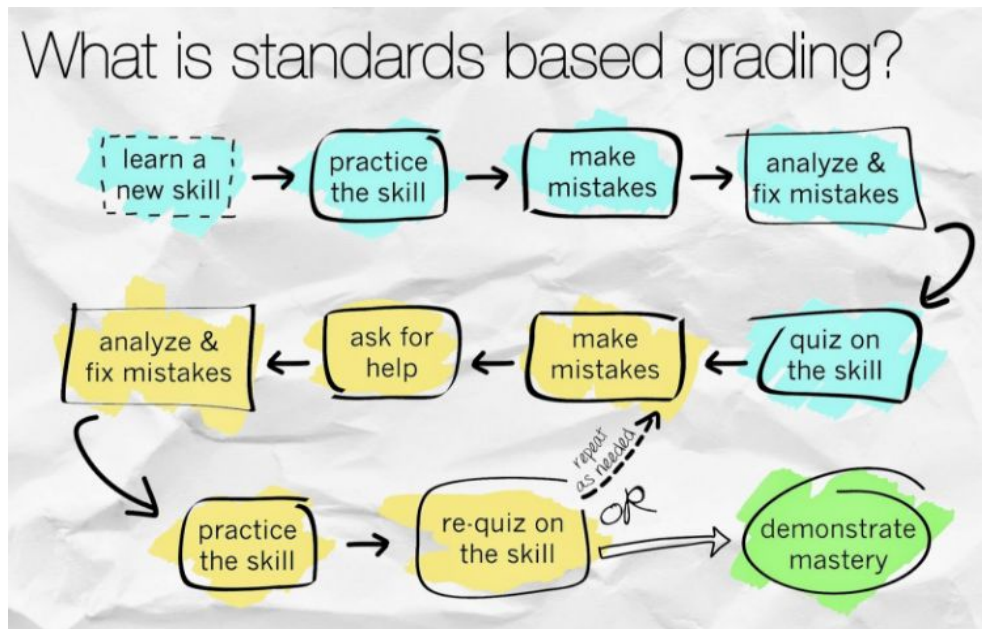


Somerset Middle School

Grading Handbook for Parents

What is standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading (SBG), also known as Grading for Learning, communicates how students are performing on essential learning targets that are created from the Wisconsin Academic Standards. The purpose of standards-based grading is to identify what a student knows, or is able to do, in relation to pre-established learning targets, as opposed to simply averaging grades/scores over the course of a grading period, which can mask what a student has learned, or not learned, in a specific course.



Source: Google Images

Why have we moved to Standards-Based Grading?

It is important to remember that this really is a change in how we communicate student understanding, not necessarily what is happening in the classroom. SBG shows parents their child's progress within the district's curriculum. With this system, parents will know how their child is progressing toward mastering standards in each subject area. Additionally, parents will know whether their child is "on target" with district and state standards. It is a much better way to communicate progress. Many educational researchers consider standards-based grading much more fair to students and best educational practice.

What are the advantages of standards-based grading?

Learning targets are clearly communicated to students throughout instruction. Parents and students are able to clearly see which learning targets have been mastered and which ones still need practice. With SBG, conversations between teachers and students become focused on what learning still needs to happen versus how to get an A.

How will Standards-Based Grading benefit students?

SBG will assure that students within a grade level receive similar instruction and are assessed on the same expectations. SBG will also allow teachers to better communicate individual student progress. A standards-based report shares much more information about the skills and knowledge a student has acquired with more detail than a

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single number.

How does standards-based grading differ from traditional grading?

Unlike traditional grading systems, a standards-based grading system measures a student's mastery of grade-level learning targets by prioritizing the most recent, consistent level of performance. Thus a student who may have struggled at the beginning of a course, when first encountering new material, may still be able to demonstrate mastery of key content/concepts by the end of a grading period. A student who is at grade level at the start of the course can then work to apply the knowledge and background they already have to push themselves further.

In a traditional grading system, a student's performance for an entire quarter is averaged together. Early quiz scores that were low would be averaged together with more proficient performance later in the course, resulting in a lower overall grade than current performance indicates.


Standards-based report cards **separate** academic performance from work habits and behavior in order to provide parents a more accurate view of a student's progress in both academic and behavioral areas. Variables such as effort, participation, timeliness, cooperation and attitude are reported separately, not as an indicator of a student's academic performance.

How are my child's marks determined?

A student's performance on a series of assessments (both formative and summative -- see below) will be used to determine a student's overall grade in a course. Practice assignments (i.e. homework) are just that, practice, and thus serve primarily as a source of feedback and instructional support for both students and teachers. Scores on practice assignments will not be used as a major component of a student's report card score. However, teachers may require students to complete all of their practice work prior to allowing them to take, or retake, an assessment.

Formative and Summative Defined	
Formative Assessment- The general goal of formative assessment is to collect detailed information that can be used to improve instruction and student learning <i>while it's happening</i> .	Summative Assessment- The goal of summative assessment is to <i>evaluate student learning</i> at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against grade level targets.
Formative assessments are <i>for</i> learning, while summative assessments are <i>of</i> learning.	

What will each of the numbers in the 4 point scale represent?

Score	Rubric Descriptor	Explanation
4	Exceeding Target	Students consistently and independently know (can do) content well enough to make connections that were not explicitly taught. Students can apply learning skills to new and more complicated tasks.
3.5		Partial success at next level
3	 Meeting Target (goal for all students)	Students consistently and independently know (can do) everything that was taught without making major mistakes.
2.5		Partial success at next level
2	Working Toward Target	Students know (can do) simpler content that was explicitly taught, but need additional time and teacher assistance to demonstrate understanding of more complex content.
1.5		Partial success at next level
1	Significantly Below Target	With help, students know (can do) simpler content that was explicitly taught, but need additional time to be independent with the content.
.5		Partial success at next level (or student has provided little evidence of content mastery and/or has put little effort into completing task?)
0	No Evidence Toward Target	Student has provided no evidence of content mastery.

What is considered to be an A in a standards-based grading system?

You cannot really compare a traditional grading system to standards-based grading. It is like comparing “apples to oranges,” SBG identifies a standard and indicates whether or not a student is meeting the standard at a given point in the school year. A score of (3) is defined as meeting grade level standards and indicates that a student has demonstrated mastery of the skills that were expected to be learned by that point in the grading period. In an ideal world, all students achieve at least a 3 in all learning at SMS.

How will I know if my child needs help?

Receiving a 1, 1.5, 2 or 2.5 on a grade report/report card can be a sign that a student is in need of academic support in that specific area. This is one benefit of a standards-based report card; specific areas in need of support are clearly identified. Intervention classes are in place at Somerset Middle School to support learners who are behind in math and reading. If a student receives 1’s or 2’s, it means his/her work is not yet meeting grade level standards. A number of academic interventions will be offered to those students who are struggling to meet the established learning targets. Students may be pulled in during Target Time for re-teach or a specific intervention. These supports are not a punishment; they are the way that we support the learning process. Grade level retention is not a practice that is generally supported by educational research.

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How can my child earn a 4?

A score of (4) indicates performance that is consistently above what is expected for mastery at that point in the school year. Level 4 work would indicate a much deeper understanding of a standard, the ability to apply that knowledge, make connections, and extend learning beyond the targeted goal. Many, but not all, assessments have the possibility to earn a 4, as long as they are assessing higher-level thinking..

How does Standards-Based report card improve teaching and learning?

Knowing where the students are in their progress toward meeting standards-based learning targets is crucial for planning and carrying out classroom instruction. Teachers teach to the needs of their students. Standards-based grading is designed to give teachers more information about the student's progress in meeting the level of proficiency required by each standard. In addition, teachers share the standards with students and parents, helping them to better understand the learning that needs to take place and how we can help our students succeed.

How will Standards-Based Grading prepare student for the high school where letter grades are still in place?

Middle school students and families will have a clear understanding of the areas in which the students' learning is at, above or below grade-level proficiency. This allows students to enter high school with realistic goals and expectations of academic performance.

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What is a Learner Behavior grade?

A learner behavior grade indicates a student’s ability to meet pre-established behavioral guidelines in the areas of behavior, work completion, participation and working in groups. Learner behaviors are assessed as follows:

Learner Behavior	Expectations	Evidence (Examples)
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brings materials and homework to class ● Arrives to class on time ● Respects self, peers, staff, property ● Upholds the Six Pillars of Character 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does not need to be reminded to be kind to others or self. ● Positively engages in the learning process.
Work Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completes work by due date and submits as directed ● Seeks assistance from teacher when needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of late assignments ● Is able to meet deadlines on big projects/labs.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Answers questions & contributes comments/ideas when called upon ● Stays on topic/focused ● Displays active listening skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pays attention when classmates/teacher are talking.
Working in Groups (may not apply to all areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Actively contributes to group discussion/work ● Completes assigned tasks on time ● Treats others respectfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does not make negative comments about self, others or the learning.

Score	Rubric Descriptor
3	Consistently Exhibits
2	Inconsistently Exhibits
1	Requires Constant Help and Guidance