

Standards-Based Learning

Frequently Asked Questions



— EXCELSIOR SPRINGS —
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What is standards-based learning?

Standards-based learning focuses a student's learning on the essential standards for a class, or how well the student understands the key 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 a student's 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 conversation about how the student can master the material for the class. In particular, because learning is a process that takes place over time, the teacher will provide feedback for the student about what to focus on next, and the student will be allowed to show improved learning over time by being reassessed. If the new evidence shows a higher level of mastery, that new score replaces the old one.

How is standards-based learning different from traditional grading?

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 learning looks at how well a student has mastered the essential standards, so the grade book does not separate out tests, homework, or projects. Instead, 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 each student's learning. Non-academic factors like behavior, attitude, and attendance are not included in this grade and reported in a different manner.

Why is the district using standards-based learning?

The goal of the Excelsior Springs School District to improve student learning by reporting grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning, and the change to standards-based learning is an effort to reach that goal. Here is how standards-based learning 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: This approach 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 is a standards-based rubric?

A standards-based rubric gives a clear list of the learning that your student need to master for each essential standard in a class. These rubrics are written in student-friendly language and are an important tool to help direct and drive your student’s learning. A sample SBL rubric from Algebra I is shown below.

4.0 – In-depth Applications	I know I can because:
<p>I have an in-depth understanding of the expected knowledge and skills and can show my expertise by using it to problem solve and think critically, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Solve real-life problems that can be modeled using a polynomial function; <input type="checkbox"/> Solve a polynomial function by factoring; and <input type="checkbox"/> When given a set of ordered pairs, write the quadratic equation that is modeled by the set 	
3.0 – Expected Knowledge and Skills	
<p>I can...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Multiply polynomials; <input type="checkbox"/> Solve quadratic equations by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Graphing; <input type="checkbox"/> Factoring; and <input type="checkbox"/> Using the quadratic formula 	
2.0 – Foundational Knowledge and Skills	
<p>I can...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Add and subtract polynomials; <input type="checkbox"/> Apply properties of exponents; <input type="checkbox"/> Fill in an x-y table when given a polynomial function; <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the zeros when given a graph of a polynomial function; <input type="checkbox"/> Solve a polynomial equation when given the factored form the equation; and <input type="checkbox"/> When given the discriminant of a quadratic equation, interpret the number and type of solutions 	

This rubric format is used in every standards-based class throughout the high school.

What do the scores on the 4.0 scale mean?

At the start of the 2014-2015 school year, the Standards-Based Learning Scale was introduced to clarify what each of the score points on the 4.0 scale means. The SBL Learning Scale is:

- 4.0** I have an in-depth understanding of the expected knowledge and skills and can show my expertise by using it to problem solve and think critically.
- 3.5** I know all of the expected knowledge and skills for the topic and have some success applying them.

3.0 I know all of the expected knowledge and skills for the topic.

2.5 I know all of the foundational and some of the expected knowledge and skills.

2.0 I know all of the foundational knowledge and skills on my own.

1.5 I know all of the foundational knowledge and skills, but I still need support for some of it.

1.0 I know all of the foundational knowledge and skills, but I need support for all of it.

0.5 Even with support, I don't know all of the foundational knowledge and skills.

0.0 I hardly know any of the foundational knowledge and skills.

Each level of the SBL Learning Scale provides a clear description of the learning that must take place as a student's mastery of a standard grows.

What is the grade scale for standards-based learning?

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 support, 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.

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

PowerSchool has certain limitations, and teachers have to work within those limitations. When checking a student's grades in PowerSchool, you will see the 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.

If you see this percent in PowerSchool	=	This is the letter grade	=	This is the traditional grade range	=	This is the standards-based grade range
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?

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 support, 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?

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 actual 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?

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

Why does my student have a passing percentage grade but a failing letter grade?

All standards-based classes require a student to be assessed on at least 80% of their essential standards that have been covered at that point in the class. If a student does not meet this requirement at any time, the student’s letter grade will drop to failing until they have been assessed on the missing standards.

If you see this situation in your student’s grade, please be proactive by working with your student and their teacher to get your student assessed on the necessary standards as soon as possible.

NOTE: If the student has not met the 80% requirement at the end of the semester, the student will fail the class regardless of their performance on the other standards.

How will my student be assessed?

A student's learn is assessed using a variety of formative and summative assessments. These tools 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?

The goal in a standards-based class is on ensuring that students master the essential standards for the class, so any efforts to raise a student's grade will have the same goal. The 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 the student demonstrates a higher level of mastery on the assessment, then the grade for that standard will be increased and that student's grade will increase. Again, the focus is on improving the 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?

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 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 activity 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 a 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 are there reassessment deadlines, and what are the dates?

We believe that learning is a process that takes place over time and at different rates for different students. At the same time, all your student's classes are constantly moving on to new material. To balance these two issues, we have implemented reassessment deadlines to give your student plenty of time to reassess while also encouraging your student to continue mastering new material. The reassessment deadlines for the first and third quarters are one month after the end of the quarter, and the deadline for the second and fourth quarters are one week before the end of the semester. The exact dates will shift slightly due to weekends and holidays, so please be sure to check with your student's teachers for the exact dates. For the 2014-2015 school year, the reassessment deadlines are:

- 1st quarter: November 14th
- 2nd quarter: December 12th
- 3rd quarter: April 10th
- 4th quarter: May 12th (or five days before the last day of school, depending on snow days)

Why should my student do the homework assigned in class if it isn't included in the grade?

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 practice, 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?

Because standards-based learning focuses on the learning a student demonstrates, the 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 teacher to collect enough evidence to determine each student's level of mastery and give an overall grade. However, while the overall grade may not change as frequently, the teacher is still recording other assignments, such as homework and in-class assignments, that provide important feedback about what work is being done. This additional information is available in PowerSchool Parent Portal by clicking on a 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?

These factors have always been and will continue to be an important part of every student's success. However, in standards-based learning, these factors will be communicated separately from the student's academic grade.

How will standards-based learning affect my student's GPA and transcript?

Standards-based learning reports an overall letter grade for each course, so it does not have any impact on a student's grade point average or transcript.

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

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 ESHS registrar sends the grade scale conversion chart shown earlier 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 learning to help with the transition.

What classes are currently using standards-based learning?

The majority of classes at Excelsior Springs High School are standards-based. If you are unsure whether or not a specific class is standards-based, please contact the teacher of that class.

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

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