

Murray City School District

Competency Based Learning Standards Based Grading



COMPETENCY BASED PARENT INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

During the last five years Murray City School District has been using standards-based grading in Kindergarten and First Grade which focuses on students' ability to demonstrate their learning and accurately reflects areas of academic strength and weakness. During the 2019-2020 school year Murray City School District is fortunate to be one of 7 districts awarded the Competency Based Education grant through the Utah State Board of Education. This packet provides a brief overview of competency-based education in Murray City School District. We welcome your input as we hope to move forward to implement standards-based grading district wide over the next several years.

PREMISE FOR STANDARDS-BASED GRADING IN MURRAY CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Grading and reporting learning by standard allows students, teachers, and parents to focus on the learning of specific curricular and essential skills rather than the chasing of points, or simply completing missing work to raise an average grade. Grades have traditionally been a representation of several components, including, but not limited to, the number of assignments completed, tests, and quizzes, extra credit, etc. They are also represented as an average over time rather than a demonstration of where they are currently, their most recent level of understanding. This type of grading and reporting falls short for both students and parents if they are concerned with exactly what a student knows and may not know so students can be prepared for the demands of college and careers. It emphasizes completion of assignments and point gathering over competency in content and essential skills. Traditionally, students are held back by previous failures or low scores and without clear next steps or hope for overcoming these mistakes, will often give up. By contrast, explicit expectations of student proficiency, opportunities to reassess, and recognizing their progress in specific criteria promotes the feeling of clarity and confidence, motivating students to achieve at high levels.

The move toward standards-based grading is research-based and modeled after the work of Robert J. Marzano, Richard DuFour, Tom Schimmer, Phil Warrick, et al. The initial research is based on item response theory vs classical test theory, with the former having stronger findings, primarily in the area of classification of errors.

REINFORCING PRACTICES OF STANDARDS-BASED GRADING

- Issues of student behavior, participation, punctuality, work timeliness and effort are reflected in a citizenship grade rather than an academic grade.
- "Extra credit" is not included in the academic grade.
- Teachers create frequent opportunities for students to demonstrate concept proficiency.
- Teachers utilize a multitude of evidence in multiple modalities to determine a student's level of proficiency: assignments, observations, portfolios, assessments, products, discussions, projects, performance tasks, etc.
- Homework is meaningful independent practice which requires time and effort outside the classroom and has an articulated purpose tied to content standards **but is not scored.**
- Points are not deducted for reasons other than a student's lack of academic proficiency.
- Classroom assessments tie directly to specific content standards and objectives.
- Gradebook is updated regularly to prompt learning and increase proficiency in content standards.

COMPARING SYSTEMS: TRADITIONAL GRADING VS. SBG

TRADITIONAL GRADING SYSTEM	STANDARDS-BASED GRADING SYSTEM
Based on multiple assessment methods (quizzes, tests, homework, projects, etc.). One grade/entry is given per assessment. Assessments are based on a percentage system. Criteria for success may be unclear.	Based on learning goals and performance on assessment opportunities specifically designed to assess one or more standards. A minimum of three assessments per standard is required to determine a final score. Scores are consistently reported using a scale of 1-4 which indicates the level of proficiency on the standard.
Utilizes an uncertain mix of assessment, achievement, effort and behavior to determine the final grade. May use late penalties and extra credit.	Measures achievement only. Separates achievement from effort/behavior. No penalties or extra credit applied.
Everything may go in the Gradebook – regardless of purpose. Homework is often given more weight than assessments of learning which can be detrimental to a student’s grade while they are engaged in new learning.	Purposefully designed assessment opportunities are provided to students in different modalities to give each student multiple opportunities to show mastery of the standards. Opportunities for reassessment are also provided.

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

DISCUSSING PROFICIENCY WITH STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

WITH THE TEACHER

- Has my child completed the learning activities/homework you have provided?
- Will my student have another opportunity to be assessed on the standard?
- What practice, studying, and/or reteaching opportunities should my student take advantage of prior to the next assessment?
- How might my student demonstrate they are highly proficient on the standard?

WITH YOUR STUDENT

When discussing a student's scores in their "data binders," consider asking your student the following questions:

- What standards do you think you still need to learn?
- What practice, studying and/or re-teaching opportunities have you completed in preparation for the next assessment on the standard?
- Have you discussed how you might improve a score on an assessment with your teacher?
- If the student has demonstrated level 3 proficiency on the standard - How might you demonstrate that you are above proficient on the standard? Have you discussed opportunities to demonstrate that you are above proficient with your teacher?

HOW DO I CHECK MY STUDENT'S GRADE?

When ready, we will be sending you an invitation to Illuminate, the Gradebook platform we will be using to measure proficiency. You will be setting up an account for your Parent Portal where you will be able to see how your student is progressing on the standard.

Your teacher and/or grade level team will also be sending you information on how to check your child's daily work via a student data binder. This might be digital and it might be hard copy. Students will be able to guide you through their daily assignments and you can ask the questions above and have robust conversations about their learning.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF HOMEWORK IN STANDARDS-BASED GRADING?

Homework no longer counts toward the final grade; however, it is still assigned as independent practice through which students receive feedback from the teacher on progress toward mastering the related course standards. Some students may choose not to complete the homework. In a standards-based grading system a student who has not demonstrated understanding of a standard (and/or is not satisfied with their current assessment scores) can improve their scores on the future assessments by taking advantage of the independent practice and targeted teacher feedback on it.

Two of our reinforcing practices state...

- Teachers create **frequent opportunities** for students to demonstrate concept mastery.
- Teachers utilize a **multitude of evidence in multiple modalities** to determine a student's level of proficiency: assignments, observations, portfolios, assessments, products, discussions, projects, performance tasks, etc.

HOW ARE STUDENTS MOTIVATED TO COMPLETE HOMEWORK IF IT DOESN'T 'COUNT'?

Parents and teachers can help motivate students by discussing the purposes of independent practice/homework. Final grades should communicate learning that has occurred after opportunities are provided to practice and improve. Some students master standards quickly and require very little practice, while other students require multiple opportunities to master standards with differing levels of teacher support. Parents can also help students understand that the role of practice in learning course standards is similar to practice in sports or music. The reward is the final game and/or performance; student athletes/musicians are not rewarded after every practice. It is important for parents and teachers to have these conversations with students as they begin to rethink the purpose of homework.

WILL MY STUDENT RECEIVE A LETTER GRADE IN THE COURSE?

Elementary students will receive a composite proficiency score of 1-4 that has been calculated by averaging all the proficiency scores for each standard in each subject.

Highly Proficient-4 I exceed expectations and can apply the standard in complex ways.

Proficient-3 I meet the expectations described in the standard and can do them independently.

Approaching Proficient-2 I am getting close to meeting expectations and can do the simpler parts of the standard independently.

Below Proficient-1 I still need help and support from my teacher to do the simpler parts of the standard.

HOW WILL GRADES BE DETERMINED?

Student grades in each overall subject (i.e. Math, Language Arts and Science) will be calculated by taking the median of the content standard final scores.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION IF I HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Teachers participating in the CBL Grant will be happy to answer questions regarding how standards-based grading is being implemented in their classrooms. Principals can answer general questions regarding standards-based grading. For additional information or questions please refer to the Murray City School District CBL director, Melissa Hamilton for more answers.