

# Standards-Based Grading

December 2013

District 97 is committed to supporting student learning through the adoption of the Common Core State Standards. With the implementation of the new elementary report card and use of Standards-Based Grading we realize there will be questions and concerns. We will be continually reflecting on grading practices to ensure students receive grades that reflect proficiency. We hope this brief presentation answers some of your questions.

# Why Standards-Based Grading

- Standards-Based Grading is based on current research of best practices in grading
- Standards-Based Grading is designed to clearly communicate students' progress toward learning standards
- Grading is aligned with the Common Core State Standards

# Traditional Grading Compared to Standards-Based Grading

As parents and educators, the change in the grading system requires a fundamental change in our thinking.....

# Traditional Grading



- Uses A, B, C, D
- Every assignment is given a grade
- Assessments are based on a percentage system
- Scores are averaged
- Uses an uncertain mix of assessment, achievement, effort and behavior to determine the final grade
- Homework and extra credit factor into the grade
- Grades don't necessarily reflect what skills and concepts a child knows

# Standards-Based Grading

- Based on learning goals and performance standards
- Indicates what a student knows and is able to do
- Measures a student's progress toward proficiency
- Clearly communicates expectations ahead of time
- Separates achievement from effort/behaviors
- Is authentic to the learning experiences of students based on complex tasks

Standards-Based Report Cards

A Family Guide



# Philosophy of Standards-Based Grading

We know grading is a complex process. Our goal in Standards-Based Grading is to provide grades that are FAIR and less subjective to bias, more ACCURATE, SPECIFIC so that both teachers and students can describe what it means to be proficient. By providing feedback in a timely basis students can improve their performance and understanding of the standards.

# The Standards are our targets

Students are given targets (the Common Core State Standards) that remain consistent throughout the school year.

The target is set for the end of the grade level and does not change each trimester.





# Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q: What are the goals of Standards-Based Grading?**
- A: The goals of Standards-Based Grading (SBG) is to clearly communicate what each student knows and is able to do according to the Common Core State Standards.
  
- **Q: How does Standards-Based grading work?**
- A: Traditional grading averages all of the work done another subjective factors. SBG removes extraneous factors and solely focuses on proficiency.

# Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q: How does SBG differ from traditional letter grades**
- A: SBG provides us with information on what students have actually learned. SBG measures students' knowledge of grade level content over time by reporting the most recent, consistent level of performance.
  - Example: In traditional grading, the student's performance for the whole trimester would be averaged and early quizzes that were low would be averaged with later higher performance assessments. In SBG, a student who reaches proficiency would be reported proficient and the grade would reflect current performance level.

In addition, SBG will report proficiency and work habits separately in order to give a more accurate report of student progress so that factors such as attendance, effort and attitude do not influence grades.

# Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q: What is a Standards Based Report Card?**
- **A:** The purpose of a report card is to clearly communicate how a child is doing in school. A standards-based report card tells specifically how a child is doing in regards to the standards and helps to identify areas for improvement. All teachers in a grade level measure student learning against set criteria that is the grade level standard. This is different from a traditional report card which gives a single letter or number grade for broad subject categories. A standards-based report card puts the emphasis on learning, rather than on comparisons among students. A standards-based report card gives concrete information the teacher and parent can use to assist the student. It also clearly separates academic performance from work habits and behaviors that support learning.

# Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q: What marking system is used on the Standards Based Report Card**
- A: The Performance Descriptors include:
- **(EX) Exceeds:** The student consistently demonstrates independent mastery of the grade level standard. The student grasps, applies, and extends processes and skills for the grade level with relative ease.
- **(PR) Proficient:** The student demonstrates understanding of the grade level standard and can apply concepts in a variety of contexts.
- **(AP) Approaching Proficient:** The student is beginning to, occasionally does, or meets the grade level standard with assistance. The student is beginning to grasp and apply key processes and skills for their grade level, but produces work that contains some errors.
- **(NP) Not Proficient:** The student is not meeting the grade level standard, even with assistance. The student demonstrates a limited understanding of the grade level standard and produces work that contains many errors.

# Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q: Who decides that a student has mastered standards and how?**
- A: Student learning is measured by formative checkpoints throughout instruction. There are a variety of opportunities for students to practice skills and concepts. Not all assignments are counted toward a grade, but the assignments build toward the assessments that measure student progress.
  
- **Q: What if my child doesn't master the standard on the first assessment?**
- A: For students who do not master the standard on the first summative assessment, teachers will re-teach, provide more practice, and give additional opportunities to master with a different summative assessment.
  
- **Q: How will a parent know if their child is on the proper continuum to reach a standard?**
- A: You will be communicated with in regards to your child's progress towards end of the year mastery throughout the school year. This will be done through report cards and regular communication.

# Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q: How will standards-based grading meet the needs of students with accommodations?**
- A: If the student is receiving instruction based on grade level content (with and without accommodations), the student should receive a grade based on grade level standards. Accommodations are changes in the way instruction is provided or the way in which the student is expected to respond during instruction.
- **Q: What is the role of homework in a standards-based reporting system?**
- A: Homework helps to reinforce learning that takes place during the school day. The value of skill practice in the form of homework can be demonstrated in classroom participation and assessments. Homework completion is included under a section called “Behaviors that Support Learning” on the report card.

# Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q: Are Standards Based Report cards more difficult to understand?**
- **A:** It will no doubt take some practice to get used to interpreting this more complex report card, but it's not difficult. There are some other pieces that will round out the picture, such as the rubrics teachers will use to evaluate progress toward standards and narrative explanations that teachers may include for some assignments. Parents can also learn about their child's performance in school during parent teacher conferences or other informal meetings scheduled with the teacher. Throughout the year, your child's work is sent home and provides information on progress.

The Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test in reading and math is given three times a year to students in grades 2<sup>nd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> and provides comparative information about your child's progress against their peers in D97 and nationally. The annual ISAT (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) tests provide individual results and compares school grade-level performance against the district and the whole state.