

Crook County School District #1 Standards-Based Grading

Parent Guide

Crook
County
School



District #1

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What is standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading measures your child's mastery of the essential standards for a class or how well your child understands the material in class. At the beginning of every unit, the teacher will break down the standards for the unit into smaller learning outcomes and criterion using a detailed rubric. During the unit, your child 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. Your child's level will be based on evidence the teacher collects demonstrating mastery of the essential learning outcomes.

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 show 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 score 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 learning outcomes, which give the teacher, student, and parent a very detailed picture of which standards a student has mastered.

Are non-academic factors, such as effort, attitude, participation, and behavior part of the class proficiency level?

These factors have always been and will continue to be an important part of your child's success. However, in standards-based grading, these factors will be communicated separately from your student's mastery level. Non-academic factors like behavior, engagement, and preparedness will be reported under personal and social development.

Why does Crook County School District use standards-based grading?

The goal of Crook County School District #1 is to report scores that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning. The change to standards-based grading is an effort to reach that goal. The following 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 the 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 standard, 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 term.

Meaningful: A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place. In a standards-based classroom, scores are reported by the essential standards, rather than by type, such as tests

or homework, making it easier to identify areas of strength and to address areas of concern for each student.

Supportive 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 procedure also supports student learning by allowing new levels of learning to replace the old levels when a student shows improvement on an assessment.

What do the scores on the 4.0 scale mean?

The scores on the 4.0 scale each have a very specific meaning. They are:

- **4.0 (*Exceeding Standards*):** A “4” indicates the student is exceeding grade level standards. A student receiving a “4” demonstrates academically superior skills in that specific area. This student shows initiative, challenges him/herself, and demonstrates this advanced knowledge at school by going beyond what was taught. A “4” is difficult to obtain and indicates unusually high achievement.
- **3.0 (*Mastery of Standards*):** A “3” indicates the student has mastered grade level standards. We want all of our students to reach a level “3.” A student receiving a “3” is right on track with our high academic expectations. A “3” is something to be celebrated!
- **2.0 (*Approaching Standards*):** A “2” indicates the student has basic understanding and is approaching grade level standards. A student receiving a “2” understands the basic concept or skill, but has not yet reached the mastery level. A “2” should indicate that the student’s performance varies in consistency with regards to accuracy, quality, and level of support.
- **1.0 (*Not Meeting Standards*):** A “1” indicates the student has minimal understanding and does not meet grade level standards, even with support.

How will my student be assessed?

Your child’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 score in a standards-based class?

The goal in a standards-based class is ensuring that students master the essential standards for the class, so any efforts to raise your child’s mastery level will have the same goal. Students have the opportunity to be reassessed on a standard. If your child demonstrates a higher level of mastery on the assessment, then the mastery level for that standard will be increased. Again, the focus is on improving your child’s mastery of the material, so extra credit points are not used in standards-based grading.

Why should my student do the homework assigned in class if it isn’t included in the score?

Some 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 helps their teacher assess their knowledge and helps prepare the students for the assessments. Just as an NFL team would never expect to win the Super Bowl without hours upon hours of practicing, students need the practice homework provides to help 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 score to a student's work for a term. So, if a student chooses not to do an assignment, or is frequently absent, not only are they missing an opportunity to practice a skill, they may also miss an opportunity to display mastery of a standard to their teacher.

Why doesn't my student have a mastery level yet?

Because standards-based grading focuses on mastery, your child's overall score may not be updated as frequently as it was when every assignment impacted the grade. This shift towards standards-based grading is especially noticeable at the beginning of the term when it may take a few weeks for the teacher to compile enough evidence for your child to be given a score. However, while the overall score may not change as frequently, the teachers are still recording other assignments, such as homework and in-class assignments, that provide important feedback to you and the teacher about what work is being done. Please contact your child's teacher at any time if you have questions about your child's score.

How can I get more information about my student's grade or about standards-based grading?

If you have questions or concerns about your child's score on a standard, or if you would like more information on standards-based grading, please contact your child's teacher for more information.