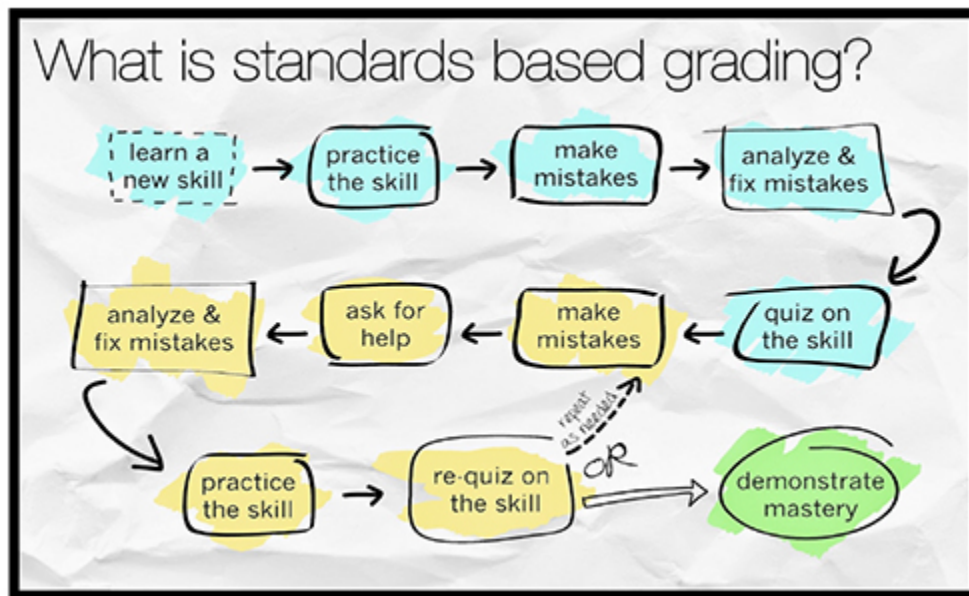


A Parent's Guide to Standards-Based Grading

At AGBU MDS, we aim to have a student- and parent-friendly elementary grading system with clearly defined learning objectives and high-quality assessments. Our standards-based report card provides meaningful feedback so students and parents can track academic progress toward mastering essential grade-level standards and reflect on strengths and growth areas.

What is standards-based grading (SBG)?

Standards-based grading, or proficiency grading, measures academic progress in meeting grade-level learning goals set forth by state and national standards. The standards-based approach provides a grade for different learning goals, so students receive multiple grades in each subject area. Instead of giving an average at the end of a semester for a subject area, which combines different assignments, tests, and behavior, SBG provides two separate grades for work habits and behavior. Separately assessing these two things helps provide a more accurate picture of each student's academic achievement.



Why standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading changes how we communicate student understanding. With this grading approach, students and parents can track learning progress to ensure students are taking the necessary steps toward mastery of learning standards. Teachers and parents will know whether students are on target in each subject area and can begin to focus their attention on the specific categories that need improvement. With SBG, the focus is placed on *what* still needs to be learned versus how to get an A.

How will standards-based grading benefit students?

This reporting system allows teachers to communicate individual student progress more accurately. A standards-based report card shares much more information about the skills and knowledge a student has acquired with more detail than providing a single number on a traditional report card.

What are the main ways standards-based grading differs from traditional grading?

The three main differences between SBG and traditional grading are:

1. Unlike traditional grading systems, standards-based grading systems **measure a student's mastery of grade-level standards** by prioritizing the most recent, consistent level of performance. A student may have struggled at the beginning of the course but can still demonstrate mastery of key concepts by the end of the grading period. Also, a student at grade level at the start of the course can work to apply the knowledge and background they already have to push themselves further.
2. In a traditional grading system, a student's performance for the entire semester is averaged together for one total grade. For example, a student receives one overall grade for math. In standards-based reporting, **grading is separated into strands or categories** that help pinpoint learning targets (i.e., Measurement and Data, Number and Operations, Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Geometry). This gives teachers, students, and families a clearer picture of which areas are strengths and which require more attention.
3. Standards-based report cards **separate academic performance from work habits and behavior**. Separating the two helps provide a more accurate picture of student progress. Variables such as effort, participation, timeliness, cooperation, and attitude are reported under work habits and behavior.

How are overall grades determined for the report card?

Student performance on various types of assessments (both formal and informal) will be used to determine the overall grade in a course. Final grades will not be based on participation, homework, and behavior. Those variables are still essential but will be graded separately.

What do each of the numbers in the 4-point scale represent?

Academic Proficiency Levels		
Proficiency Level	Points	Definition
Mastery	4	The student has mastered the learning objective <u>and</u> can <i>apply it</i> or <i>explain it</i> articulately to others.
Proficient	3	The student has <i>mostly</i> mastered the learning objectives, requiring minimal guidance.
Developing	2	The student shows some evidence of understanding the objective.
Beginning	1	The student is beginning to show partial understanding of the objective but requires more guidance and support.
No Evidence	0	The student did not attempt to do the assignment and/or showed little or no evidence of understanding the learning objective. The student needs to be retaught and/or requires additional support.
Not Assessed	/	Not assessed at this time

Does the numerical score correlate to a letter grade? (i.e., A=4, 3=B, 2=C, etc.)

A traditional grading system using A-F cannot be compared to standards-based grading. SBG identifies a standard and indicates if a student is meeting the standard at a certain point of the year. A score of 3 is defined as proficient or meeting grade-level standards. The goal is to have all students achieve *at least* a 3 in each learning objective.

How will I know if my child needs help in a specific area?

A score of 0 is an immediate sign that a student needs academic support. A score of 1 or 2 indicates that the student is working but is not yet meeting grade-level standards. A significant benefit of standards-based reporting is identifying specific areas of need.

How can my child earn a 4, or level of Mastery?

A student will earn a 4 when they consistently show mastery of a skill *and* can apply it. A 4 indicates that a student can perform more challenging work and demonstrate knowledge of more depth and complexity. The ultimate goal is for students to learn for the sake of learning, be able to clearly articulate what they have learned, and apply the skills they have learned later in different contexts.

Are basing grades on standards and rubrics truly subjective?

All grading has an element of subjectivity. However, clear criteria make reporting a student's progress on standards less subjective. A student's work is measured against the criteria. Rubrics designed by teachers in grade-level teams document the specific criteria for each proficiency level 0-4.

What are "Effort" grades?

Effort grades of "Consistently," "Moderately," and "Rarely" are given to assess a student's essential skills and habits. This includes respect, responsibility, work habits, and collaborative skills. Students will receive both Effort (behavior and habits) and Proficiency (academic) grades for all subjects.

How will standards-based grading prepare students for middle school and beyond, where letter grades are still in place?

Standards-based grading is used most commonly in public and private schools at the elementary level, and the research continues to support the benefits of this system. If done with fidelity, there should be an easy transition from standards-based to traditional grading when students enter middle or high school. Elementary is a student's first experience with formal academic assessments and grading. For this reason, it is critical that the school and home share a vision and can speak a common grading language. With the proper support, a child's foundational school years can be designed to be more student-centered, encouraging intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations for learning. Successful students learn to take ownership, becoming actively involved and responsible in their learning process. With these fundamentals in place, the transition of grading systems should be minimal since students will be equipped with the skills and habits necessary to be successful learners.