



Cascade Middle School
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Dear Families,

We are excited to meet your student(s) and see the progress they will make this year. We have encountered many questions related to our standards-based grading and would like to provide a FAQ sheet for you to review.

What is standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading communicates how students are performing on a set of clearly defined learning targets called 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.

How is this less subjective?

One aspect of proficiency-based grading is that it eliminates the element of behavior in assessing students' academic performance. Because the Common Core Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and other content standards are based on skills, teachers focus on these skills in class and create measurable rubrics to assess the skills on a scale of 1-4. Eliminating the aspect of behavior in a student's assessments (i.e., late work, extra credit) offers a clearer picture of the student's actual academic skill.

How does standards-based grading differ from traditional grading?

Unlike with traditional grading systems, a standards-based grading system measures a student's mastery of grade-level standards 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.

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, attitude and attendance are reported separately, not as an indicator of a student's academic performance.

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

A score of (4) would indicate that a student exceeds a standard by consistently demonstrating an advanced level of understanding and/or the ability to apply their knowledge at a higher level.

A score of (3) would indicate that a student has independently achieved the standard. The student demonstrates mastery of the standard.

A score of (2) would indicate that a student is developing an understanding of a standard, but still may need additional instruction and/or support.

A score of (1) would indicate minimal understanding of a standard. The student shows limited evidence of understanding the standard.

- A: 3.4-4.0
- B: 2.70-3.39
- C: 2.00-2.69
- D: 1.60-1.99
- F: 0.00-1.59

How will I know if my child needs help?

Receiving a 1 or 2 on a grade report/report card can be a sign that a student needs extra support in the areas where they are receiving low marks. This is one benefit of a standards-based report card; areas in need of support are clearly evident.

Is it possible to achieve a grade of 4?

Yes, it is. However, a score of (4) indicates performance that is consistently above what is expected for mastery. 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. Students have multiple opportunities to reach a 4.

Where else in the area is standards-based grading being implemented?

It is important to note that our elementary schools have been utilizing this system for several years, so it will not be new to the majority of our families. It is also under study, or already implemented, in a number of school districts in the area, including elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools.

Best Regards,
Stephen DuVal – Principal
Eric Powell – Assistant Principal