



What is standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading is a grading system, which involves measuring students' mastery of a set of clearly defined standards. Its purpose is to identify what a student knows or is able to do based on these pre-established standards, rather than averaging grades/scores, which may not provide an accurate picture of what a student has or has not learned.

What is a standards-based report card?

A standards-based report card lists the most important skills students should learn in each subject at a particular grade level.

What is a "cluster?"

Within the standards-based report card, clusters are used as "umbrellas" to smaller groups of standards. DPS uses clusters in order to reduce the number of standards listed on the actual report card, resulting in a more concise document.

How does standards-based grading differ from traditional grading?

In a traditional grading system, a student's performance for an entire quarter is averaged together. Early quiz scores that were low would be averaged together with more proficient performance later in the course, resulting in a lower overall grade than current performance indicates.

A standards-based grading system measures a student's mastery of standards by prioritizing the most recent, consistent level of performance, allowing a student who struggled early to demonstrate mastery by the end of the grading period. Variables such as effort, participation, timeliness, cooperation, attitude and attendance are reported separately, not as an indicator of a student's academic performance.

How are my child's grades determined?

A student's performance on summative assessments will be used to determine a student's overall grade. Formative assessments, which occur throughout the grading period, are used to identify areas of strength and weakness of students in order to guide the teacher in providing targeted instruction. Homework assignments should serve as a means of providing additional practice to develop a student's level of understanding, and therefore should not be factored into a student's academic grades.

Will my child still receive teacher comments on the report card?

Yes. Individualized feedback is an essential component of standards-based

grading. Effective feedback is a more useful source of information than simply assigning a numeric value or letter grade to student work.

What will each of the numbers in the four-point scale represent?

4 - Indicates that a student exceeds all standards in a cluster

3 - Indicates that a student meets all standards in a cluster

2 - Indicates that a student meets some of the standards in a cluster

1 - Indicates that a student does not meet the standards in a cluster

How should a student/parent view student grades now that the system of A-F has been replaced by a four-point scale? What is considered to be an 'A' in the new grading system?

Standards-based grading identifies a standard and indicates whether or not a student is meeting the standard at a given point in the school year. A score of '3' is defined as meeting grade level standards and indicates that a student has demonstrated mastery of the skills that were expected to be learned in a cluster. This is similar to earning an 'A' in a traditional system.

Is it possible to achieve a grade of '4'?

Yes. A score of '4' indicates performance that is above what is expected for mastery as indicated in the grade level standards. This means a student has demonstrated a level of understanding that goes beyond the targeted goal.

Is the '4' the same as an 'A'?

No. The numbers cannot and should not be matched to letter grades. The number grade gives a more detailed description of how your child is moving towards meeting a standard set for all students at a particular grade. The numbers will also indicate that the teaching and learning of the standard is ongoing.

Does it mean that my child is failing if he/she receives all 2's?

No. Standards-based report cards are not about passing and failing. A '2' shows that a child is meeting some of the standards in a cluster. Teachers will provide a combination of instruction, individualized and differentiated support to facilitate a child's progress towards mastery.

If a student receives 1's all year, does that mean the student will be retained?

Intervention classes are in place in Durham Public Schools to support learners who are behind in course work. If a student receives '1's or '2's, it means his/her work is not yet meeting grade-level standards. A number of academic supports should be offered to those students who are struggling to meet the established standards. Grade-level retention is not a practice that is generally supported by research, and will be determined after a collaborative process including the family and school.

How will I know if my child needs help?

Receiving a '1' or '2' on a progress report/report card can be a sign that a student is in need of extra support in the areas where he or she is receiving low grades. This is another benefit of a standards-based report card – areas in need of support are clearly evident.

How will honor roll be determined?

The traditional concept of an honor roll does not easily match up with standards-based grading. Schools will develop the criteria for academic recognition. It is our intention to recognize and acknowledge the academic accomplishments of DPS students, as well as those who consistently display good citizenship/work habits.



What are non-academic behaviors?

Non-academic behaviors describe behaviors or habits that may impact achievement. Students will receive grades (C=Consistently, S=Sometimes, or R=Rarely) separate for these behaviors.

The non-academic behaviors are:

- Takes responsibility for learning
- Respects authority, peers, and property
- Follows directions
- Completes classwork on time
- Completes homework on time
- Demonstrates effort
- Participates in class activities
- Collaborates effectively with peers
- Cooperates in Art Class
- Cooperates in Music Class
- Cooperates in P.E.

Where else is standards-based grading being implemented?

Our elementary schools have been utilizing a four point grading system for several years, so it is not new to the majority of our families. A number of school districts in the area, particularly at the elementary level, have already implemented standards-based grading.



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