Berrien Springs Middle School

Standards-Based Grading
Handbook

" Together, inspiring students to think, learn, achieve
and care in a global community. **"**

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Standards-Based Grading Handbook

"Why would anyone want to change current grading practices? The answer is quite simple:
Grades are so imprecise that they are almost meaningless."
~Robert Marzano~

Standards-Based Grading - Key Concepts:

Standards-based grading and reporting provides students, parents, and teachers with more detailed information about student learning than the traditional system of grading. Scores directly reflect student growth and proficiency according to academic standards (content and/or skills) and separate non-academic factors such as effort, participation, punctuality, preparation, and work completion, which are still assessed, but through more appropriate methods.

Summative Assessment	(Performance): This is assessment of learning *after* instruction and responsible for final course grades, aligned to specific content standards. Essentially, this grade represents what a student knows (knowledge) and what a student can do (skills).
Formative Assessment	(Practice): Consistent feedback given to students throughout the learning process to drive both student learning and teacher instruction. While they are not factored into final course grades, formative assessments are crucial to student learning and help track growth.
Student Learning	Student learning is the focus. In standards-based grading, learning replaces time as the constant, limitable variable and allows for extra time/opportunities to prove content mastery based on individual student needs. Students may need more time and more than one opportunity to show what they know; our teachers are prepared to allow for multiple opportunities to prove mastery, within reasonably established guidelines. Students are expected to be responsible for their own learning and communicate individual challenges and learning needs with their teachers.
Academic Behavior	While not included in final grades, students will be held to high standard in these areas: Effort, Participation, Preparation, Punctuality, and Work Completion. Extracurricular involvement will be determined by these behavioral expectations.
Standards	Michigan content standards are established to clearly define grade appropriate knowledge/skills, aligning school curriculum and teacher instruction guide students mastery toward a common set of learning expectations.
Proficiency	Student achievement is measured by mastery of specific content standards. Standards-based grading focuses on measuring students' proficiency on a specific set of outcomes. These outcomes are shared with students at the outset of the course, along with a learning scale, that explains the essential outcome in detail. A student's progress toward proficiency is tracked by performance on learning tasks that align to the outcome, which encourages

	student ownership of the learning and allows the teacher to provide accurate feedback to the student.
Learning Scales	Student growth will be reported and assessed using common learning scales – from 0-4 – rather than the traditional point-average method. Grade books may report several scale scores, one for each content standard, rather than a traditional letter-grade which incorporates many unrelatable factors.
Grade Reporting	Students will receive guided feedback in three aspects of their role as students: summative assessment scores, formative assessment codes, and academic behavior codes. Assessment and feedback are the most important tasks a classroom teacher performs; appropriate reporting is essential for communicating growth to students and parents, providing an accurate depiction of where students began, how they have grown, and what they have learned (proficiency of standards) after instruction and practice.
Feedback	A goal of standards-based grading is a clearer communication of student strengths and focus areas to directly guide instruction and influence growth and learning. It is essential that we create an environment where students are aware of their own thinking and take responsibility for their own learning. Guided feedback, based on formative assessments, is essential in this process.
Intervention/ Enrichment	Formative assessment allows for clearer identification of students strengths and focus areas. Interventions may be implemented for students who need to focus on growth in specific focus areas, while enrichment may be implemented for students who exhibit advanced proficiency in certain content standards. Formative assessment allows these needs to identified more quickly and more accurately.
Learning Goals	A learning goal identifies what students will learn or be able to do as a result of instruction, and are clearly expressed to students at the start of each lesson or activity.
Depth of Knowledge	Depth of Knowledge (DOK) represents the comparison of the cognitive demand of the content standards and the cognitive demand of assessments given to determine student mastery of those standards, represented by four levels: 1) Recall, 2) Skills/Concepts, 3) Strategic Thinking, and 4) Extended Thinking. These do not represent difficult, but appropriately align assessments with standards.
Extra Credit	Extra credit no longer exists, but is replaced with retakes and redos. Students will have an opportunity to replace poor scores by participating in more practice and retaking tests or redoing assignments.

Introduction/Rationale for SBG:

What is Standards-Based Grading?

Standards-based grading focuses a student's learning on the essential standards for a class, or how well the student understands and can apply the key material in class. At the beginning of each unit, a teacher will break down the content **standards** for that unit into smaller components and criteria using a detailed **scale**. During the unit, the student receives **feedback** on frequent **formative assessments** to gauge their understanding and application of the material. These assessments may be administered by variety formats, such as traditional pencil-and-paper tests, online assessments, projects, discussions, reports, or any other format by which learning may be evidenced. At various points throughout the unit, and/or at the completion of a unit, students will participate in **summative assessments**, which will demonstrate a student's mastery of the essential content standards – ultimately, what they **KNOW** and what they can **DO**.

The goal of standards-based grading is to provide the most accurate picture of student learning. Constant assessment will track student **growth**, provide immediate and clear **feedback**, and identify any needs for either **intervention** or **enrichment**. Learning is a process that takes place over time and requires active participation by all those associated with that process – teacher (providing feedback), student (opportunities to practice and present knowledge/skills), and parent (supporting the process). Standards-based grading creates a scenario in which all parties are able to engage in pointed and meaningful conversations about that learning process. As learning is reflected, instruction adapts to support continued growth.

How is standards-based grading different from traditional grading?

In the traditional 100-point grading system, grades are typically generated from a series of scores from all work assigned in the class, including classwork, homework, projects, quizzes, tests, etc. These scores are often arranged in the grade book by the type of assignment rather than by the essential outcomes for the class. Therefore, the final grade becomes a cumulative numerical average from many unrelated activities, which also often include points for non-academic factors, such as behavior, participation, effort, and attitude.

Standards-based grading, however, focuses solely on progress toward mastery of the essential standards. An SBG grade book tracks learning through activities that focus on standards and do not include non-academic factors such as behavior, participation, effort, and attitude. These factors are important and are assessed and reported, but through a separate and more appropriate method.

Why is the district using standard- based grading?

The goal of Berrien Springs Middle School is to improve student learning by reporting grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning, and the shift to standards-based grading is an effort to reach that goal. Here is how standards based grading addresses each of those four criteria.

Learning Scales:
Learning scales articulate "Learning Goals" in scale/rubric format. Learning scales are clearly communicated to students and give clear direction about instructional targets as well as descriptions of levels of understanding and performance for those targets.

Creating Scales:
Each scale is built around content standards identified by the common-course teachers in each grade level. The learning goals are designed to align with the standards, skills, and processes in the Michigan GLCE & Common Core Standards.

Step 1: Identify Level 3 - Proficiency
Teachers begin by identifying the targeted, complex knowledge for the level 3 items, which identifies the expected level of performance for all students in that standard.

Step 2: Identify Level 2 – Foundational Material
Teachers must identify the foundational skills for the content as Level 2. This level identifies the basic learning that is the foundation for the higher levels of learning needed in levels 3 and 4. Examples of this type of learning may include recall questions, fact-based skills, and basic applications.

Step 3: Identify Level 4 – Advanced Mastery
Teachers must identify expectations for achievement of Level 4. Level 4 requires students to show advanced mastery and application of skills beyond what is expected for standard proficiency (Level 3). These items are not simply harder tasks, but learning that requires extended or more rigorous thinking. Examples of this type of learning may include: applications for real-world use, solving problems in a different context, synthesizing information to create something new, or explaining connections between ideas.

Scale Notes:
- Level 4 is not intended to be an overly exhaustive or impossible process; it is any opportunity for a student to demonstrate advanced mastery. Students *may* participate in alternate tasks to demonstrate Level 4, so long as they are sufficiently rigorous and assess student levels appropriately.
- The items at each level should build upon one another, rather than overlap one another.
- The 0 – 4 levels are standardized for all scales and should not be modified.
- The scale should focus on quality of work, not measurements of quantity. Statements of quantity for an outcome such as "with 80% accuracy" or "identify 3 out of 4" are not appropriate.
- The scale is designed as a tool for students, parents, and teachers, to provide clear language for academic discussion of student learning.

What does the number value (4, 3.5, 3, 2.5, 2, 1.5, 1, .5 and 0) on the scale mean?

The scores on the scale represent a learning continuum and are NOT equated to grade point average. It is understood that as students demonstrate low levels as they are introduced to new skills and content. Each level builds on the others and describes the learning students must demonstrate in order to achieve higher levels – students must demonstrate increasing levels of proficiency to receive higher levels. For example, a student may start at "1" or "2" but may still earn a "3" once they eventually demonstrate proficiency, which is the goal for all students.

4.0	**Advanced mastery** of the content knowledge and skills.
3.5	In addition to a 3.0 score, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications with partial success.
3.0	Student demonstrates **proficiency of knowledge and skills** related to the content standards.
2.5	In addition to a 2.0 score, the student demonstrates partial knowledge of 3.0 elements.
2.0	The student understands the **foundational material**, but is still working to master application of the concepts and skills without assistance
1.5	The student demonstrates understanding of all 2.0 elements with help and independent understanding of some 2 elements.
1.0	The student is able to demonstrate an understanding of all of the foundational material **with support**.
.5	With help, the student demonstrates limited understanding of only some 2.0 elements.
0	Even with assistance from the teacher, the student shows **no understanding** of the material.

Zeros are not intended to be punitive, but are clear indicators of need for guided intervention.

7th Grade Reading
Learning Goal Scale
Standard: **RL.7.4**

SCORE	LEARNING GOAL
4.0	The student will: ● Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone in a grade-appropriate text, including analogies or allusions to other texts No major errors regarding the score 4.0 content
3.5	*In addition to score 3.0 performance, partial success at score 4.0 content*
3.0	The student will: ● Analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (for example, alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a grade-appropriate poem or section of a grade-appropriate story or drama ● Analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone in a grade-appropriate text No major errors regarding the score 3.0 content
2.5	*No major errors or omissions regarding score 2.0 content, and partial success at score 3.0 content*
2.0	The student will recognize or recall specific vocabulary, such as: ● Alliteration, allusion, analyze, association, drama, figurative, figure of speech, impact, interpret, literary, meaning, poem, repetition, rhyme, similar, sound, stanza, story, text, tone, verse The student will perform basic processes, such as: ● Identify examples of rhymes and other repetitions of sound in a grade-appropriate poem, story, or drama ● Identify specific words that impact the meaning and tone of a grade-appropriate text ● Identify figures of speech in a grade-appropriate text ● Describe the background of teacher-provided figures of speech (for example, literary, biblical, and mythological allusions) ● Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a grade-appropriate text, including figurative and connotative meanings No major errors regarding the score 2.0 content
1.5	*Partial success at score 2.0 content, and major errors or omissions regarding score 3.0 content*
1.0	With much help, only partial success at score 2.0 content.
.5	*With help, partial success at score 2.0 content.*
0	Even with help, no success

Course Name: _____
Learning Goal Scale
Standard: _____

SCORE	LEARNING GOAL
4.0	The student will: No major errors regarding the score 4.0 content
3.5	*In addition to score 3.0 performance, partial success at score 4.0 content*
3.0	The student will: No major errors regarding the score 3.0 content
2.5	*No major errors or omissions regarding score 2.0 content, and partial success at score 3.0 content*
2.0	The student will recognize or recall specific vocabulary, such as: The student will perform basic processes, such as: No major errors regarding the score 2.0 content
1.5	*Partial success at score 2.0 content, and major errors or omissions regarding score 3.0 content*
1.0	With much help, only partial success at score 2.0 content.
.5	*With help, partial success at score 2.0 content.*
0	Even with help, no success

Assessment:

Assessment of student growth and proficiency is a dynamic process. While this process exceeds absolute definition, the following are agreed to be certain:
- Assessment must align to grade level or course standards. An assessment can cover more than one standard, but it should be clear which parts of the assessment are tied to which standards.
- Assessment must measure individual proficiency. While group work and collaboration is an important part of the 21st century classroom, only work that can be clearly attributed to an individual student should be used to determine proficiency.
- Assessment must be valid and accurately reflect student mastery of standards in a fair and consistent manner.
- Assessment must include structured scales. Since assessment drives feedback using scales, they must be aligned to content standards and clearly communicate learning expectations for students.
- Assessments must incorporate appropriate depth of knowledge of questions/tasks to the depth of knowledge of the standard.

Frequency of Assessment

It is required that teachers assess activities and practice multiple times for each standard. All evidence should be recorded in the gradebook as it is collected, and all formative assessments (practice) should be completed before a summative assessment is given.

Homework Policy:

Homework is never given to students so they can learn the material the first time around. Solid learning should be achieved before the first homework assignment is uttered. Homework is given in order for students to practice, reinforce, and extend what they already know.

There must be feedback on homework assignments. This is so central to homework's impact on student learning, it makes assigning anything without providing feedback close to a complete waste of time. Research shows that if students receive feedback from themselves, their classmates, their teachers, or someone else, they learn dramatically more from the homework experience. So, in the same planning breath we use to design our homework assignments, we need to ask ourselves, "How will students receive descriptive feedback on this?"

Once we have established why and how we assign homework, we turn to how we should grade it. In short, do not.

Homework is what we do to learn the content, practice the skills, and meet the standards; it is not a final decree of proficiency for any objective or assessment. Grades, on the other hand, reflect a summative declaration of what we know and are able to do regarding a standard. That grade should not be raised or lowered by the cumulative quality of practice assignments that take place prior to the summative assessment. The routes we take to mastery will vary from person to person, but the important and honest testimony comes at the end of the learning: What has the student learned as a result of his/her participation in this class?

Re-Take Policy:

One of the greater benefits of standards-based grading is that students have opportunities to truly display their mastery of content knowledge and skills - even if that doesn't happen during the initial assessment. It is the right of every student to retake assignments, provided students have adequately prepared for retakes, per confirmation of teacher. Therefore, the following policies are in place to outline the process for students to participate in assessment/activity retakes:
- Teacher coordinates either formal or informal retake with students individually to determine changes in proficiency level
  or
- Student makes formal request to teacher for re-take assessment
- Teacher approves request if evidence supports students has made effort to prepare for assessment.
- Teacher inputs student information online into weekly GoogleDocs retake registration.
  - Student Name, Class, Teacher, Test/Code, Enrollment (*taken by supervisor*)
  - Parent notification delivered home through student.
- Students attends "Re-Take Room":
  - Wednesday, 2:45pm
  - Monitored each Wednesday by grade level teachers, as determined by regular rotation.
  - If student is not present, room supervisor will contact home.

Late Work Policy:

There should be a clear distinction between late daily homework assignments and late major projects or papers. If daily homework is recorded only in the nonacademic portion of the grade, it seems acceptable that a teacher might not accept or credit late homework. A student who does not turn in all daily assignments but who has mastered the material can still receive a high grade in the academic component if he or she demonstrates strong learning through in-class assessments. Conversely, a student who turns in all of his or her homework but is not learning will receive high marks for the non-academic portion, but not on academic components.

Major assignments, such as projects or research papers, should be handled differently. Because they are important learning opportunities, they should be accepted even when they are late. The difficulty arises in determining how to assign a grade to late work. A common practice for teachers is to simply reduce the grade, but this practice confuses the issue. A lower grade for an essay turned in late does not accurately communicate how well the student has learned and performed. The grade may indicate that the student is a poorer writer than he or she actually is. With a disaggregated grade, however, the teacher can record a low work habits grade to reflect that the student missed the deadline while giving the paper a grade on the academic component that accurately reflects what the student has learned.

Academic Behaviors:

	4 Exemplary	3 Proficient	2 Progressing	1 Needs Improvement	0 Disregard for Expectations
Effort	Consistently stays focused on the task and what needs to be done. Works well independently. Always has a positive attitude.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done most of the time. Works well independently and generally has a positive attitude.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done some of the time and needs to be reminded to keep on task.	Rarely focuses on the task and what needs to be done. Needs reminders to perform classroom work. Often has a negative attitude.	Disregard for Expectations.
Participation	Routinely shares information or ideas when participating in discussion or groups. A definite leader who contributes consistent effort.	Usually shares information or ideas when participating in discussion or groups. Often is a leader.	Sometimes shares information or ideas when participating in discussion or groups. Exhibits few instances of leadership. Does minimum required.	Rarely shares ideas. May refuse to participate. In groups, relies on the work of others.	Disregard for Expectations.
Preparation	Always brings needed materials to class and is ready to work.	Almost always brings needed materials to class and is ready to work.	Usually brings needed materials to class and is ready to work.	Often forgets materials and is rarely ready to get to work. Often does not accept redirection.	Disregard for Expectations.
Punctuality (*weekly*) **Punctuality (*quarterly*)**	No tardies. No tardies	One tardy or less. Three or fewer tardies.	Two tardies. Four – five tardies.	Three tardies. Six or more tardies.	Disregard for Expectations. Disregard for Expectations.
Work Completion	Is punctual in turning in assignments and meets the requirements relative to neatness and adherence to conventions.	Is punctual in turning in most assignments and most of the time meets the requirements relative to neatness and adherence to conventions.	Is not punctual in turning in assignments or does not meet the requirements relative to neatness and adherence to conventions.	Is not punctual in turning in assignments and does not meet the requirements relative to neatness and adherence to conventions.	Disregard for Expectations.

Extracurricular Activity Eligibility:
Students will be held to a strict level of accountability when determining their participation in extracurricular activities. We understand that positive academic behaviors typically produce positive results in the classroom. Therefore, in order to support the development of such behaviors for all students, challenged *and* advantaged learners, eligibility for athletics and activities shall be determined using the "Academic Behaviors" scales, which shall be determined by grade level teams of teachers and reflect behavior across all courses.

Weekly Activity Eligibility:
To be eligible, student must achieve "3/Proficient" or higher in at least 3 of 5 indicators.

Students are deemed ineligible if they:
     a. Receive "1/Needs Improvement" in any two indicators.
     b. Receive even a single "0/Disregard" for Expectation.

Seasonal Athletic Eligibility:
In compliance with MHSAA policy, students must "pass" at least 50% of their courses in order to be eligible for the following athletic season or semester. Therefore, BSMS students must receive a 2.5 or higher grade in at least 4 of 7 courses.

Feedback:

Providing meaningful data is an integral part of the educational process. Standards-based grading not only offers feedback, but *useful* feedback that will guide both student learning and teacher instruction. Students and parents can expect to see three categories of specific feedback:

	Summative Assessment Grade		Formative Assessment Code		Academic Behavior Score
4	Advanced Mastery	**E**	Exemplary	**4**	Exemplary
3	Proficiency	**P**	Proficient	**3**	Proficient
2	Foundational Material	**G**	Growing	**2**	Growing
1	Basic Understanding w/Support	**N**	Needs Improvement	**1**	Needs Improvement
0	No Understanding	**W**	Warning – Intervention Needed	**0**	Disregard for Expectations
½ points may be used to represent knowledge/skill that falls between levels.		**M**	Missing	*Scores determined by grade level teams of teachers.*	
		I	Incomplete		

Reports:

Below is a table providing a brief summary of selected reports.

Report Name	Information Given	Audience	Uses	Recommended Frequency
Score Sheet	▪ Assignment Feedback ▪ Standard Scores ▪ Strand Scores	▪ Students	▪ Display in classroom	▪ Weekly
Individual Student Report	▪ Assignment Feedback ▪ Strand Scores for One Class	▪ Students ▪ Teachers ▪ Parents	▪ Conferencing ▪ CSTs ▪ IEPs ▪ Study Skills ▪ Etc.	▪ As needed
Student Multi-Section Report	▪ Assignments Feedback ▪ Scores for All Courses on Student Schedule	▪ Students ▪ Teachers ▪ Parents	▪ Conferencing ▪ CSTs ▪ IEPs ▪ Study Skills ▪ Etc.	▪ As needed
Missing Assignment Report	▪ Missing Assignments	▪ Students ▪ Teachers	▪ Individual Student Report ▪ Teacher Analysis	▪ As needed
Standards Report	▪ Summative Assignments (linked to standards) ▪ Final Strand Scores	▪ Students ▪ Teachers	▪ Progress Monitoring ▪ Goal Setting ▪ Teacher Planning ▪ Reflection	▪ Quarterly