

# Eminence Independent Middle/High School Standards Based Grading

**At Eminence Independent MS/HS**, our goal is for student grades to be accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of each student's learning, and standards-based grading is an effort to reach that goal.

Here is how standards-based grading addresses each of these four criteria:

**Accurate:** By basing a student's grade on assessments, 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 are communicated separately.

**Consistent:** For each unit, the teacher will provide the standards and targets the student will need to master. Using these rubrics establishes clear expectations for mastery up front and applies them consistently throughout the unit.

**Meaningful:** A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place. In a standards-based classroom, scores are recorded by the learning targets rather than by categories, such as test or homework, making it easier to identify areas of strength and address areas of concern for each student.

**Supportive of Learning:** Standards-based grading 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 retesting policy also supports student learning by allowing new levels of learning to replace old.

Standards-based grading is a process that is designed to give students more direct descriptive feedback about specific learning targets. In a standards-based system, teachers report what students know and are able to do relative to the standards (College & Career Readiness, Common Core, Core Content for Assessment 4.1 or Quality Core). The system includes:

- The improvement of student achievement of standards in each content area,
- The mastery of defined learning targets instead of the accumulation of points,
- The reporting of students 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, and
- A system that encourages student reflection and responsibility

Standards-based grading helps students know the specific learning targets they are expected to demonstrate mastery on and where they are progress towards mastery. Students are given precise information relative to performance and any areas that need improvement.

The two main purposes of standards-based grading are improved accountability for student achievement and improved learning.

1. **Improved Accountability:** Teachers and students develop a shared understanding of standards, grading loses its obscurity and gains a direct relationship to learning. By communicating this understanding throughout the entire school community, the system of standards-based grading becomes transparent and fair, a force for accountability.
2. **Improved Learning:** Standards-based grading improves teaching and learning through improved feedback to teachers and students and a new approach to student motivation. Teachers use knowledge of how students are doing with respect to the standards to plan further instruction. Students likewise use feedback to adjust their strategies and improve their work.

The points below outline standards-based grading at Eminence MS/HS:

1. For each unit of study students will receive a list of learning targets that are written in student-friendly language. These targets are taken directly from the standards (College & Career Readiness, Common Core, Core Content for Assessment 4.1 or Quality Core) and specify what students have to know, be able to do, and demonstrate mastery in. Classroom activities/lessons will focus on these learning targets. Students will be assessed throughout the unit to monitor progress on these targets. This data will be used to not only monitor progress but to plan next steps for both the student and teacher.
2. At the end of each unit of study students will be assessed on their mastery of the learning targets. Assessments will be planned out so that each learning target is assessed an appropriate amount of times and using appropriate methods. Students performance on each assessment will be based on the performance levels defined below.
3. After receiving feedback on their performance, students will have the opportunity to re-test on those targets/standards where mastery was not demonstrated. An appropriate amount of time must be given for instruction and practice before the second assessment will be given. The second opportunity will allow students to show if there has been any improvement in their mastery of individual learning targets. Only those targets where students were unsuccessful at demonstrating mastery will be assessed again. If mastery or improvement is demonstrated the grade will be adjusted. If students again are unsuccessful at demonstrating mastery the grade will remain the same. There is no penalty for taking longer to demonstrate mastery of a learning target.
4. Any student who still does not demonstrate mastery on any specific standard/target can request additional help from the teacher.

This grading process allows students the chance to take ownership of their grades. They have the ability to know what they need to improve on and how to improve it.

**To ensure the success of all students, the teacher, student, and parent have the following responsibilities:**

**Teacher Responsibilities** – *Each teacher will...*

- Provide standards and targets to students describing the learning the students will need to master.
- Design formative and summative assessments that meet the learning objectives.

- Provide meaningful feedback to students and parents so that progress can be monitored.
- Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways.
- Provide additional support for students as needed.

**Student Responsibilities:** - *Each student will. . .*

- Take responsibility for the learning that takes place.
- Ask for additional help in areas of difficulty.
- Complete course work in a timely manner.
- Use formative assessments as a meaningful opportunity to practice.
- Actively monitor progress towards meeting learning objectives.
- Retake assessments to improve mastery to reflect new learning.
- Arrange for time before or after school or during ESS (or EXCEL week) to receive additional help and to redo assessments.

**Parent Responsibilities:** - *Each parent will. . .*

- Monitor student progress on the learning targets.
- Provide support for learning at home.
- Communicate concerns with the student and teacher.
- Require student to arrange a time before school, after school, or during ESS (or EXCEL week) to receive additional help and to redo assessments.

**Performance levels based on evidence provided by students:**

**Exceeds (4)** – The student consistently exceeds the content standard. The student clearly and consistently grasps, applies and extends key concepts, processes, and skills for that standard.

**Meets (3)** – The student regularly meets the content standard. With limited errors, the student grasps and applies key concepts, processes, and skills for that standard.

**Working (2)** – The student is working to and occasionally does meet the content standard. The student is beginning to grasp and apply key concepts, processes, and skills for that standard but produces work that contains many errors and deficiencies.

**Attempting (1)** – The student attempts to meet the standard, but demonstrates minimal knowledge of the standard.

**No Evidence (0)** – The student has not completed the necessary assessments/assignments to check for mastery of the standard/target or the work shows no knowledge of the standard.

**Role of homework in standards-based grading**

The purposes for assigning homework include the following:

- To help students master learning targets.
- To prepare students to learn new material.
- To provide extension and application of skills taught in the class to new situations.
- To integrate and apply many different skills to a larger task. Examples of this type can be projects, creative writing, and I-Search papers.

Homework scores are not usually included in the assessments of the standards, unless the assignment is designed to show mastery. The student's grade will indicate how well he/she has mastered the content, not whether he/she completes assignments. Effort will be reflected separately from the academic grade.

The student's grade more accurately represents the progress towards mastery of standards than traditional grading does. Standards are deconstructed into learning targets 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 target. The influence of positive and consistent work habits on student learning is reported separately from the academics.

### **Non-Academic/Process Reporting**

In standards-based grading, academic achievement is separated from behavior, effort, and progress. Students' achievement is evaluated with respect to a grade-level/content area standard. Instead of a single grade for a course, teachers report on multiple standards to give a more accurate picture of what students know and are able to do. Teachers and students focus on meeting those standards.

Work habits and behavior are separate with standards-based grading. The only thing that the grade reflects is a student's achievement based on the standards and learning targets. There are some cases with standards-based grading when a student's work habits and behavior prevent the student from turning in class work and homework assignments. In these cases, teachers do not have evidence to determine if the student meets or does not meet the standard. Without evidence that the student can do the work on his /her own, the student will score a zero. In standards-based grading, it is imperative that teachers and parents work to encourage and motivate each student to complete his/her work.

## **Resource**

*Guskey, T.R. (2006). Making high school grades meaningful. Phi Delta Kappan, 87(9), 670-675.*

*Marzano, R.J. (2009). Formative assessment and standards-based grading: Classroom strategies that work(pp. 15-19 and 105-123). Indianapolis, IN: Solution Tree Press.*

*O'Conner, K. (2009, January). Reforming grading practices in secondary schools. Principal's Research Review, 2(1), Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.*

*Reeves, D.B. (2004, December). The case against the zero. Phi Delta Kappan, 86(4), 324-325.*

*Scriffiny, P.L. (2008, October). Seven reasons for standards-based grading. Educational Leadership, 66(2), 70-74.*