

Standards-Based Grading FAQ

Why do you use SBG?

SBG is a great way to hold teachers accountable for teaching the standards and students accountable for mastering the standards. It's also a fabulous method for measuring student growth throughout the course of the year. This system also takes the emphasis off of the "big picture" of grades, and places the focus, instead, on specific skills and content.

I don't understand how the percentages work. Help!

Because the scale makes most assignments worth 4 points or less, the percentages WILL look different than you're used to. Think of it like converting currency from the Dollar to the Euro. Percentages have to be adjusted on IC to account for a 4-point scale. The easiest thing to do is to look for "3" and "4" scores on assignments to see that your student is meeting or exceeding the expectations for that assignment. When you see consistent scores of "2" or "1" that means your student is performing below expectations on class work.

Are you the only teacher/team using it?

There are approximately 12 teachers using it in the building. A full team at 7th grade (Burgundy) and 8th Grade (8 Silver AAA), Mr. Loomis in 6th grade Maroon, Mr. Thurston and Mrs. Oldfield on 8 Maroon, and most teachers in the building use common 4-point rubrics for writing assignments that are Standards-Based in philosophy.

Does your policy of late work or re-takes teach bad habits for later in life?

This philosophy is designed to help students be more successful. We feel it's more important to honor a student who shows what they know, rather than how compliant they are. Our responsibility is to ensure students know and understand the content outlined by the state and national standards, not to teach responsibility. In the real world, re-takes are a built in to many parts of our society. A person can re-take a driver's test five times, and their driver's license doesn't look different or restrict them from driving on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It doesn't matter how many times someone fails the Bar Exam; when they pass, they are allowed to practice law.

Is there research to support why this system works better than others?

Bob Marzano and Thomas Guskey have done extensive research on different methods of assessment to help student learning. They are leading names in educational research and support the implementation of this philosophy. Let me know if you would like to read over any of the scholarly articles we have used to frame our system.

I'm worried my kid's grades are taking a hit because of SBG.

All classroom expectations for assignments are clearly outlined using rubrics, modeling, student samples, and more. If students want to ensure good grades, they should consult the requirements laid out for them. If a student is dissatisfied with his or her grade, he or she can ask the teacher how to demonstrate better knowledge of the content (or, better yet, approach the teacher with his or her own suggestion!). With this system, students will be more strongly assessed on their knowledge of content than they will on "fluff" grades like participation or completion; if your student relies on these types of grades to stay afloat, then, yes, his or her grade may dip.

I'm worried that this process inflates grades for kids.

This system was created to alleviate inflated grades by taking out compliance factors. Instead, it focuses on skills acquired and content mastered.

When my kid gets to the high school, is this going to help?

A lot of the skills being taught to students will help them be great advocates for themselves. First, they will be better users of rubrics, which define how they earn their grade. Next, they are better equipped to work with their teachers to advocate for themselves and their learning. By taking the emphasis off compliance factors and focusing just on the skills and content, students should know exactly what they need to learn and demonstrate to meet expectations.

I'm worried that SBG will not look good on a transcript.

Standards based grading is widely accepted at all major universities. We have actually contacted universities in the area such as UCCS and Colorado College, and all expressed that they would happily accept a student's transcripts with standards based grading.

My student really wants an "A" in your class. What can he/she do?

It's great that your child has high expectations for classwork, and we want to support this, too. "A" level work means that the student is consistently exceeding expectations on assigned work. Take a look at rubrics for assigned work, and see what is defined in the "4" column. In addition to re-take opportunities for students falling below expectations, some teachers offer retake/revision opportunities on assessments when students want to make those additional adjustments. Most teachers also display examples of great "A" level work in their classrooms. These can be great teaching tools for students to see what good work looks like.

My student really wants to earn a Gold Medal at the end of the year. Is it going to be more difficult with SBG?

Students can still earn a gold medal at the end of the year; they would need to make sure they are doing what it takes to earn a 4 on assignments. They would stay in contact with teachers and make sure they are showing that they are exceeding standards. Comparing a standards-based team to non-standards based teams in the past, there have been an equal number of students who earn medals on all teams.

How do the numbers 1-4 work when I'm looking at grades on IC?

4 exceeds grade-level expectations for a particular skill; 3 meets expectations; 2 approaches expectations, and a 1 does not meet expectations.