



H·I·G·L·E·Y

C O N N E C T

E N G A G E

I N S P I R E

Assessment & Grading Handbook

Grades K-5

Higley Unified School District
2935 S. Recker Road
Gilbert, Arizona 85295

Purpose of Standards-Based Grading

The purpose of standards-based grading is to improve student achievement by focusing on instruction and the alignment of curriculum with the essential standards. Standards-based grading and reporting will provide better communication to students, parents, teachers and administrators on what each student knows and is able to do according to the identified standards and separately assess the influence of positive and consistent work habits on student learning.

Standards-Based Grading

Standards-based grading measures the mastery of the learning objectives, or how well students understand the material in class. It is based on a specific set of standards that students need to meet for each grade/content level. Marks are not a comparison of one student to another, but rather a way to measure how well students are doing on grade-level/course level standards. A standards based approach allows parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected of students and how to help them be successful in their educational program.

A standards-based approach:

- Indicates what students know and are able to do.
- Scores indicate a student's progress toward the attainment of a standard.
- Clearly communicates expectations ahead of time.
- Is based on complex tasks, as opposed to rote memory.
- Occurs when appropriate, not just on scheduled days.
- Emphasizes the more recent evidence of learning.
- Utilizes multiple methods of grade calculation to determine grades.

The K-5 Grade Reports to Parents include the following levels of performance:

4= Above benchmark / Exceeds current grade level expectations

3= Meets benchmark / At grade level expectations

2= Approaching benchmark / Improving but not consistent

1= Below grade level / Needs more time and support

Blank= Not yet introduced

District Grading Practice #1:

Only include scores that relate to the achievement of the standards.

Be clear about what students must know and be able to do.

- Have a clear understanding of what each level of performance looks like before students begin work by utilizing scoring rubrics. Define what it takes to receive a 4, 3, 2, or 1.
- Ensure that questions are tied to essential standards to verify that assessments measure what is intended.
- Data collected on non-academic factors (behavior, effort, participation, attendance, attitude, adherence to class rules, late work etc.) should be reported separately.
- Base grades/scores on individual achievement, not group scores.
- Don't give points for extra credit or use bonus points; seek only evidence that more work has resulted in a higher level of achievement.
- Apply other consequences for academic dishonesty other than reduced grades/scores.
- Homework should be minimally included in the student's academic score. Homework should be a chance to experiment and practice with newly acquired skills without penalty. Homework/practice should represent 10% - 20% of a final grade.

Benefits:

By reporting on specific learning standards, standards-based grading provides considerably more feedback about how a student is progressing toward learning each standard. This will allow us to report student learning more accurately and to the degree to which students have attained mastery of learning objectives.

It is essential for students to do homework that is tied closely to learning objectives and for students to see those connections. Teachers provide feedback on homework that is assigned to practice new skills.

Attendance, effort, behavior, participation and other factors are important but separating these from achievement factors will give parents a clearer picture about their student's learning. Students will be held accountable for these factors, but they will be reported separately.

District Grading Practice #2:

Use a variety of assessment methods to collect high quality, organized evidence of achievement.

- Use multiple measures to determine student achievement. Include more than one kind of assessment to examine the same kind of knowledge or skills (ex: paper/pencil assessments, essay assessments, performance assessments, lab assignments, and personal communication) to evaluate student achievement on grade/course level standards.
- Provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge or skill expected with proficiency on a standard. Repetitive opportunities within the grading period (redos and retakes) for students to master standards should be provided and encouraged until they can demonstrate proficiency.
- Gather evidence using quality assessments.
- Organize and report evidence of learning by standards/learning goals.
- Provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations and mark each assessment on clear, pre-established criteria.
- Compare each student's performance to preset standards rather than on student's achievement compared to other students.

Benefits:

Links the basis for curriculum instruction, assessment, and intervention, provides a clear focus, and makes grading consistent, accurate, meaningful, and supportive of learning.

District Grading Practice #3:

Use grading and assessment procedures that support learning.

- Use evidence from assessments to determine grades.
 - Teachers carefully consider using a variety of the following, in determining progress: independent daily written or oral tasks; application of skills; periodic assessments (quizzes, tests), performance tasks, and teacher-student questioning.
 - Information from formative assessments should be used to provide feedback on progress towards mastery of the standards and to develop interventions and reteaching opportunities.
- The information that provides the most accurate depiction of students' learning is the most current information. If students demonstrate that past assessment information no longer accurately reflects their learning, that information will be dropped and replaced by the new information. Final grades will reflect the most recent evidence of learning, not an average of scores across the grading period.
- Homework (practice) will be minimally included in the student's academic score. Homework (practice) is a chance to experiment and practice with newly acquired skills without penalty. Homework/practice should represent 10% - 20% of a final grade. Formative and summative assessments taken in class should represent 80% - 90% of a final grade.
- Include students in the grading process. Students should track their own progress on identified standards.
- Communicate with students and parents using a standards-based grading/reporting system.

Benefits:

The goal of frequent assessment is to guide instruction. Formative assessments are scored and can be recorded but are mainly used to track student learning so that appropriate instruction can be planned. Including students in classroom assessment practices and scoring ensure that the expectations are clear to all, promotes student learning and encourages self-assessment and mastery of the standards. Where learning is developmental and will grow with time, repeated practice and assessment provides evidence of progress.

Standards Based vs. Traditional Grading:

Standards-Based

- Based on learning goals with a grade for each
- Criterion-referenced and proficiency-based using a limited number of levels with criteria and targets known to all
- Measures only achievement: behaviors reported separately; no penalties or bonuses given
- Includes individual evidence only Focuses on formative and summative assessments for grading
- Emphasizes the most recent evidence of learning
- Uses only common quality assessments and carefully recorded data
- Discusses all aspects with students

Traditional

- Based on one grade per subject
- Based on a percentage system; often norm-referenced; criteria not clear
- Use an uncertain mix of achievement, attitude, effort, and behavior; uses penalties and extra-credit
- Includes group-work scores Scores and includes everything in grades
- Includes every score regardless of when it was collected; scores are averaged
- Assessments vary in quality; some evidence comes only from teacher recollection
- Decisions are made about grading and then announced to the students

Sample Proficiency Scale

| Level of Performance | Score | Proficiency Scale |
|----------------------|-------|---|
| Advanced | 4.0 | In addition to the proficient performance, makes in-depth inferences and extended applications of what was learned, including connections to other experiences. |
| Proficient | 3.0 | MEETS THE STANDARD – Expected Level of Performance. No major errors or omissions regarding any of the information and/or simple or complex processes that were explicitly taught. |
| Basic | 2.0 | No major errors regarding the simpler details and processes, and some of the more complex ideas and processes. |
| Below Basic | 1.0 | A partial understanding of some of the simpler details and processes, but major errors or omissions regarding the more complex details and processes. |
| Failing | 0 | No evidence or insufficient evidence of student learning. |

Grading and Assessment Definitions:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Assessment: | Gathering and interpreting information about student achievement using a variety of tools. |
| Benchmark Assessment: | An assessment that measures a student's achievement level on all standards in a course that will be repeated periodically to check for improvement. |
| Common Assessment: | The same assessment that is given and graded by common grade level/subject classrooms at about the same time to collect data. |
| Formative Assessment: | Periodic assessment tool for learning that is used to adjust instruction for individual students or a whole class; given throughout the period of instruction. |
| Grade: | A simple, clear, and concrete summary representation of student achievement based on what a student knows at the end of a given time period. The number (or letter) reported at the end of a period of time as a summary statement of student performance. |
| Mastery: | Demonstration of student performance against standard criteria at a pre-established level. |
| Score: | To mark, evaluate, or place a value on a single product as compared to a standard or objective. The number (or letter) "score" given to any student test or performance. |
| Proficiency Scale: | A proficiency scale is a set of descriptions that describes a stage in the development of competence in a standard, typically with a range of 0 to 4. |
| Standards: | Statement that describes what and/or how well students are expected to understand and perform. |
| Standards-based Grading: | Achievement level based on mastery of essential standards—a grading system where scores denote progress toward the understanding of a specific standard. |
| Summative Assessment: | An evaluation tool designed to show information about a student's achievement at the end of a period of instruction. |
| Test: | An assessment intended to measure the student's knowledge or other abilities. |

Questions & Answers

What is Standards-Based Grading?

Standards-based grading measures the mastery of the learning objectives, or how well students understand the material in class. It is based on a specific set of standards that students need to meet for each grade/content level. Marks are not a comparison of one student to another, but rather a way to measure how well students are doing on grade-level/course level standards. A standards-based approach allows parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected of students and how to help them be successful in their educational program.

What is the goal of Standards-Based Grading?

The primary goal of standards-based grading is to improve student achievement by focusing instruction and the alignment of curriculum with the essential standards. Standards-based grading and reporting will provide better communication to students, parents, teachers and administrators on what each student knows and is able to do according to the identified standards and separately assess the influence of positive and consistent work habits on student learning.

How does standards-based grading differ from traditional letter grades?

Standards-based grading informs us what students have actually learned and know. Standards-based grading measures students' knowledge of grade-level content over time by reporting the most recent, consistent level of performance. So, a student might struggle in the beginning of a grading period with new content, but then learn and demonstrate proficient performance by the end of the grading period. In traditional grading, the student's performance for the whole grading period would be averaged and early quiz scores that were low would be averaged together with proficient performance later in the course resulting in a lower grade. In standards-based grading, a student who reaches proficiency would be reported proficient and the grade would reflect current performance level.

In standards-based grading, in most courses factors like attendance, effort, work habits, and attitude will be reported separately in order to give a more accurate report of student progress. It is important to keep academic grades as a true picture of student achievement.

What student evidence determines grades?

Teachers carefully consider the following in determining progress: independent daily written or oral tasks; application of skills; periodic assessments (quizzes, tests), performance tasks, and teacher-student questioning. Several different types of assessments will be available. Students can retest to show they know the concept or skill. Consistent descriptive feedback will be given to let students know what improvements are needed and what they are doing right.

The information that provides the most accurate depiction of students' learning is the most current information. If students demonstrate that past assessment information no longer accurately reflects their learning, that information must be dropped and replaced by the new information.

What is the standard of proficiency?

On a proficiency scale, the standard of proficiency is a 3.0. This means that on an assessment or across a series of assessments, no major errors or omissions regarding any of the information were made. Mastery of the standard has been achieved. A score of 4.0 means that in addition to the proficient performance, the student goes above and beyond to make in-depth inferences and extended applications of what was learned, including connections to other experiences.

What about extra credit?

Extra credit does not measure learning. In a standards-based system, students are actually able to demonstrate their learning in many different ways and timeframes. In a traditional system in which points determine everything, extra credit and extra points will influence a grade and not reflect any additional learning. For instance, a student that has a 2.0 on a specific learning goal may have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning at the 3.0 level. However, in a traditional system in which extra points are simply added in to the overall grade, extra points can be earned regardless of whether or not learning may have occurred.

What research has the district used in developing standards-based assessment and grading ?

The district has utilized research from a number of experts in the field. A resources and reference page is attached.

Resources and References

- Ainsworth, L. (2003). *Power standards: Identifying the standards that matter the most*. Englewood, CO: Advanced Learning Press.
- DuFour, R., Dufour, R., & Eaker, R. (2008). *Revisiting professional learning communities at work: New insights for improving schools*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Guskey, T. R. (Ed.). (2010). *Developing standards based report cards*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Guskey, T. R. (Ed.). (2009). *Practical solutions for serious problems in standards-based grading*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Marzano, R. J. (2006). *Classroom assessment & grading that work*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Marzano, R. J. (2010). *Formative assessment & standards-based grading: Classroom strategies that work*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.
- Marzano, R. J. (2000). *Transforming classroom grading*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Marzano, R. J., & Haystead, M. W. (2008). *Making standards useful in the classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- O'Connor, Ken. (2010). *A repair kit for grading: 15 fixes for broken grades*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- O'Connor, Ken. (2009). *How to grade for learning: K-12 (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Reeves, D. (2011). *Elements of grading: A guide to effective practice*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Schmoker, Mike. (2011) *Focus: Elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Schmoker, Mike. (1999) *Results: The key to continuous school improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Stiggins, R., Arter, J., Chappuis, J., & Chappuis, S. (2006). *Classroom assessment for student learning: Doing it right-using it well*. Portland, OR: Educational Testing Service.
- Vatterott, Cathy. (2009) Rethinking homework: Best practices that support diverse needs.** Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Wormeli, Rick. (2006) Fair isn't always equal; Assessing & grading in the differentiated classroom.** Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.