

## Frequently Asked Questions about Standards Based Grading

### Q1: Clarify what SBG is and how it differs from traditional grading.

A: Quoting from our parent/guardian handbook, a Standards Based Grading System (SBG) contrasts to the traditional grading system, a chronological collection of numerical points or percentages which may or may not provide feedback regarding what a student has learned or knows. As stated in our mission statement, we want to support and challenge each student to reach his or her highest potential. Standards Based Grading is designed to provide specific feedback on what students are achieving and really know plus show their progress and growth over time. Much more "real world," SBG focuses on the summative achievement of students rather than how quickly they learn or how many times it takes them to master essential standards. While the Pinnacle grade book system is averaging the scores, teachers will look at the overall body of evidence of achievement and determine the score or grade for each grading period.

A significant difference in SBG is that students will have multiple opportunities to show mastery of a standard before the grade is final. What you'll see in Pinnacle Internet Viewer from teachers' grade books are assignments and a rating of how students are achieving on each one. Eventually you'll see the ratings linked to standards. The rating will be a numerical value: 4=Advanced; 3=Proficient; 2=Partially Proficient or Developing; 1=Emerging; and IE=Insufficient Evidence. This will give us the ability to quickly identify students who need intervention or enrichment. In this system in harmony with the implementation of Response to Intervention, teachers will be planning together to have the same assignments and assessments and then work together to develop effective interventions and enrichments for students.

### Q2: Is there a list of standards being taught and assessed for each unit taught and can it be made available to each student at the beginning of each unit?

A: Some teachers have provided the overall list of essential standards via a course syllabus or blackboard site. More importantly, each teacher communicates the following each day: the learning objective(s), essential questions, the plan of the day, key vocabulary, and any assignments.

### Q3: Why isn't there a score for each standard at the end of the quarter rather than an averaged grade?

A: This is our ultimate goal and we hope to have it in place by 2010-2011 when the district system becomes web-based. We want to shift everyone's thinking to scores or grades as measures of learning rather than a chronological collection of points or percentages. We're sorry if it's confusing right now having letter grades in addition to numerical scores. We encourage students and parents/guardians to focus on the numerical scores rather than the averages or the letter grades.

**Q4: Explain why the standards have been pared down to create essential standards and how can we be sure the students are getting a complete education?**

*A: Research has been done on Colorado standards showing that it would take 22 years of education to teach them all. Our district teachers have chosen five to eight essential standards in each course, so teachers are able to be consistent and focus on in depth instruction and learning. We certainly do teach beyond those five to eight standards so students are getting a complete education, but not a "mile wide and an inch deep."*

**Q5: What about students who want to move beyond the standards?**

*A: Teachers are working to provide enrichment and challenge for these students as we always have. This may take the form of pre-AP courses, higher level course placement, challenge questions and projects, etc. Students can also go beyond the proficient expectations through re-dos or the depth with which they communicate their answers.*

**Q6: Does each assessment explain how the student met or missed the standard(s) being addressed?**

*A: Yes, teachers will provide feedback in a variety of ways: oral, written comments, rubrics, etc. We want to shift from discussing how many points something is worth to what a student is learning and specifically what they might need to work on.*

**Q7: How will each instructor determine what is a 4, 3, 2, 1 or IE?**

*A: Each department is working together to be as consistent as possible in determining scoring for practice, assignments, and assessments. Common assessments and rubrics are developed when units are planned. Teachers first determine what evidence will demonstrate proficiency of learning in a specific standard or several standards. From there, they determine evidence for the other categories.*

**Q8: Will students have to be "perfect" to get a 4?**

*A: No, students do not have to be perfect. In order to score a 4, a student would have to show learning that goes above and beyond the criteria for the learning target. It would reflect in-depth understanding of content and/or excellence in demonstration or communication of knowledge, process or skills. Realistically, a small percentage of students will regularly score 4's on summative assessments the first time.*

**Q9: What is the difference between formative and summative assessments?**

*A: Formative assessments include frequent, ongoing practice and/or assignments and/or assessments en route to mastery that are considered “check points” for student progress and the foundation for feedback. They inform instruction letting teachers know whether students are ready for the summative assessment. Examples of formative assessments: daily practice/homework, work in class, quizzes, etc.*

*Summative assessments are completed after the learning experiences which include several formative assessments. They usually require students to demonstrate mastery of all the essential learnings (content, concept, skills). Examples of summative assessments include: projects, presentations, unit tests, essays, performances, etc.*

**Q10: Will the teachers encourage each student to redo an assessment if they are below proficient or will it be up to the student to improve their score? Are all students given the opportunity to better scores on assessments or is it only those with 2 or lower?**

*A: For those below proficient, teachers will require students to re-do assignments and/or assessments, especially those that are summative in nature or those that demonstrate specific skills. For those students who are proficient and want to score advanced, it is up to the student to request a re-do. In both cases, teachers will have specific conditions such as error correction, tutoring time, evidence of study, etc. Assignments that are practice or formative in nature may or may not be required to be re-done. In most instances, practice assignments are on-going, so students will have several opportunities to show growth and improve their scores. It will depend on whether lack of completion is negatively affecting the student's learning. Weekly practice for band or orchestra, for example, would be time-bound to each week. We also want to honor and respect teacher's work load and time. The learning curve is steep for all of us as we figure out how to implement the details of SBG.*

**Q11: How are we going to teach our kids that in the real world or on tests such as CSAP, ACT, etc. that they must do their best the first time or on a continuous basis?**

*A: Our goal is student learning. We all know students learn at different rates, and students have issues that may affect their testing ability on a given day. Many real life final tests such as driver's license, ACT, SAT, bar exam, MCATS, Olympics, etc. offer multiple opportunities for mastery with no penalty for number of attempts. There are still deadlines within units and some of the practice work is time bound. There are indeed cut off times for assignments per teacher discretion when late work will simply not be accepted because the unit is over.*

**Q12: What will teachers do to ensure that the learning of those students who learn quickly is not compromised when teachers take extra time so everyone learns it?**

*A: Teachers will not hold back an entire class. Instead, there will be different grouping at times, there will be differentiation at times, and students who need extra time and help will be provided that time before or after school, at lunch and/or in study hall.*

**Q13: Will proficient be considered “good enough” resulting in some students feeling bored and not challenged?**

*A: Consistent with our mission statement, we are challenging students to rise to their highest potential. We hope parents/guardians are teaming with us in encouraging and motivating students to do their personal best work and not “settle” for being good enough. On the other hand, we don’t want students to feel they have to be perfect in every single subject and every single assignment and/or assessment. On some assignments where teachers are looking for completion such as vocabulary, our highest expectation is a 3 since it’s not an assignment where a student would be expected to go into depth. We strive for balance and hope parents/guardians will emphasize that as well!*

**Q14: Why does homework count so little in the final grade and will that discourage students from completing homework?**

*A: Only when homework is practice will it count 10%. Other homework such as essays, projects, assignments, assessments, etc. will count 90%. We are shifting the priority focus to clear and consistent evidence of learning rather than the multiple practice times it may take a student to get to that learning. We believe students will recognize that without practice, they will not be able to perform on the assessments.*

**Q15: How are we holding kids accountable by letting them turn in late work or re-do work? How does this teach responsibility?**

*A: We want time to become the variable rather than the learning. We are now giving specific feedback on work habits. The logical consequence for not doing the work is doing the work and learning the content or skill. By not allowing students to turn in late work or re-do work, we deny the growth mindset so vital to student maturation and we are declaring to the student the assignment had little educational value, it’s okay if you don’t do the work, and it’s okay if you don’t learn the content or skill. These messages are no longer acceptable to us as professional educators preparing students to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world. Giving a reduced grade or zero didn’t teach responsibility to students who were not intrinsically motivated. It provided an easy way out for students.*

**Q16: How will you address test assessment anxiety?**

*A: If anxiety truly is an issue, teachers will work with students individually to create a different setting or different way of testing or help students work through their anxiety to find success in traditional testing situations.*

**Q17: Why are only 4 middle schools (Blevins, Preston, Webber and Wellington) implementing SBG this year?**

*A: While all middle school administrators agreed to implement SBG, not all schools were ready to make that transition this school year.*

*If you are interested in doing some reading on your own about SBG, here are some authors you might want to check out:*

*Black, P. Harrison, C, Lee, C, Marshall, B & William, D.*

*Marzano, Robert*

*Guskey, T. R.*

*Reeves, D. B.*

*Popham, J.W.*

*Stiggins, Rick*

*Wormeli, Rick*

*O'Connor, K*

*Wiggins, G.*