Standards-Based Grading FAQ

Why are we changing to a standards-based grading system?

We are changing because we want to improve achievement for all students. Research shows that standards-based grading helps students learn more effectively through improved feedback.

What is standards-based grading?

In a standards-based grading system, teachers report what students know and are able to do in relation to district-adopted standards.

What benefits does standards-based grading offer?

Standards-based grading offers many benefits, including the following:

- Improved student achievement towards learning the essential outcomes in all of the content areas
- Focus is on the mastery of these essential learning outcomes instead of the accumulation of points toward a grade on a report card
- Better communicates student achievement more precisely to both students and parents.
- Provides teachers with data/evidence that helps them adjust instructional practices to better meet the needs of students, and
- Encourages students to reflect on and take responsibility for their own learning

What are the purposes of standards-based grading?

The purpose of standards-based grading are:

- to improve student learning
- to provide clear communication to students and parents regarding student progress toward learning outcomes in a way that is accurate, fair, specific and timely
- to provide information to students and parents regarding work habits and behavior separate from the information provided about academic skills

How does standards-based grading work?

Traditional grading takes student achievement data over a period of time and averages that data with other data, such as work habits. Standards-based grading focuses only on student attainment of learning outcomes giving greater weight to the most recent evidence of learning. Other factors are reported out separately. Subject areas are subdivided into essential learning outcomes that students are expected to master. Each of the outcomes is assessed separately. Scores from practice activities are not included in the final assessment of the learning outcome.
What are the disadvantages of standards-based grading?

As with changing any long-held tradition, it is a difficult and lengthy process to change a system of grading...but worth it, in terms of improved student learning.

What is our grading scale for standards-based grading?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeding standard</td>
<td>Meeting standard</td>
<td>Developing toward standard</td>
<td>Beginning to understand/apply standard</td>
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- Student consistently exceeds standard
- Student demonstrates a deeper understanding of the standard as evidenced by higher levels of thinking and application
- Student consistently meets the standard
- Student understands and applies the standard as evidenced by demonstrating the thinking and application of the standard
- Student demonstrates a basic understanding of the standard with gaps and errors in learning
- Student evidence of learning is inconsistent and/or incomplete
- Student demonstrates unclear or minimal understanding of the standard
- Evidence of learning is insignificant

Teachers will use more specific rubrics based upon the above scale that will be aligned with their subject matter.

Possible Grading Scale: Assignment scores are converted to a 4 point scale to show mastery of the concepts (We will move towards this as we implement) Concept scores are averaged into a final grade.

3.34-3.66 - A-  2.66 - 2.9 - B-  1.66 - 1.9 - C-
What about students who have an IEP? How will their progress be represented through standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading is equally as applicable for students with disabilities as it is for students without disabilities. IEP teams determine what, if any, adaptations are necessary for students to master grade-level expectations. Some students have accommodations written into their IEPs that provide them with additional support to ensure that they are progressing towards meeting grade-level standards. These students will be instructed with these accommodations and then graded using the same grade level standards-based grading rubrics as students without disabilities. Other students may have modified grade-level expectations (learning outcomes) written into their IEP. A student who has modified grade-level expectations as part of the IEP will be graded against modified grading rubrics. Report cards and progress reports will indicate that if this is the case.

What about students who are English Language Learners? How will their progress be represented through standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading principles are just as valid for students who are learning English as they are for students who are native English speakers. Depending upon the needs of the student, English Language Learners may have modified grade-level expectations for oral language and/or communication standards within any subject area. These modifications will be adjusted as the student progresses in the development of English language skills.

How will I know what progress my student is making and if he or she is on track to meeting the standard?

Parents should begin by talking with their child’s teacher to help better understand what assessments, assignments, and/or work products are most important for their child’s grade and look on the teachers CANVAS page. CANVAS, will have, via the parent portal, assessments, assignments, and/or work products shown in the online gradebook. Parents should focus on trends in these scores. Students should be progressing toward (4’s or 3’s) by the end of the quarter. Teachers will use assessments, assignments, and student work products as evidence for the final grade at the end of the quarter. The scores on each concept will be averaged together to determine a final grade for the quarter.

What about homework? Does it count? How will students understand the importance of homework if it isn’t part of the final grade?

The purpose of homework is practice. Practice is important, but homework will only impact the final scores within the standards-based grading system to a small percent. (Eventually, in standards based grading it is just practice and the assessments are the grade.) Here is a comparison to learning to drive. If a student is learning to drive on a learner’s permit, they are practicing the skill of driving. After practicing for a length of time, the student would then need to pass the driver’s exam in order to get a Utah Driver’s License. Only the driver’s exam counts for whether they pass or not - the practice is not considered. When the student finally earns the driver’s license (similar to reaching a learning outcome), their license does not reflect all of the mistakes they made during practice. It only reflects that they have attained the standard of driving skills that our state expects from those to which we give a driver’s license (i.e., the student does not get a D- on their driver’s license if they made a lot of mistakes while learning to drive).
If students get several chances to show that they have mastered a learning outcome, how will this teach students that “in the real world” they must do their best the first time?

The ultimate goal for students at Kearns Jr. is student learning. That is also the purpose of standards-based grading. Standards-based grading provides teachers, students, and parents with information as to how a student is doing on specific learning outcomes. From this information, teachers, students and parents can make decisions that will improve student learning on specific learning goals. Students learn at different rates and may have a poor assessment performance on any given day for a variety of reasons. As such, students are given multiple opportunities to show mastery. In truth, this is almost always how things work in the real world. People are given multiple opportunities to show their skills on:

- driver’s license exams
- ACT
- GRE
- even employee evaluations in the business world
- etc.

Think about it, for the most part when employees are evaluated at work, they are not evaluated on how they did on one performance. They are instead evaluated based upon where they are at the present time in regards to company expectations. It is not “one and done”, but instead an evaluation based upon multiple observations and job performance over time with their most recent performance given the most weight.

**How will student progress be measured?**

The District Standards were synthesized into major learning outcomes to summarize growth on the report card. This will provide students, parents and teachers with more clear, concise and precise information regarding student progress. Teachers will collect evidence of student mastery through observations, class work, projects, test data, etc. Then, the teacher will evaluate the overall progress toward the learning goal using the scale mentioned above:

- Beginning
- Developing
- Meeting
- Exceeding

**Will standards be grade-leveled?**

For example, when a student takes a social studies class in 7th grade, the standards that he or she will be measured against are at the 7th grade ability level.

**How will Standards-Based Grading affect the placement of 8th grade students as they enter into high school?**
As always, the Kearns Jr High School teachers and guidance staff will meet regularly and work closely with Kearns High staff to ensure that our students are placed appropriately. Placement will be based on many factors including the following:

- student mastery of learning outcomes as demonstrated on standards-based report card
- teacher recommendations
- informal assessment data
- formal assessment of academic skills and knowledge (e.g. state assessments, SRI Assessments, etc.)
- any other relevant information