

# Standards-Based Grading

## Frequently Asked Questions



— EXCELSIOR SPRINGS —  
**MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
— *Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow* —

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

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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 class 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?**

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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 reported in a different manner.

## **Why is the district changing to standards-based grading?**

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The goal of the Excelsior Springs School District 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 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 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 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 policy also supports student learning by allowing new levels of learning to replace old when a student shows improvement on an assessment.

### What do the scores on the 4.0 scale mean?

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

- **4.0:** The student demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the material by completing advanced applications of the material.
- **3.0:** The student has mastered the complex, targeted knowledge and skills for the class
- **2.0:** The student understands the foundational material that supports the targeted learning, but is still working to master the complex material for the class.
- **1.0:** The student is able to demonstrate an understanding of the foundational material for the class with help from the teacher, but still struggles when working independently.
- **0.0:** Even with assistance from the teacher, the student shows no understanding of the material. A zero will not be given for missing work until the end of the semester.

The intermediate scores of 0.5, 1.5, 2.5, and 3.5 are used to show that a student has shown partial mastery of the next level of learning. In particular, a score of 0.5 shows that a student has mastered some but not all of the foundational 2.0 material, a score of 1.5 shows that a student has mastered all of the foundational material with help but only some of it without help, and a score of 2.5 shows that a student has mastered all of the foundational material at the 2.0 level but has only shown partial mastery of the complex, targeted learning at the 3.0 level.

### What is the grade scale for standards-based grading?

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The 4.0 scale will be converted to a letter grade using the grading scale shown below.

A:	3.75 – 4.00	B-:	2.75 – 2.99	D+:	1.50 – 1.74
A-:	3.50 – 3.74	C+:	2.50 – 2.74	D:	1.25 – 1.49
B+:	3.25 – 3.49	C:	2.00 – 2.49	D-:	1.00 – 1.24
B:	3.00 – 3.24	C-:	1.75 – 1.99	F:	0.00 – 0.99

This conversion scale sets clear expectations for student learning. In order to receive credit for a class, a student must, with help, show an understanding all of the foundational skills taught in a class. The C range shows that the student understands all of the foundational skills without help, and the B range requires a student to master all of the complex, targeted knowledge in the class. Finally, to receive an A- or A, the student must show an in-depth, advanced understanding of the material.

### Which courses are graded Pass/Fail?

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6th graders on the exploratory wheel, ELT, Math Skill Builder, Systems 44, Health, Physical Education, Computers and Applied Technology will be graded Pass/Fail. 6th graders on the exploratory rotation will be scored with rubrics, however they will be converted into a Pass/Fail system. A passing grade is a score above 60% on the traditional scale, or a score of 1 or more on the standards-based scale.

**If the letter grades are the same for traditional and standards-based grading, why do the percentages look different in PowerSchool?**

PowerSchool has certain limitations, and teachers have to work within those limitations. When you check your student’s grades in PowerSchool, you will see your student’s letter grade and a percent for each class. The letter grade is the same for both the traditional and standards-based scale, but due to PowerSchool’s limitations, the percentages will look different. The chart below that shows the alignment between the different scales.

<b>If you see this percent in PowerSchool</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>This is the letter grade</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>This is the traditional grade range</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>This is the standards-based grade range</b>
93.8 - 100		A		95 – 100		3.75 – 4.00
87.5 – 93.7		A-		90 – 94		3.50 – 3.74
81.3 – 87.4		B+		87 – 89		3.25 – 3.49
75.0 – 81.2		B		83 – 86		3.00 – 3.24
68.8 – 74.9		B-		80 – 82		2.75 – 2.99
62.5 – 68.7		C+		77 – 79		2.50 – 2.74
50.0 – 62.4		C		73 – 76		2.00 – 2.49
43.8 – 49.9		C-		70 – 72		1.75 – 1.99
37.5 – 43.7		D+		67 – 69		1.50 – 1.74
31.3 – 37.4		D		63 – 66		1.25 – 1.49
25.0 – 31.2		D-		60 – 62		1.00 – 1.24
0 – 24.9		F		0 – 59		0.00 – 0.99

All assessments will be entered based on the 4-point scale using the rubrics passed out in class. Using this scale is the best way to address the technical limitations of PowerSchool.

**What does “LND” mean?**

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LND stands for “level not determined.” This score is used when there is not enough information to give a student a score for a standard based on the current assessment evidence. This score may be used when a student struggles with an assessment and the teacher needs to follow up to determine if the student can do the work with help, or if the student shows mastery at the 3.0 or 4.0 levels but shows gaps on the 2.0 level. LND’s are temporary scores used while the teacher gathers more evidence to give a score and will not be in the grade book for more than two weeks. An LND does not affect the student’s overall grade.

**What does “NC” mean?**

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NC stands for “not complete.” This score is used by the teacher when the student has not completed the necessary assessments to be given a grade for a standard due to absences or other factors. An NC is calculated as a zero in the student’s grade to show the effect of not completing the assessment, but this score will be replaced by the student’s numerical score once the student completes the necessary assessments. Any NC’s left in a student’s grades at the end of the semester will become zeros.

### **What is the “Average Score for All Standards” in the grade book mean?**

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The Average Score for All Standards is your student’s ongoing grade in the class. This is calculated by averaging your student’s scores on any standards that have been assessed and is continually updated by your student’s teacher. You can see your student’s scores on the individual standards by clicking on the Standards Grades tab at the top of the grade overview page of the PowerSchool Parent Portal.

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

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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?**

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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?**

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

1. 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.
2. 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. Any activities selected by the student or teacher must have evidence that it has been completed.
3. Together, the student and teacher will decide when, where, and how the student will be reassessed in the “Reassessment Information” section.
4. 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.
5. 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 relearning 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 my student do the homework assigned in class if it isn't included in the grade?**

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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.

### **Why doesn't my student have a grade yet?**

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Because standards-based grading focuses on assessments, your student's overall class grade may not be updated as frequently as it was when every assignment impacted the grade. This shift is especially noticeable at the beginning of the semester when it may take a few weeks for the class to complete the first assessment and for your student to be given a grade. However, while the overall grade 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. You can see this additional information by clicking on your student's grade for a class. Please contact your student's teacher at any time if you have questions about your student's grade.

### **Are non-academic factors, such as effort, attitude, participation, and behavior part of the class grade?**

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Effort and conduct ratings are provided to give feedback about non-academic factors in each classroom such as the student's behavior, attitude, participation, and effort. This rating does not impact the academic achievement grade a student earns.

### **If we change school districts, how will my student's grade be transferred if the new district does not use standards-based grading?**

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When a student transfers to a new district, the transfer grade is determined by the student's current letter grade. For example, if the student currently has an average of 3.00 on the standards-based scale, the current letter grade is a B, so the transfer grade is sent as an B/75%. The MS registrar sends the grade scale conversion chart shown above to allow the receiving district to determine the appropriate grade in their grading system. The receiving school is also sent some basic information about standards-based grading to help with the transition.

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

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If you have questions or concerns about your student's grade in a class or if you would like more information on standards-based grading, please contact the teacher of that class for more information.