What is standard-based grading?

In a standards-based system, teachers report what students know and are able to do relative to the Common Core, Iowa Core and District Standards and Benchmarks or Learning Targets. The system includes:

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

What are the purposes of standards-based grading?

- Align grading with the state academic standards as measured by consistent and accurate student achievement data and common criteria for grading
- Ability to accurately communicate achievement of learning targets to students, parents and educators
- Clearly articulate and communicate student strengths and areas of growth to students and parents

Ultimately, West Branch Community School District's purpose for standards-based grading is to raise student achievement by clearly communicating students' progress toward learning targets.

How does standards-based grading work?

Traditional grading averages work that a student has done over a semester with other student characteristics, such as work habits. Competency-based grading removes extraneous factors and focuses solely on a student's academic achievement and continued mounting evidence that indicates a true assessment of the child's present attainment of the learning targets.

How is standards-based grading different?

- **The student's grade more accurately represents the progress toward mastery of competencies or standards than traditional grading does.**
- **Subject areas are subdivided into big ideas related to standards and their respective learning targets that students need to learn or master.**
- **Each target is assessed multiple times and there is opportunity for reassessment**
- **The influence of positive and consistent work habits on student learning is reported separately from the academics**
- **Traditional grades may reflect the percentage of items that a student got correct and are sometimes influenced by non-academic issues.**

See the table on the next page for a more detailed comparison.

What does standards-based grading look like?

Traditional Grading System	Standards-Based Grading System
1. Based on assessment methods (quizzes, tests, homework, projects, etc.). One grade/entry is given per assessment. 2. Assessments are based on a percentage system. Criteria for success may be unclear. 3. Use an uncertain mix of assessment, achievement, effort and behavior to determine the final grade. May use late penalties and extra credit. 4. Everything goes in the grade book - regardless of purpose. 5. Include every score, regardless of when it was collected. Assessments record the average - not the best - work.	1. Based on learning goals and performance standards. One grade/entry is given per learning goal. 2. Standards are criterion or proficiency-based. Criteria and targets are made available to students ahead of time. 3. Measures achievement only OR separates achievement from effort/behavior. No penalties or extra credit given. 4. Selected assessments (tests, quizzes, projects, etc.) are used for grading purposes. 5. Emphasize the most recent evidence of learning when grading.

Adapted from O'Connor K (2002). *How to Grade for Learning: Linking grades to standards (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.*

What are the advantages of standards-based grading?

- **The learning targets are clearly articulated to the students throughout instruction.**
- **Parents can see which learning targets students have mastered and which ones need reteaching and relearning.**
- **Students have multiple opportunities to assess the learning targets**

What are the disadvantages of standards-based grading?

- **It's a change, and change takes time to build understanding for everyone involved.**
- **Traditional grading practices are ingrained in the community. Community members will have to go through the change process along with the other stakeholders.**

What is the role of homework in SBG?

The purposes for assigning homework include the following:

- · **Preview - To prepare students to learn new material.**
- · **Practice – To help students master learning targets.**
- · **Evidence – To provide evidence of a student's progress toward a learning target.**

  Homework is critical to learning and students are required to do the homework on time in order to have the opportunity to reassess.

- · **Extension – To provide opportunities for extension and application of skills taught in the class to new situations.**
- · **Integration – To provide opportunities to apply many different skills to a larger task. Examples of this type can be projects, creative writing, and I-Search papers.**

How does a standards-based report card improve teaching and learning?

Knowing where the students are in their progress toward meeting standards-based learning targets is crucial for planning and carrying out classroom instruction. Teachers teach to the needs of their students. The new grading system is designed to give teachers more information about the student's progress in meeting the level of proficiency required

by each standard. In addition, teachers share the standards with students and parents, helping them to better understand the learning that needs to take place.

However, at this point, the high school report card looks very similar to the traditional report card with a single letter grade for each course representing a student's performance on all of the learning targets.   A new addition on the report card is a separate grade for "learning/ employability skills."   This grade helps parents hold students accountable for their responsibility in the learning process.

Does this mean the district is eliminating letter grades?
No, the intent is to provide more feedback for parents and students through letter grades. The intent is also to create more equity and validity in letter grades. This does not include eliminating letter grades at this time.

How does this impact students?
Students are required to take more ownership of their learning. They can look in the grade book and see areas where they are doing well and areas they need to improve. The course's "big ideas" are no longer hidden behind the name of a project, worksheet or test.
Students who understand concepts and skills without needed additional practice are allowed opportunities to extend their knowledge. Similarly, students who need additional time, practice and/or instruction are not penalized by the averaging of assignment scores over time.

How might this impact parents?
Currently, parents may log on to PowerSchool and see an assignment or assessment score such as 10/12. This does not necessarily tell parents the specific concepts, skills or ideas his or her child is doing well in or needs to improve. In standards-based grading, parents will be able to see specific competencies/standards a student has demonstrated a thorough understanding and well as standards a student has not yet learned at a high level. At any given time, parents will be able to read the big ideas students are studying as well as their student's current level of understanding. Teachers will be using Active Gradebook to assess the standards and that will be where parents will log in to see this progress.

How will this affect the distribution of grades?
In a standards-based system, students study and learn because they know their current levels of understanding. In an assessments-based system, students study and complete assignments, because they're told to do so. A standards-based system has the potential to motivate students to learn at high levels. We do not anticipate seeing any long-term changes in GPA, however we do believe quarter and semester grades in a standards-based system will be a better reflection of student learning.

How does the conversation change between students and teachers when using a standards-based grading approach?

TRADITIONAL SYSTEM:

Student: How do I raise my grade?

Teacher: You have several options: Your first option is to complete the extra credit which will be will be assigned next week. Your second option is to do well on the next test. Your third option is to turn in the assignment you was due last week, but only for partial credit.

STANDARDS-BASED SYSTEM:

Student: How do I raise my grade?

Teacher: Your grade reflects your current level of understanding. In order to raise your grade, you need to demonstrate a higher level of understanding on future assessments. You may also learn more about current standards in the grade book and re-assess in these areas. New levels of understanding will replace old levels of understanding in the grade book.

Where can I read more about changes in grading practices?

Earl, L. M. (2003). *Assessment as Learning: Using Classroom Assessment to Maximize Student Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2007). *Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for your Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Guskey, T. R., & Bailey, J. M. (2001). *Developing Grading and Reporting Systems for Student Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Marzano, R. J. (2006). *Classroom Assessment & Grading that Work*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Marzano, R. J. (2010). *Formative Assessment & Standards-Based Grading*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.

O'Connor, K. (2009). *How to Grade for Learning, K-12* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

Wormeli, R. (2006). *Fair Isn't Always Equal*. Portland: Stenhouse.

Who do I contact if I have questions about this change?
- Any secondary teacher or administrator