

**STANDARDS-BASED GRADING:** This class will be piloting a new grading system called standards-based grading. The goal of this grading system is to give students full credit for what they know and to not punish students who do not learn quickly enough. Your grade will come entirely from your ability to prove mastery of your grade-level ELA standards. All of the classwork and homework we will work on will be to prepare you to show mastery of the various ELA standards of the CCSS. While this work will not count toward your overall grade, it will provide you with the feedback necessary to improve over the semester. If you are ever unhappy with your performance, you will have the opportunity to show that new learning has taken place by revising or completing an alternate assignment.

4 - Distinguished	3 - Proficient	2 - Developing	1/0 - Beginner/Not Yet
99%	86%	74%	60%/INC
<p><i>*The most recent data points for each standard will be averaged based on the following % scores to find an overall semester grade. An incomplete (INC) score on more than two major standards will earn an "F" overall*</i></p>			

**WHAT IS STANDARDS-BASED GRADING? AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?** Most can agree that students learn at different paces. Yet, most current grading systems do not positively reflect this belief. Scores collected early in the learning process, possibly before learning has taken root, are averaged with later, often higher scores. The result is an averaged grade of old and new data that does not accurately reflect students' current level of mastery.

**Take, for example, a beginner's swimming class.** Students in this class come with all different levels of experience: some have played and practiced in the pool, playing "Marco Polo" with their siblings on the weekends, while others have rarely set foot in a pool.

After the first week of lessons, the swim instructor may assess each student's performance in the backstroke. Swimmers with previous experience playing in the pool may be showing basic proficiency in the lessons so far. Other swimmers may just be gaining confidence floating on their back or placing their head underwater. On this first assessment, the swimmers with more previous experience in the pool would probably earn a "B" while the swimmers without the previous experience may earn a "D."

More lessons go by, and all swimmers continue to improve. However, some swimmers need a bit more time gaining confidence in the pool. The experienced swimmers earn an "A" on the next few assessments, while the swimmers needing a bit more time earn a "C" and then work up to a "B."

Finally, the swimmers reach the end of their course. The swim instructor gives out one final assessment, and all of the swimmers can now perform the backstroke at an "A" level.

*Traditional grade calculations would average all assessments from the course to come up with a final grade. The swimmers with previous experience may end the course with an "A," while the swimmers without previous experience (or just needed a bit more time to gain confidence in the water) end the course with a "C." However, all students, regardless of starting circumstance, can perform the backstroke at an "A" level.*

Standards-based grading gives students full credit for what they know, without punishing students for how long it took them to learn. Rather than average all data points together to reach an overall grade (combining old and new data), the teacher looks at the growth over time and assigns a grade based on recent performance. In the swimming example, all swimmers that showed mastery in the backstroke would earn a mastery grade. Students earn full credit for what they know and are not punished for how quickly they learn.

\*\*For More Information, See: Schimmer, Tom. *Grading From the Inside Out*. Bloomington: Solution Tree Press, 2016.  
Print.\*\*

## STANDARDS-BASED GRADING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is standards-based grading?**

Standards-based grading measures your student's mastery of the essential standards for a class, or how well your student understands the material in class. At the beginning of every unit, the teacher will break down the standards for the unit into smaller objectives and criteria using a detailed rubric. During the unit, the student is assessed to see if they truly know the material using a variety of assessments, such as traditional pencil-and-paper tests, projects, discussions, or reports. The student's grade will be based on all of the evidence the teacher collects demonstrating mastery of the essential standards.

The goal of this approach is to provide the teacher, student, and parent as accurate a picture as possible of the student's learning and to encourage a dialogue about how the student can master the material for the class. In particular, because learning is a process that takes place over time, each assessment will provide feedback for the student about what to focus on next, and the student will be allowed to retake assessments. If the new assessments shows a higher level of mastery, that new score replaces the old one.

### **How is standards-based grading different from traditional grading?**

In the traditional 100-point grading system, a student's grades are typically based on all of the work assigned in class, including classwork, homework, projects, quizzes, and tests. These scores are often arranged in the grade book based on the type of assignment rather than on the essential standards for the class. The grade may also include points for non-academic factors, such as participation, effort, or attitude.

Standards-based grading does not separate out tests, homework, or projects. All of the work a student does is used to assess the student's mastery of the essential standards. A student's scores from their work are tracked by the essential standards, which gives the teacher, student, and parent a very detailed picture of which standards a student has mastered. Non-academic factors like behavior, attitude, and attendance are not included in this grade and are reported in a different manner.

### **Why make the change to standards-based grading?**

The goal is to report grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning, and the change to standards-based grading is an effort to reach that goal. Here is how standards-based grading addresses each of those four criteria.

- **Accurate:** By basing a student's grade on solely academic factors, the teacher creates a clear picture of what a student has learned without the influence of other factors. These other factors, such as effort and attitude, are still essential, but are not part of the student's academic grade and are communicated separately.
- **Consistent:** For each unit, the teacher will provide a rubric that describes exactly what the student will need to master. Using these rubrics establishes clear expectations for mastery up front and applies them consistently throughout the unit and semester.
- **Meaningful:** A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place. In a standards-based classroom, scores are recorded by the essential standards rather than by the type of assignment, such as tests or homework, making it easier to identify areas of strength and to address areas of concern for each student.
- **Support of Learning:** Standards-based grading supports learning by focusing on the material that has or has not been learned rather than on accumulating points to reach a certain total. The reassessment policy also supports student learning by allowing new levels of learning to replace old ones when a student shows improvement on an assessment.

### **How will my student be assessed?**

Your student's learning will be assessed using a variety of formative and summative assessments. These tools will include formal assessments such as traditional paper-and-pencil tests, projects, written papers, lab reports, or verbal assessments, but they may also include informal assessments such as classroom discussions or teacher observations. Essentially, everything that a student does in a standards-based class provides the teacher with evidence of the student's learning.

### **What can my student do to raise their grade in a standards-based class?**

The goal in a standards-based class is on ensuring that students master the essential standards for the class, so any efforts to raise your student's grade will have the same goal. Your student should meet with the teacher to determine which standards need improvement and fill out a reassessment agreement to create a plan on how to relearn the material and when to be reassessed. If your student demonstrates a higher level of mastery on the assessment, then the grade for that standard will be increased and your student's grade will increase. Again, the focus is on improving your student's mastery of the material, so extra credit points are not used in standards-based classes.

### **What does my student need to do in order to be reassessed?**

After completing an assessment in a standards-based class, the student can ask for a reassessment using the process described below.

- The student gets a copy of the reassessment agreement from the teacher and completes the "Standards to Reassess" section to choose what standards the student wants to be reassessed on and at what levels.
- The student completes the "Preparation Information" by picking a few activities that would help with relearning the material. The student then arranges a meeting with the

teacher to discuss the agreement. The teacher may require specific activities to prepare for the reassessment, such as completing missing assignments, completing test corrections, or redoing assignments with low scores. Any activities selected by the student or teacher must have evidence that it has been completed.

- Together, the student and teacher will decide when, where, and how the student will be reassessed in the “Reassessment Information” section.
- Once all of the relearning activities have been completed, the student will show the necessary evidence to the teacher, and both the teacher and student will sign the “Reassessment Approval” section of the agreement.
- The student is now ready to be reassessed as described in the “Reassessment Information” section.

The reassessment agreement supports your student’s learning by:

- Ensuring that re-learning takes place before reassessment.
- Identifying the specific steps the student must complete to be reassessed.
- Clarifying the reassessment process for both the student and the teacher.
- Identifying exactly how the student will be reassessed so there are no surprises.

If you have any additional questions about the reassessment process, please contact your student’s teacher.

### **Why should be student do the homework assigned in class if it isn’t included in the grade?**

Many students feel that in a standards-based class they don’t have to worry about anything except their final chapter or unit test. This is incorrect. It is important for students to understand that they are being assessed every day by their teachers, and that everything they do in class lets their teacher assess their knowledge and helps prepare the students for the assessments. Just as an NFL team would never expect to win the Superbowl without hours upon hours of practicing, students need the practice homework provides to prepare them for success.

Student work is also analyzed by teachers to determine growth and improvement towards mastery of a specific skill or content. Every teacher has the responsibility of taking all the work a student does into account when assigning a grade to a student’s work for a semester. So, if a student chooses to not do an assignment, not only are they missing an opportunity to practice a skill, they also miss an opportunity to display mastery of a standard to their teacher.