

## **Standards Based Grading (SBG)**

***Last updated: Oct. 27, 2014***

### **Introduction/History**

- Eight years ago in 2007-2008, Bismarck Public Schools (BPS) started implementing Standards Based Grading (SBG) with incoming kindergarten students, three years before North Dakota adopted Common Core (CC) state standards in math and reading. Thus, in BPS, Standards Based Grading was not a by-product of Common Core. We use SBG in all subjects that have standards, not just reading and math.
- Standards Based Grading is “growth based grading” that measures academic growth over time. For example, if the standard is that a kindergarten student can count to 100 by the end of the school year, the student will be measured on that standard throughout the year. The student may get a 1 at the beginning of the year or the start of instruction, and receive a 3 once the standard is achieved, or a 4 if the student excels beyond the standard for that grade level.
- BPS currently uses Standards Based Grading in grades K-7. Grade 7 is being added this year, and grade 8 will follow in 2015-16.
- High school students will need letter grades for the foreseeable future. Thus, there is no current plan to exchange letter grades for number scores (4, 3, 2, 1) at the high school level. It is expected that letter grades will be based on student achievement of academic knowledge, skills, and processes. Further discussion around Standards Based Grading will occur over the next two years.

We hope you will read this information so you are “in the loop” about Standards Based Grading in Bismarck Public Schools! This article is also an interesting read for parents who find it challenging to help their children with math: <http://themindfulmathematician.blogspot.com/?m=1> .

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

#### **What is Standards Based Grading?**

In Standards Based Grading (SBG), learning targets have been identified and teachers have designed lessons that teach the standards. Feedback on assignments is used to determine who has increased in proficiency/achievement and who has not. When student achievement is assessed, grades show progress on learning targets rather than reflecting a student’s task management skills, such as turning in their work on time.

SBG measures student academic proficiency. Standards Based Grading report cards tell what the student has actually learned and how. SBG reports are a measure of the student’s knowledge of grade level content over time by showing the most recent, consistent level of performance. A student may struggle with new content in the beginning of a course, then learn

and demonstrate proficiency by the end of the course. Traditional grading practices also may measure subjective factors such as a student's attendance, effort and attitude. When those task management skills are mixed in with grades, it's difficult for parents and students to tell if a potential issue is one of academic achievement, task management, or both.

### **How does Standards Based Grading work?**

While traditional grading averages all of student work and may include subjective factors, Standards Based Grading focuses solely on proficiency. Teachers use the following scores to indicate the level of proficiency a student is demonstrating throughout the school year:

- 4.0 - Demonstrates understanding that exceeds the grade level standard or target.
- 3.0 - Demonstrates proficiency with the grade level standard or target.
- 2.0 - Demonstrates partial understanding of the grade level standard or target.
- 1.0 - Demonstrates beginning understanding of the grade level standard or target.
- 0.5 - Demonstrates misunderstandings about prerequisite knowledge and/or skills necessary to meet the grade level end of year standard (expectation) or target.

The goal is that learners will achieve the critical content, and their work will earn a grade of 3.0 by the end of the school year or at the end of instruction for each grade level standard. If that happens, learners are more likely to be prepared for and find success at the next grade level. Students commonly demonstrate proficiency levels of 1.0 at the beginning of instruction for any new standards in their grade level. At times, students may receive a score of 0.5 at the beginning of the year or before instruction begins on a new standard. To receive a 4.0 score, students must demonstrate that their level of understanding exceeds the standards set for their grade level.

### **Where can I find my child's grades?**

Click on the "Standards Grades" tab in the parent portal in Power School (grades K-6). Sample:

**Standards Progress: LeDoux, Samuel**

Show Completed Classes

Language 3 (Aldean, Jason)	B1	T1	Y1
(L) Language Standards	0.5	--	--
Determine meanings of unknown and multiple-meaning word and phrases	0.5	--	--
- Determine meanings of new words formed when a known affix is added	0.5	--	--
(W) Writing Standards	--	2	2
-Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences	--	2	2
Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters	--	3	3
Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings	--	1	1

### **What do these codes mean: B1, T1, T2, T3, and Y1?**

B1 is a baseline score or pre-test. It represents a student's understanding of a standard before in-depth instruction has taken place. Teachers use baseline scores to plan their instruction based on what students already know or don't know. Elementary students receive grades at the end of each trimester (T1, T2, and T3) and at the end of the year (Y1). Middle and high school students receive grades each quarter (Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4) and at semester time (S1 and S2).

### **What does the gray box mean?**

If you see a gray box on your child's report card, that means the student's new learning for that standard has not been assessed during the current grading period but will be in the future. A gray box may also appear once a student has mastered a standard (3.0) and is no longer being assessed on that skill.

### **How was this change in grading practices communicated to parents?**

Informational parent meetings were held, though attendance was light. Letters are/were sent annually to parents. Educators also answer questions about Standards Based Grading as they go through the report card with parents during fall and spring conferences.

### **Why is BPS using Standards Based Grading?**

The goal is when teachers, students, and parents focus on the standards from the start of the school year learners have as many opportunities as it takes to be on track to meet the standard by the end of the year, or to have opportunities to extend their understanding beyond the grade level standard. Students, parents and teachers can set meaningful goals for improvement or advancement. This is a complex transition and an important one! Students can achieve, and

our system, including our feedback system, needs to be clear about where students are on the learning progression, from beginning (1) to having mastered (3) or excelling beyond (4).

As we learn to use Standards Based Grading in Bismarck Public Schools, we can expect to see:

### **Student Benefits**

- Students as partners in their own learning.
- Students monitoring their own progress toward the achievement of learning targets.
- Learning targets that are clearly defined.
- Students understanding the expectations and purpose of each learning experience.
- Multiple opportunities and ways for students to demonstrate mastery.
- Students who can think critically and solve real-world problems.
- All students achieving their highest potential.

### **Parent Benefits**

- Parents monitoring their students' progress on current learning targets that link to upcoming targets in the next grades up to graduation.
- Parents receiving information about what their child knows and is able to do separate from task management skills.
- Parents know in what academic areas their child needs more support and where their learner should be pushed to higher levels.
- Discussions about task management, separate from academic grades or achievement, can inform parents about executive functioning skills that are important to the learning process.
- When seeking colleges, parents and students have a better idea of the learner's true academic ability.

### **Teacher Benefits**

- Teachers can focus on specific learning targets.
- Teachers of the same courses have the same expectations, standards, and reporting.
- Teachers work more closely together due to common goals and understandings.
- Collaboration encourages consistency between teachers more than ever.
- Expectations are clearer for teachers as well as students.
- Teachers know exactly where students stand in their progress toward learning targets and what support to provide.
- Assessment results help teachers determine when students need extra help and when they

need more challenging work.

- Professional development is focused on teachers helping students achieve at higher levels.

**Did BPS start using Standards Based Grading because it's part of the Common Core?**

No. Bismarck Public Schools started implementing Standards Based Grading in 2007-2008 before North Dakota adopted the Common Core in 2011.

**Are other North Dakota school district using Standards Based Grading (SBG)?**

Yes. Mandan and Fargo schools use SBG in grades K-5. Hillsboro uses SBG in grades 1-5 reading and grade 3 math. Grafton and Cavalier are also moving towards Standards Based Grading.

**Why are middle schools also assessing student behavior?**

A behavior rubric is used to assess middle school students on the 3 Rs: Being Responsible, Being Respectful, and Reaching for Higher Standards. These behaviors are important for student learning, but they are reported separate from a student's academic achievement.

For example, a student could be doing exceptional work but not handing assignments in on time. Instead of reducing the student's grade for late work, the student may receive an N for Needs Improvement in the behavior of Being Responsible. The other symbols used by teachers on the Behavior Rubric are M for Meets Goal and P for Progressing towards the goal.

**What is listed on the elementary behavior scale?**

Elementary students are given the same scores (see above) on the following behaviors:

- Responsibility for learning
- Responds to teacher-directed activities
- Demonstrates self-monitoring
- Interacts positively with peers and adults
- Puts forth effort
- Creating, imagining and innovating
- Critical thinking and problem-solving

**How can I learn more about how Standards Based Grading works?**

Please visit with your child's teachers or the principal. This document can also be found on the district website under the Parents tab on top at <http://www.bismarckschools.org>. For helpful tips about math, visit <http://www.mec-math.org/math-at-home/helping-with-homework>.

*If you have questions or concerns, please e-mail BPS Community Relations Director Renae Walker, [renae\\_walker@bismarckschools.org](mailto:renae_walker@bismarckschools.org) or call her at 701-323-4091.*