

Community Consolidated School District 89 Standards Based Grading – Frequently Asked Questions

You might be asking, “Why are we moving to a standards-based grading system?”

The simple answer is: ***We want to improve student achievement for all students in every classroom every day; and research supports standards-based grading as a basis of communication that will help students learn more effectively through better feedback.***

What is standards-based grading (SBG)?

In a standards-based system, teachers report what students know and are able to do in relation to the Common Core and Illinois State Standards. The system includes:

- The improvement of student achievement of required learning outcomes in all content areas,
- The mastery of defined learning outcomes instead of the accumulation of points,
- The reporting of student achievement toward meeting learning outcomes at a given time by analyzing recent trend information based on various forms of evidence,
- A record keeping system that provides teachers with information that allows them to adjust learning practices to meet the needs of students, and
- A system that encourages student reflection and responsibility

What are the purposes of standards-based grading?

The purpose of standards-based grading is to raise student achievement by clearly communicating students’ progress towards learning outcomes in a timely, accurate, fair, and specific manner. SBG accurately communicates student achievement to students, parents, and educators. The influence of work habits on student learning is reported separately from the academics.

Why is CCSD 89 making the change to SBG?

- Improved communication and additional feedback for parents, students and teachers - parents and students will see areas of academic strength and weaknesses in the grade book rather than seeing a test score or homework assignment and wondering what the next steps might be. Teachers will know which standards they need to re-teach. Students will know which standards they need additional learning opportunities and/or practice.
- Supports “assessment *for* learning,” in a traditional grading system, student assessments were often given for the purpose of entering them in the grade book. Assessment for learning means assessments are given for the purpose of identifying future learning opportunities/activities for students.

How does standards-based grading work?

Traditional grading averages a student’s achievement data with other characteristics, such as work habits. SBG removes extraneous factors and focuses solely on a student’s academic achievement and continued mounting evidence that indicates a true assessment of the student’s present attainment of learning. Other characteristics are reported separately.

How is standards-based grading different?

The student’s grade more accurately represents the progress toward proficiency of standards than traditional grading does. Subject areas are subdivided into big ideas related to standards and their respective learning outcomes that students need to learn or master. Each target is assessed. Scores from activities that are provided solely for practice will not be included in the final assessment of the learning outcome. The influence of positive and consistent work habits on student learning is reported separately from the academics.

What are the advantages of standards-based grading?

Learning outcomes are clearly articulated to the students throughout instruction. Parents and students can see which learning outcomes students have mastered and which ones need re-teaching or re-learning. SBG can change the complexion of at-home conversations between the student and the parent/guardian from, “Why didn’t you finish your work?” “Did you make up that quiz you missed?” and “Have you finished your project?” to “Tell me your understanding of this standard,” “How does your teacher connect your in-class work to the unit’s objectives?” or “What more do you need to do to achieve this benchmark?” Some students struggle at the beginning of units, fail assessments and give up; with SBG, the door remains open to achieving standards.

What are the disadvantages of standards-based grading?

Of all aspects of our education system, none seems more impervious to change than grading and reporting. Changing long-held traditions is a difficult and lengthy process.

What will a standards-based report card look like at the elementary level?

At the elementary level, parents will receive a report card very similar to the existing standards-based report card. The differences will include; the standards will be reflective of the Common Core State Standards and the measure will be, Exceeds (E), Meets (M), Progressing (P), Below (B), instead of the current – Above Grade Level (+), At Grade Level (✓), Below Grad Level (Δ). Parents will also receive information related to *Behaviors that Promote Learning*. These include things like: participates in class discussions, completes homework, follow directions, etc.

What will a standards-based report card look like at the middle school?

At the middle school, parents will receive a report card with both traditional letter grades and progress on specific standards. Students will continue to receive a letter grade (A, B, C, D, F) for the subject, but teachers will also communicate progress towards specific standards within the subject. The report card will look similar to the image below.

<u>Class</u>	<u>Grade</u>
7 th Grade Math	B+
Understands Ratios and Proportional Relationships	M (Meets)
Understands the number system	E (Exceeds)
Understands expressions and equations	M (Meets)
Understands Geometry	P (Progressing)
Understands Statistics and Probability	M (Meets)

Will students have to be “perfect” to get an Exceeds?

No, students do not have to be perfect. In order to receive an exceeds, a student would have to show learning that goes above and beyond the criteria for the learning target. It would reflect in depth understanding of content and/or excellence in demonstration or communication of knowledge, process or skills. Realistically, a small percentage of students will regularly score exceeds on summative assessments the first time.

How are we going to teach our kids that in the real world or on tests such as ACT, SAT, etc., that they must do their best the first time or on a continuous basis?

Our goal is student learning. We all know students learn at different rates, and students have issues that may affect their testing ability on a given day. Many real life final tests such as driver's license, ACT, SAT, bar exam, MCATS, Olympics, etc. offer multiple opportunities for mastery with no penalty for number of attempts. There are still deadlines within units and some of the practice work is time bound. There are indeed cut off times for assignments per teacher discretion when late work will simply not be accepted because the unit is over.

How are students with learning disabilities or English language learning needs affected by standards-based grading?

Students with an IEP, 504, or English Language Learning needs will continue to receive the accommodations they are eligible to receive and they will continue to receive appropriate support and/or interventions. Teachers will report how they are performing as measured against content standards, when those standards are not aligned with the grade level they are assigned, parents will be notified that the student proficiency report is for a standard other than that of the assigned grade. All students benefit from having well-developed lesson plans, quality instruction, and assessment that informs instruction and provides meaningful, accurate feedback regarding their learning.

What is the timeline for implementation in CCSD 89?

CCSD 89 has been working with teachers and parents for several years to prepare for the full transition to a Standards-Based Grading system. During the 2013-2014 school year, teachers will consistently use the language of standards based grading. Additionally, buildings will employ consistent practices as it relates to re-teaching and expectations for meeting standards. The elementary report cards will reflect the Common Core Standards in order to accurately reflect the learning taking place in class. The middle school report will not change for the 2013-2014 school year.

During the 2014-2015 school year, both the elementary and middle schools will have an electronic report card with standards. The middle school will still report a letter grade, but will also report progress on standards. We will continue to provide opportunities for parent education throughout both years.

How can I learn more about Standards-Based Grading?

We welcome feedback and questions from parents. Please feel free to contact your child's teacher or building principal for further information on SBG. You can also visit www.CCSD89.org and go to Curriculum and Instruction for research, videos and other valuable information.