

Memorandum

To: Kevin Emsweller

From: Melissa Kikta - Tipton Middle School Principal

Date: 3/3/2020

Subject: Standards Based Grading Description

Please see the description below on the implementation of Standards Based Grading in the Middle School.

Standards Based Grading

Definition

Standards-based grading (SBG) is an intentional way for teachers to track their students' progress and achievements while focusing on helping students learn and reach their highest potential. It is based on students showing signs of mastery or understanding various lessons and skills. ... Standards-based grading is a way to view student progress based on proficiency levels for identified standards rather than relying on a holistic representation as the sole measure of achievement—or what Marzano and Heflebower called an “omnibus grade.”

When a teacher uses SBG practices, they clearly state to the students the goals (standards) for their class. After normal instruction, the teacher assesses the students in how well the students meet these goals. Students receive feedback directed towards the goals they were trying to achieve. Students use this feedback to focus their learning and relearning efforts on goals they are currently learning and ones they have not met.

Benefits

There are many benefits to standards-based instruction, feedback, and grading. In initially setting the goals of the course, the teacher is reviewing the state standards for the course and rewording or combining them into student-friendly terms. This allows the teacher to have a clear understanding of how state standards, curriculum, instructional methods, and assessments align to ensure students are receiving the proper instruction.

Through the establishment of goal-centered instruction, teachers are able to have a clearer picture of where their students are academically. Standards are assessed on a rubric style mastery system. Teachers are tracking student achievement on ten to fifteen course goals. This drastically reduces the amount of interpretation teachers are required to do when looking at student achievement. Figures 1 and 2 below show the difference between the grade book styles for the first four assessments. In Figure 1, a points based gradebook is presented. A score was recorded for each of the assessments, which is calculated into a percentage and letter grade. In Figure 2, a standards based gradebook is presented. The same four assessments are presented; however, a student's ability to master the goals are represented in a four point scale. As indicated, a teacher can clearly see the components of the course that the student needs to work on, standard 3 Narratives, and the ones they have mastered, standards 1 Argument and 2 Informative. The teacher can see that this student should focus on learning the content of Narratives and can relax on the mastered standards' content.

Figure 1: Points Based Gradebook

	Points Earned	Points Possible	Percentage	Letter Grade
Assessment 1	5	10	50	F
Assessment 2	7	10	70	C-
Assessment 3	9	10	90	A-
Assessment 4	10	10	100	A+

Figure 2: Standards Based Gradebook

	St 1 Argument	Decay Average	St 2 Informative	Decay Average	St 3 Narrative	Decay Average
Assessment 1	1	1			3	3
Assessment 2	2	1.65			3.5	3.325
Assessment 3	4	3.1775	3	3		
Assessment 4	4	3.712125	4	3.65		

This pointed, standards based tracking can be shared with parents and guardians to provide a clearer picture of the areas their student is excelling and where improvement is needed. This data can also follow the students through the school system to allow teachers to have a better picture of students' needs at the beginning of each new course.

Students and teachers are able to review the data on each standard to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the individual student. The teacher and student can target classroom and practice activities to encourage mastery of the standards. There is an increase of mastery simply because the students are aware of the areas they need to improve. Teachers create resource sites for students to access materials in and out of the classroom to continue the learning process on a more individual basis.

In a points based grading system, similar to the one pictured in Figure 1, the initial grade of 5 out of 10 remains in the gradebook the entire year. Students are constantly reminded of this poor performance. Standards based grading uses a decaying average to determine the mastery level. When students start to show a high level of mastery in a consistent manner, the poor attempts from earlier in the grading period are valued less than the most recent. This allows the grading to reflect the current level of understanding. The focus of the grade is on the student *learning* the material and not *when* they learned it.

Potential Conflicts

Similarly to other changes, the newness of this method could potentially cause some conflicts with the students and their guardians. This is a style of assessment and feedback that will cause a shift in the definition of a successful student. It will take diligence and patience when working with students and their guardians to fully understand the grading system.

This grading style removes the completion aspect found in many points based grading systems. Students are asked to learn and demonstrate a deeper understanding of the material. With the removal of grading practice pieces or assignments completed in the company of others, teachers are able to see where each student is individually. The students are unable to hide knowledge gaps with extra credit or compliance with typical school norms. This allows the teacher to address the gaps and move the student towards better understanding. Unfortunately, this will present some weaknesses in academic areas that the students were able to hide with other grading practices.

The emphasis on a student's current knowledge of the standards could identify weaknesses in a student's understanding that was not readily identified through other assessment means. This could be a struggle for students who are not familiar with having a growth mindset. It has been observed that students struggle buying into a system that they feel is punitive or subjective. To address this, teachers will be working to increase the awareness of growth mindset in all classes throughout the building.

Timeline of Implementation

January 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected Courses Piloting of Hybrid Standards Based Grading • Building of a Resource Page on TMS Website
February 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interested TMS Faculty Members Initiate Book Study
Spring 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Discussions for Interested Teachers • Information Sessions for Parents and Community Members
Summer 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty Training and Work Time • Information Sessions for Parents and Community Members
Fall 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Parent Communication • Analysis of Implementation

Potential Grading Styles

Similarly to points based grading practices, standards based grading can take on many different appearances. Tipton Middle School is investigating various methods to find the system that will increase the students' achievement the most. The implementation of standards based grading will align to letter grades much in the same way as points based grading. Teachers will discuss the use of hybrid systems, rubric scale sizes, and reassessment procedures.

Parent Communication Plans

Communication is the key to successful implementation of any new initiative. Since this change concerns the assessment of their students, communication with parents and guardians is crucial. The initial plan is to use evening information sessions to provide the bulk of the information and allow for questions and concerns to be addressed and/or discussed. These presentations will be recorded and posted to the standards based grading web page on the school website. The website will also house links to video, article, and book resources.