

WEST FARGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ELEMENTARY
STANDARDS-BASED GRADING & REPORTING

GUIDEBOOK for EDUCATORS



Table of Contents

Section One	Purpose and Reasoning for Standards-based Grading	3
Section Two	Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum	4
Section Three	Scores Defined	5
Section Four	Frequently Asked Questions	8
Section Five	References	11

Section One – Purpose and Reasoning

The purpose of a report card is to communicate with all stakeholders regarding progress toward district identified content learning standards and Approaches to Learning skills. It indicates the learner’s learning strengths and where additional practice is needed.

Research on Standards-Based Grading

Research, education experts, and practitioners have emphasized that assessment and grading practices need to:

- 1) have meaning
- 2) support learning
- 3) be consistent across classrooms and
- 4) enhance motivation to learn (O’Connor, 2011).

In addition to the four overarching expectations surrounding assessment and grading, Schimmer (2016) acknowledges that Standards-based grading (SBG) and assessments practices have a significant impact on learners’ growth mindset and self-confidence.

Effective assessment practices provide the descriptive feedback for learners to improve on their learning. This form of feedback occurs while the learning is occurring (formative assessment). Scores are a form of feedback to a learner, indicating their progress toward reaching the standards. Learners and families need a precise picture of what has been learned and what still needs to be learned. Research has indicated that grading and reporting around specific standards, while using formative assessment with feedback relating to the progress toward the standard/learning target, significantly improves learner achievement and motivation. Black and William (1998) and Hattie (2009) meta-analysis demonstrates that high-quality formative assessment and feedback is one of the leading educational practices to positively impact learner achievement. Standards-based grading and assessment practices provide the methodology that includes accuracy, meaning, consistency, and motivation for all learners to achieve.

Section Two – Guaranteed & Viable Curriculum

A strong Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum ensures that our district is committed to learner learning.

“Guaranteed” **means** that all learners, regardless of their teacher or school, will have access to the same content, knowledge, and skills across the district. “Viable” means schools make sure that the necessary time is available and protected so students will be able to learn the guaranteed curriculum (Marzano).

WFPS Elementary Schools Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum Requirements

District level	Building/Team Level
Scope and Sequence that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standards• Enduring Understandings• Essential Questions• Trimester Proficiency Scales that align to the categories on the Report Card	Module/Unit Guides that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enduring Understandings, Essential Questions, and Proficiency Statements from the District-wide Scope & Sequence and Proficiency Scales• Specific Learning Targets linked to Standards• Resources - Lessons and/or Activities - Formative Assessments - Scoring Rubrics

Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum and PLCs

Having a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum (GVC) drives our Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and ensures equity amongst our schools and classrooms.

- What do we want our learners to know and be able to do? (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, Mattos, 2016)

The PLC process needs a vetted scope & sequence in order to have common formative assessments (designed by the team) that can be discussed and utilized to drive instruction and provide professional development for our teachers.

According to *Learning by Doing* (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, Mattos, 2016)

- The purpose of our school is to ensure all learners learn at high levels.
- Helping all learners learn requires collaboration and a collective effort.

How are Report Cards and Proficiency Scales Designed?

Each academic area has defined trimester proficiency scales for specific learning categories. These categories of reporting often include more than one academic standard as defined by the state of North Dakota. The academic standards required have been prioritized and placed into a scope and sequence, which aligns to the statements reflected in the proficiency scales for each trimester. The entire statement for the category is be considered at the end of the grading period when determining whether a learner has achieved a “3 - Proficient.” This document often refers to the entire learning category when referencing “standards.”

Section Three – Scores Defined

Mark on Report Card	Meaning of the Mark
4- Advanced	Learners reach a level of proficiency beyond the grade-level standards. They are able to apply and adapt to authentic or unpredictable situations or circumstances. These learners can draw upon their conceptual understanding to solve real problems that show a level of creativity and sophistication. These learners are able to accurately self-assess and have a depth of understanding that seamlessly connects related or previously explored concepts.
3- Proficient	Learners independently demonstrate competence within the standards. Whether basic or sophisticated, these learners have met the standards and are capable of selecting the appropriate strategy for most situations or circumstances. With assistance, these learners can occasionally apply their proficiency to more authentic situations or circumstances. While they haven't consistently achieved more advanced demonstrations, these learners have fully met the expectations of the intended learning.
2- Approaching	Learners are those who inconsistently demonstrate an understanding of the grade-level standards, and sometimes require assistance and guidance to reach full proficiency. Connections to related or previously explored concepts are either minimal or inconsistent. Learners will occasionally reach the proficiency level on some standards, while also demonstrating some learning at the novice level. These learners have some transferable skills and a limited conceptual understanding that goes beyond right or wrong.
1- Novice	Learners are those who can only demonstrate a very basic understanding of the grade-level standards and concepts. These learners are at the beginning stages of learning; explanations and demonstrations are task specific, inconsistent, linear, and isolated in that they show little connection to any related or previously explored concepts. These learners often operate at the recall and replication level.
IE- Insufficient Evidence	Not enough evidence has been collected at this time.
NA-Not Assessed	This component was not assessed in depth during this marking period.
* Asterisk	Modifications: shift the expectations from the grade-level. (Asterisk) Accommodations: Supports put in place to help achieve grade-level expectations. (No Asterisk)
Tom Schimmer, <i>Grading From the Inside Out</i>	

The asterisk * is ONLY utilized when the student is being taught and assessed on non-grade level standards.				
Grade	Approaches to Learning		Grade	Profile of a Graduate
K-5	Asterisk available in collaboration with the MTSS specialist. (Counselor, Dean, School Psych, SPED, Title I, EL, or 504 case manager) IF the standards are MODIFIED by the special education teacher. ACCOMODATIONS may be made and students may be assessed without the asterisk.		6-8	Asterisk available in collaboration with the MTSS specialist. (Counselor, Dean, School Psych, SPED, Title I, EL, or 504 case manager) IF the standards are MODIFIED by the special education teacher. ACCOMODATIONS may be made and students may be assessed without the asterisk.
Grade	Subject	Student Status	Content Standards	Technical Reading and Writing
6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Science Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate Core for ELA Supplemental services for ELA 	NO asterisk available – grade level standards may be ACCOMODATED but NOT MODIFIED. All students must be taught toward the grade level standards.	Asterisk available in collaboration with the MTSS specialist. (SPED, Title I, EL, Reading, or 504 case manager) IF the standards are MODIFIED by the special education teacher. ACCOMODATIONS may be made within the standards and students may be assessed without the asterisk.
Grade	Subject	Student Status	Content Standards	
K-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language Arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate Core for ELA Supplemental services for ELA 	Asterisk available <u>in collaboration</u> with the MTSS specialist. (SPED, Title I, EL, Reading, or 504 case manager) IF the standards are MODIFIED by that specialist. ACCOMODATIONS may be made within the standards and students may be assessed without the asterisk as well.	
Grade	Subject	Student Status	Content Standards	
K-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Math 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate Core for Math Supplemental services for Math 	Asterisk available <u>in collaboration</u> with the MTSS specialist. (SPED, Title I, EL, Reading, or 504 case manager) IF the standards are MODIFIED by that specialist. ACCOMODATIONS may be made within the standards and students may be assessed without the asterisk as well.	
Grade	Subject	Student Status	Content Standards	
K-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art Music Health/PE FACS CTE Foreign Lang 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IEP or 504 that directly impacts the acquisition of the grade level standards. 	Asterisk available <u>in collaboration</u> with the MTSS specialist. (SPED, Title I, EL, Reading, or 504 case manager) IF the standards are MODIFIED by the specialist.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodations examples include: content read aloud, assessments in a small group setting, extra time, the option of communicating verbally rather than in writing, more white space on a worksheet, classroom or school-wide incentives, preferential seating, taking a break, etc. ID case managers should discuss any questions with SPED coordinators. 				

Learners on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP/Special Education):

- The IEP takes precedence over the grade level standards and proficiency scales. The special education teacher/team will review which specific standards may be met on grade level for each learner.
 - If the team determines that a learner COULD potentially attain achievement of a grade level standard with some accommodations, they shall be given that opportunity. If the learner is taught the grade level standard, that standard/category would **NOT** be marked with an asterisk.
 - If the team determines that a learner needs to be taught at a level that is not in alignment with the grade level standards, that standard/category would be marked with an asterisk.
- A learning target or objective on the IEP that is not on grade level may or may not be reported on the standard report card. If the learning target or objective is closely aligned to a report card category and makes sense to communicate in that manner, it may be reported with or without the asterisk as needed.
- Learners on an IEP who are working on modified standards will receive a score of 2 or 3 with an asterisk to indicate that progress is based on non-grade level standards.
 - Since standards are modified for the individual, it is not appropriate to report “4- Exceeding Expectations” with an asterisk. If the learner has exceptionally exceeded expectations, achievement may be considered in reference to the grade-level standard and reported without an asterisk.
 - If a score of “1-Novice” is appropriate, there is no need to include an asterisk since the communication is an indication that minimal learning has occurred.
- In addition to the standard report card, a progress report addressing the IEP is an excellent form of parent communication and learner feedback.

Learners Learning English (EL):

- English Learners must have access to the Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum designated by the school district after one year of receiving services for language instruction in all academic areas other than English Language Arts.
 - English Learners must be given the opportunity and taught to the grade level standard with necessary accommodations, that standard/category is **NOT** marked with an asterisk.
 - A specialist providing specific supplemental interventions to English Learners will determine in collaboration with the core instruction teacher whether a standard/category is marked with an asterisk to indicate that instruction has been modified.
 - The need for modifications for English language learners is generally time-limited since learners will be expected to increase to a level of English proficiency where only accommodations are required.
- A trimester unit guide for a sheltered instruction course may be inclusive of accommodations to help clarify instructional practices and a scaffold of learning targets, the standard/categories on the report card are **NOT** marked with an asterisk.
- In English Language Arts, a learner's ACCESS score will help inform the instructional level. If not in alignment with the grade level standards, achievement in that standard/category would be marked with an asterisk accordingly.
- In addition to the standard report card, a progress report addressing language instruction is an excellent form of parent communication and learner feedback.

Homework

Work that needs to be COMPLETED in order to gather evidence of student learning and understanding.

Work assigned to give students PRACTICE at home. This work would not be factored into evidence of student learning and understanding. It's simply a catalyst to encourage the learning and understanding.

Redoing Work

Allowing students to redo work is really about allowing students to continue with a growth mindset and continue to work to learn and understand. If a student is not proficient, time and opportunity are given so that the student can work toward that proficiency.

Students may redo assignments, projects, quizzes, tests – anything where they can take advantage of the time to dig deeper in order to learn and understand the concepts and skills that they have not yet attained.

Allowing students to redo work or retake assessments is not an open door to collecting student evidence for weeks or months beyond when it was assigned or due. Students need to articulate a plan to better learn and understand. Student agency is a large part of this concept and something that needs to be taught and encouraged.

A component of standards-based grading is separating learner behavior from academic skills and performance. On the middle school standards-based report, each teacher will mark his or her learners on three profile of a graduate skills each trimester. The proficiency scale will stay the same each trimester and for each score in middle school.

Section Four – Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main differences from traditional grading?

- Standards-based grading focuses on a learner’s progress toward meeting grade level standards rather than a simple accumulation of points.
- It uses a number scale (4, 3, 2, 1) rather than a letter scale (A, B, C, D, F).
- To earn the highest mark of a “4,” learners must demonstrate exceptional understanding of the standard, not just general understanding of the standard, requiring learners to show they can think more deeply and tackle more complex problems on their assignments.
- It is less subjective to being influenced by non-academic behaviors.
- Scores are determined by each learner’s ability to meet standards; not on how he or she compares to other learners in the class. All learners are expected to meet or exceed standards. Course scores are not based “on a curve;” all learners that meet high standards can receive high scores.

What are the advantages of Standards-Based Grading?

- Allows learners, teachers, and families to gauge each learner’s progress according to each standard or category of learning.
- More accurately represents learner’s knowledge and skills at each trimester.
- Provides multiple opportunities for learners to show what they know.
- Doesn’t penalize learners for mistakes made during the learning process.
- Increases consistency in grading policies and criteria across teachers and schools.

Why aren’t formative assessments or homework assignments always scored or reported?

- Formative assessments and homework allow learners to try out what they are learning without having to worry about how it affects their final score.
- Teachers create formative assignments to gain insight into levels of learner learning and to check for gaps in learners’ understanding.
- Homework is used for practice, to prepare learners for upcoming learning, and to reinforce and extend learning, but **NEVER** to learn material for the first time.
- When learners don’t complete homework, it becomes evident in their *Approaches to learning* scores, formative assessment feedback, and benchmark assessment scores.
- When these warning signs arise, learners can then (with the help of their teachers and families) set goals and develop plans to better support their own learning.
- Under Standards-based grading, learners are not relieved of the responsibility to participate in all aspects of their classes. Frequent independent practice of what is taught in class aids long-term learning.

How is indicating that so many learners are “proficient” possible?

- If the Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum for our district is successful, approximately 80% of our learners will be proficient.
- Each category receives a separate score, providing more precise feedback than one overall score for an academic area.
- An analogy that may be helpful is to think of it like a “driver’s license,” which is held by both a driver who barely passed the test as well as one who achieved 100%.

What happens if there is not enough evidence collected to assess a learner’s understanding or progress on a standard?

- Every effort is made to collect the **necessary** evidence through assignments, assessments, and observations of learner work throughout the trimester.
 - This may include additional work time as structured by the school within or in addition to the school day, and/or audio or video recording or learner evidence, and/or alternative assignments if the original assignments are deemed no longer appropriate or unnecessary.
- It is allowable to enter a final trimester score of IE indicating insufficient evidence.

What evidence do I need to collect?

- Teachers can collect information about learner understanding through observations, questioning, and listening to their partner or small group discussions; or they can create more formal assessments like an exit slip, answering a question with a technology tool, completing a worksheet, providing a written response to a prompt, or taking a quiz or test.
- PLCs are focused on the four questions and the process of collecting and analyzing learner work to help inform instruction and increase learner achievement; therefore, determining the evidence that is needed is an integral part of the PLC process. Tracking learner data on the day-to-day work related to the curriculum brings a deeper meaning to the PLC process.
- The district-wide curriculum team will work to provide sample rubrics, prompts, projects, and assessment questions that align with the proficiency scales in order to help guide teachers and their PLC teams in this process.

Are scores collected based on the whole standard or only on the part of the standard currently being taught?

- Scores recorded to provide learner feedback and inform teacher instruction throughout the trimester are scored in relation to what is currently being taught. Did the learner meet the expectations that were set for the assignment?
 - Individual learner data indicates a trend toward the designated proficiency scale.
 - Collective learner data helps to inform instruction, allowing the teacher to adjust and reteach if the majority of the learners are not achieving as expected or accelerate if the majority of the learners have already attained the skill.

Is there a formula to help me calculate the score for each of my learners?

- The short answer is “no” – there is not a formula. Teachers utilize formative assessment to inform their instruction throughout the grading period, gathering learner evidence along the way. When it is time to report learner progress, it is time to reflect and determine whether each learner is “proficient” as defined.
 - If the answer is “YES,” they attain a 3, and consideration is given whether they are “advanced” and could receive a 4.
 - If the answer is “NO,” or “NOT QUITE,” they attain a 1 or a 2 using the proficiency scale as a guideline.
- Teachers utilize professional judgement, online trend data, and a reflective process to assign final scores each trimester.

What if I am surprised by how a learner performs on a summative assessment?

- If a learner does not perform as a teacher would expect, more evidence is collected.
- If there is a surprise and a learner suddenly seems to have learned what they haven’t been demonstrating in class; confirm this new found understanding with a conversation or further

demonstration.

- If there is a surprise and a learner suddenly cannot perform as previously observed, have a conversation and determine an appropriate way to reassess or allow the learner to demonstrate their skills.

What are the differences between a score of “1”, “IE”, and “NA”?

- If a learner earns a 1, it means that they completed and submitted the assessment or assignment; however, their work shows a lack of understanding and little grade-level knowledge. It is important that the learner reviews this standard and works with the teacher to identify their next steps and receive further instruction to prepare for the next assessment or a retake opportunity.
- An “IE” is given when there is not enough evidence for a teacher to assess a learner’s understanding or progress towards standards. Typically, this means that a learner did not turn in or complete an assessment or assignment.
- The “NA” code is used by a teacher when a standard is not assessed that trimester. Because this is a curriculum decision based on unit pacing, there is no action that needs to be taken on the part of the learner. With multiple standards throughout the year, not all are assessed every trimester.

What does a child need to do to achieve a 4?

- It is important to understand that a 4 in Standards-based grading is not the same as earning an “A” in the traditional system.
- West Fargo Public Schools defines a 4 as “Consistently meeting most requirements for exceptional work related to course standards and demonstrating a deep level of knowledge and skill for this point in the school year.” This means that learners need to do more than simply have a basic understanding of the course. To earn a “4” learners need to demonstrate they have a greater understanding by elaborating on their answers, solving more challenging problems, or showing connections between varying concepts that they have made on their own.
- Some learners may find this aspect of Standards-based grading more challenging since “going above and beyond the minimum standard” may take extra effort and persistence.

Do learners have until the end of the trimester to turn in assignments for full credit?

- Standards-based scores are determined by whether there is evidence to show that a learner has the skills and understanding described on the proficiency scale as “proficient.”
 - This may be demonstrated by one assignment, assessment, or observation – or may require the collection of several pieces of evidence; each category is unique.
- Learners may demonstrate that evidence at any time in the trimester.
- Learners who do not complete assignments in a timely manner will not be “proficient” on the *Approaches to learning* scale.

If a child does everything that is asked of them, why didn’t they get a 4 (or even a 3)?

- In a Standards-Based Grading system a learner’s score depends on showing proficiency of the standards. Completing the assigned work is important to a learner’s learning, but scores will be based on what a learner can demonstrate that they know.
- Scores determined in our Standards-based grading system more accurately show what learners know and can do.
- If a learner completes all assigned work, but is unable to demonstrate the knowledge and skills, the learner will not receive a 3.

Section Five - References

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment*.

Chappuis, J., Stiggins, R., Chappuis, S., & Arter, J. (2012). *Classroom assessment for learner learning: doing it right -- doing it well* (2nd ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006:

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/00346543076001001>

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., Many, T. W., & Mattos, M. (2016). *Learning by doing: a handbook for professional learning communities at work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, a division of Solution Tree.

Fernández-Alonso, Suárez-Álvarez, & Muñiz, 2015:

<https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/edu-0000032.pdf>

Galloway, Conner, & Pope, 2013:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00220973.2012.745469>

Guskey, T. R. (2009). *Practical solutions for serious problems in standards-based grading*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning: A synthesis of meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: New York.

Heflebower, T., Hoegh, J. K., Warrick, P. B., Hoback, M., McInteer, M., Clemens, B., & Marzano, R. J. (2014). *A school leader's guide to standards-based grading*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.

Marzano & Pickering, 2007:

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar07/vol64/num06/The-Case-For-and-Against-Homework.aspx>

O'Connor, K. (2011). *A repair kit for grading: 15 fixes for broken scores*. Boston: Pearson.

Schimmer, T. (2016). *Grading from the inside out: Bringing accuracy to learner assessment through a standards-based mindset*.

Townsley, M., & Buckmiller, T. (2016, June 02). What does the research say about standards-based grading? Retrieved March 05, 2017, from <http://mctownsley.net/standards-based-grading-research/>.