# Standards Based Grading
## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the purpose of Standards-Based Grading (SBG)?

- The purpose of Standards-Based Grading is to align grading with content standards. It is a system of assessing and reporting that describes student progress in relation to content standards. It is measured by consistent and accurate student achievement data, with common criteria for grading.

### What is the goal of Standards-Based Grading?

- The primary goal of SBG is to better communicate what each student knows and is able to do according to content standards. This information is used differently by students, teachers, parents, and administrators.
- To allow students to focus on understanding concepts to their greatest extent vs chasing points throughout the semester.
- Give students a clear list of performance indicators along the way. Instead of knowing the next unit will focus on multiplication, students understand the specific skills and standards they will need to master inside of the larger topic of multiplication.

### How does Standards-Based Grading work?

- Traditional grading averages work habits, content knowledge, and subjective factors that a student has shown over a semester. SBG removes many of these factors and solely focuses on proficiency with regards to the content standards. SBG assesses a student's overall work and their most recent work so it tells us what a student has learned with regards to the specific standards instead of averaging everything they have done in large content areas (5th Grade Math, Algebra I, 6th Grade Science, Etc.) .

### Why are we moving to Standards-Based Grading? What was wrong with the old system?

- A grade is supposed to provide an accurate, undiluted indicator of a student's mastery of content standards. It is not meant to be part of reward, motivation, behavior or compliance. If the grade is distorted by combining a student's behavior, character, work habits, home support and compliance it cannot be used to successfully provide feedback, document progress or inform teacher's instructional decisions and guidance.
- Our primary focus is to clarify what grades mean. We want to communicate to those who achieve something quickly so they can keeping pushing, while also finding those who struggle so we can remediate more quickly and appropriately.

  If you look at the graph below, each student in the end looks the same, but they all are very different in their levels of understanding with regards to the what was taught. This is very informative to the teacher so we can begin to individualize for our students.

| Student 1 | | Student 2 | | Student 3 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Homework: | 100% | Homework: | 50% | Homework: | 75% |
| Tests and Labs: | 50% | Tests and Labs: | 100% | Tests and Labs: | 75% |
| **Overall Grade:** | **75%** | **Overall Grade:** | **75%** | **Overall Grade:** | **75%** |

**What does this tell us about the three students?**

1. **Student 1** did very well with the homework, but did not perform on the labs or tests when they needed to apply their knowledge. Here are some questions to ponder.
    - Did the student work with someone else, and it is not a reflection of their own work or knowledge?
    - Was the homework relevant to the test?
    - Did the test measure the appropriate content?
    - Was the depth of understanding the same on the homework as the test?

2. **Student 2** did very well on the application of the material (tests and labs), but did not perform on the homework. Here are some questions to ponder.
    - Was the homework grade low because they did not turn something in?
    - Did the student not understand something at first, but then practiced and in the end they did very well on the assessments?

3. **Student 3** did average on the homework as well as the tests and labs. This student seems like they are struggling to grasp the content, and their consistency suggests it is the most accurate reflection of what they understand.

**How do you expect parents to explain to their children why they did not get a 4?**

- It is critical that parents and teachers have honest conversations with their students. At some point, some concepts or skills are more difficult to grasp than others. If given the proper amount of time, and the students are motivated to challenge themselves, they often can meet the standard and apply it. Attitudes are contagious!! We need adults involved with our children to help our students understand that learning is a process. A “2” means that they are progressing towards the standard. For some, this means that they are still learning the material, and they need more time practicing to master the skill. A “3” means they are proficient. This needs to be celebrated. A “4” indicates that a student has a strength that is above and beyond the expectation, and that the student is now applying this knowledge to other concepts or skills.

**How will this affect my student's GPA?**

- A standards grade is translated into a percentage in 7th - 12th grade. We do this for colleges. Colleges require us to report a student's GPA. Power School uses the following conversion scale:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 -> 100% | 3.5 -> 92% | 3 -> 84% | 2.5 -> 76% |
| 2 -> 68% | 1.5 -> 60% | 1 -> 52% | .5 -> 44% |

These conversions are what the standards grade translates to. This has nothing to do with the score a student might receive on an assignment. As we get better at SBG, our teachers will not use points as a measure. This confuses students to live in a standards based world and a points based world.

**Are we moving to Standards Based Grading to lower students' grades, or if my student has always gotten "A's" how will it affect them?**

- If your student was receiving lower A's because they were doing very well on the homework, but getting B's on all of their assessments, it is possible that you could notice a difference in their grades. If your student studied diligently to learn all of the material to its highest level, you should see very little difference at all.
- We are moving to SBG to give more specific feedback to students, teachers, parents, and administration. This ultimately reports grades that are more reflective of the student's ability level with regards to standards.

**Will the high school start SBG next year just for the 9th graders (who are doing it in 8th grade now)?**

- The plan is to move this to 9th - 12th grades next year. 9th Grade English already uses this format and some of our Math classes are using it this year. 6-12 English teachers have been working on it for the last four (4) years and 9-12 Math teachers have been working on it for the past two (2) years . We understand the concerns surrounding the High School and GPA (Grade Point Averages) and are confident that once we fully move to the Standards Based model, students will understand how to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to earn the GPA they want.

**When the elementary starts with SBG will it be a grade or two at a time, or the entire elementary?**

- The plan is for it to start at the same time. "K-2" and "3-4" won't look the same due to the developmental nature of those grade levels. The elementary already uses a form of Standards Based Grading, the change is that we will add the 4 to show where students exceed meeting proficiency on a standard and they will report out on more standards than they have in the past. We have started that process this year and having a 1st and 4th grader it has been great

to see that level of detail and to understand what they know and what they still need to work on.

**How difficult will it be for teachers to try to help students who are "stuck" in one area or another since they only have so much time to devote before they have to move on so they can introduce and teach each required standard?**

- This is a struggle we have regardless of the standards based system. The standards based system will help us focus on the specifics we need to address with individual students. Right now, we might know that a student struggles in Math, but we don't do a very good job of breaking out where the struggle is. Standards let us dig deeper and celebrate the things they can do and use that to help motivate them to work on the things they struggle with. Specific proficiency scales for standards will help students and parents understand the developmental steps needed to meet and exceed proficiency. Standards Based Grading will allow a conversation to move from "I'm not good at Math" to "I can multiply two-digit numbers , but I struggle using multiplication to find the volume of an object."

**How do teachers balance those who are ahead from those who are behind? Do you see SBG making that easier or more difficult?**

- The current system was built to sort and separate kids. We taught things and those who "got it" the first time and the way we taught it (Did school well) got good grades and went on to college. The rest struggled, had holes in their learning, didn't like school and went into the workforce and found jobs. That isn't a reality anymore. A HS diploma won't get you very far today and will get you a lot less 5, 10 and 15 years from now. We have to teach kids to be lifelong learners so whether they go to a 4 year or 2 year college/university or to a trade school or to some other form of learning environment they have the skills to learn what they need to and that goes beyond memorizing and recalling facts and information to get enough questions right to get that A.

**Parents will need to have and know what the standards are and when the kids are working on them though to be able to ask the shifting questions. Timely, quality communication will become even more important as we transition. How do we get this information?**

- We love when parents are involved and we hope this is a way for us to encourage that involvement. If we arm parents with more information, they will be able to ask better questions and hopefully engage with their children in a deeper way. We will continue to put out standards documents by building, but it is very important for our teachers to communicate with you about their standards, rubrics and assessments.

**Will parents be sent or given the standards for their child for the year or marking period, etc...?**

- Yes and Yes. We are working on documents that will lay out "What will my 5th grader learn this year in Math, ELA (Reading/Writing), Science, Social Studies, etc.?" We will also have a

syllabus for all MS and HS classes that will include this information as well as listing it on report cards and in PowerSchool.

**What about student's responsibility? Where is this reported out?**

- We have created Standards..."Skills for Success" with the help of the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District, other Ottawa area schools, area business, government agencies and nonprofits. These Standards encompass the "Other" things that have inflated or deflated grades. They include "Communication, Personal Accountability and Ethical Citizenship" We will be adding a reporting system for these so you will have the best of both worlds. An accurate reflection of what kids can do in the content areas and how they are doing in regards to these other skills that we know they need in life and their careers. The "Skills for Success" standards can be found on our website at: http://www.hamiltonschools.us/for-parents/skills-for-success/ and on the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District website at: http://www.oaisd.org/oaisd/departments/careertechnicaleducaton/futureprep/skills4success/