

STANDARDS-BASED GRADING PRACTICES

American schools have long had a history of teachers evaluating student work in individual and isolated ways. O'Connor quotes Guskey in saying: "[Grading] practices are not the result of careful thought or sound evidence. . . . Rather, they are used because teachers experienced these practices as students and, having little training or experience with other options, continue their use" (as cited in O'Connor, 2009). In short, many of the traditional grading practices of American teachers are unfair, inconsistent, and do not clearly communicate student achievement to students or their parents/guardians.

Bailey Charter Elementary School is committed to meeting the needs of all learners. **Standards-based practices** that are grounded in the formative assessment process provide clarity in what each student knows, understands, and is able to do, as measured against the curriculum. Such clarity empowers educators to respond instructionally, which ultimately results in improved student learning. The purpose of this section is to provide updates, information, and resources pertaining to standards-based practices in Bailey Charter Elementary School.

Instructional Practices

As part of the Board's duties, it approves a curriculum consistent with State and Federal requirements. The Principal administers and monitors the curriculum through quality instruction and ongoing assessment. Teachers deliver quality instruction for all students.

In furtherance of these goals, the Board adopts beliefs and instructional practices that align to those foundational aspects of the learning experience, as well as the School's Strategic Plan.

The following beliefs and practices are consistent with high level learning for all students:

- All students are capable of high levels of learning.
- Learning develops over time and students will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning.
- The expectations, learning targets, and behavioral goals associated with the standards at each grade level must be clearly articulated to students and parents/guardians.
- There must be school-wide consistency in the reporting and measurement of progress toward the designated standards.
- Teachers must gather ongoing evidence of progress toward the standards so instruction can be differentiated and include descriptive feedback for the students.
- Teachers must use data to evaluate the effectiveness of practice.
- Assigned work must support student's attainment toward the standards.
- Communication about student's performance as measured against the standards is an expectation.

GUIDING PRINCIPALS FOR GRADING, HOMEWORK, AND ASSESSMENTS

Fair and consistent standards-based practices provide students, parents/guardians, and teachers more accurate information about exactly what students should be learning and what they actually have learned as a result of instruction. The following *Guiding Principles* were developed to clearly communicate these practices. A more detailed description for each principle is provided throughout this document.

Content area grades will accurately communicate only academic achievement of the standards.

- Academic grades will not be based on behaviors such as work habits (missed/late assignments), participation, social development, attendance, or organization.

EXTRA CREDIT

Extra credit and bonus points can distort students' records of achievement in any content area. Grades are broken as a communication tool if teachers give points for things that do not demonstrate achievement of specified standards. Learning is about achieving higher levels of knowledge and skill, not completing more work or accumulating more points.

If the knowledge or skills tapped by extra credit or bonus points are essential for demonstrating achievement of the standard, they should be a feature of the original assessment. If not, they don't belong on the assessment to begin with. "Extra credit" practices such as bringing items for the teacher, bringing classroom supplies, obtaining points for turning something in on time, attending events, or other activities unrelated to learning are not appropriate.

Extra credit and bonus points will not be included in students' academic grade.

- Points given for things that do not demonstrate achievement of specified standards do not accurately reflect student achievement of standards.
- If knowledge or skills tapped by extra credit or bonus points are essential for demonstrating achievement of the standard, they will be a feature of the original assessment.

Students will engage in independent learning/homework as a component of the Instructional Framework.

- The purpose of independent learning/homework will be clearly communicated to students.
- Independent learning tasks for the purpose of building fluency or review and practice of past learning (daily practice) will not be included in a summative grade.
- Independent learning tasks for the purpose of applying knowledge or extending learning occur as student solidify their learning and can be included in a summative grade.

Students are expected to complete all required work by due dates.

- If students fail to submit required work on time, they will receive increased supports that do not affect the grade.
- If work is not submitted by the deadline, the report card will indicate "Insufficient Progress (I)."

All students will have multiple and varied assessment opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the standards.

- Additional opportunities may include retakes of assessments, student revisions of products based on descriptive feedback, or alternative methods of assessment.
- All students learn the content, not just the ones who can learn within established timelines.
- Retakes will be awarded full credit in order to recognize more current achievement.

Zeros will not be assigned for missing evidence. An I (for "Insufficient Progress") will be recorded when a student has not submitted required evidence of learning.

Zeros are ineffective in communicating student learning because the resulting grade is an inaccurate representation of student achievement. Zeros give a numerical value to something that has never been assessed, they can have counter-productive effects on student motivation, and mathematically misrepresent the final achievement score. It is the student's responsibility to produce sufficient evidence required so the teacher can make a valid summary judgment. Assigning a zero abdicates students of this responsibility in their learning.

- Teachers will provide opportunities for students to provide sufficient evidence so the teacher can make a valid summary judgment.
- **Assigning a zero abdicates students of this responsibility in their learning.**

INDEPENDENT LEARNING TASKS AND HOMEWORK

Through independent learning tasks, students assume more responsibility for their learning and are given opportunities to apply what they have learned to new situations or experiences.

There are four main purposes for independent learning tasks.

- Purpose 1: Building fluency
- Purpose 2: Applying knowledge
- Purpose 3: Reviewing and practicing past learning
- Purpose 4: Extending learning across topics and disciplines

While a teacher's intent for each learning will determine whether its use is formative or summative, Purposes 1 and 3 serve primarily formative functions and occur while learning is in progress. Purpose 2 and 4 serve primarily summative functions and occur as students consolidate their knowledge and skills at the end of a sequence of learning. There is flexibility depending on the teacher's intent and use of the independent learning task.

Independent learning tasks/homework can be used as a process of concept development and can therefore provide students with opportunities for investigation, synthesis of learning, and risk taking, without consequence.

School Homework Statement

Homework is an opportunity for students to practice skills, apply knowledge, review and build on past learning, and extend learning. Homework is individualized and based on each student's progress towards established standards. The purpose of the assignment will determine whether or not a grade is given and will be clearly articulated to students.

LATE AND MISSING WORK

- The true intent of teaching is learning; learning occurs best through practices of differentiation. Not all students learn at the same rate; therefore, penalties distort the achievement record the grade is intended to communicate, can harm student motivation, and for many students do not result in changes in behavior.
- Students are expected to complete their assigned work in preparation for developing content and conceptual knowledge and performing well on academic achievement assessments. Since the goal of teaching is learning, it is far better to set up support systems that reduce or eliminate the problem of late work.
- The appropriate consequence for failing to complete an assignment is completing the assignment.
- To clarify: "due date" indicates when an item is initially due to the teacher for evaluation; "deadline" indicates a firm, final date for completion (item is given an I for Insufficient Progress after this point).

MULTIPLE AND VARIED ASSESSMENTS

The purpose for multiple and varied assessment opportunities (quizzes, tests, checking for understanding, etc.) is to ensure that **all students** learn the content, not just those who can learn within established timelines. The goal is for students to persist and advance in their learning so they can achieve greater success in the future. Because of this, all students should have multiple opportunities to demonstrate higher levels of achievement. These opportunities may be initiated by the teacher or the student, but always at the teacher's discretion. Additional opportunities may include retakes of an alternate form of an assessment (e.g., Form B instead of Form A), student revisions of work products based on descriptive feedback, or alternative methods of assessment (e.g., an oral response rather than a written test).

Students may be provided opportunities to demonstrate learning over time with assessments that address previously taught content, projects, activities, and assignments. These processes provide opportunities to use more recent evidence of learning to ascertain a summative grade that indicates the overall level of the student's mastery. **Second or multiple assessments do not, however, mean an endless set of opportunities for students**, but it does mean students have an opportunity to earn full credit when retaking an assessment.

It is reasonable for additional learning to be required prior to reassessment. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) will determine the criteria for taking a retake, such as the number of opportunities and the format for re-assessing. Such criteria will be clearly communicated to students. For example, we want students to realize, "I didn't take that first test seriously. Now it's going to cost me some time with friends during my recess to take another test." The point behind offering multiple and varied assessment opportunities is for students to learn from their mistakes so that they can meet with more success in the future. "Reassessment is the opportunity and students learn the responsibility" (as cited in O'Connor).

FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

In the classroom, two forms of assessment are used to ensure that all students are learning.

- Formative assessment provides feedback for the teacher to make instructional decisions and for the student to adjust their learning. The formative assessment process is a powerful instructional strategy.
- Summative assessment evaluates student learning at the end of the unit. Summative assessments can turn into a formative assessment when the student is allowed to revise and show new learning.

SEPARATING BEHAVIOR FROM GRADES

Content area grades will accurately reflect achievement of the power standards of the content area or subject area as defined by the curriculum approved by the Principal. In order for grades to communicate what students know and are able to do, grades will reflect only the student's level of academic achievement. Academic grades will not be based on behaviors such as work habits (missed/late assignments), participation, social development, attendance, or organization.

EXPLAINING CONTENT AREA EXPECTATIONS

While it is an expectation that you communicate what grading and assessment looks like in your content area, the statements below offer examples to assist you if needed.

Examples of what you might say to students:

- You are responsible for learning just as I am responsible for leading that learning and being your partner in that learning.
- You will need to provide quality evidence of your learning; I will help you know what quality evidence looks like. You may have good ideas on this too.
- If you do not do well on a test or assessment in this class, you will need to demonstrate relearning before you are allowed to be reassessed. This is how this will work in this class.
- Doing your practice work on time is the only way that I will be able to give you accurate and timely feedback on how you're doing in relation to the standards.
- What's really important to me is that you LEARN in this class. This means we are not going to be so focused on looking for points or wondering if certain work "counts." This also means I am not going to let you take the easy way out of being satisfied with a zero and moving on; the important thing is that you learn the material and show that you understand that material.
- Your behaviors in this class definitely do matter - make no mistake about that. It's just that they will be reported separately from your academic achievement. It's much clearer to you (and your parents/guardians) how you are really understanding your learning standards if behaviors are not mixed into your academic grades.

How students will be graded

- A 0-100 percent scale will be utilized at the secondary level in Bailey Charter Elementary School.
- When utilizing a rubric with a 1-4 scale, teachers will show the connection between a student's performance on the rubric to the assigned grade within the 0-100 percent scale. This connection will be communicated at the onset of its use and throughout the learning progression for the purpose of providing feedback.
- When a rubric is converted to a letter grade, the 0-100 percent scale will be employed.

Minimum Percent	Letter Grade	Standard	
92.5	A	Exceeding	4
89.5	A-	Exceeding	4
86.5	B+	Meeting	3
82.5	B	Meeting	3
79.5	B-	Meeting	3
76.5	C+	Approaching	2
72.5	C	Approaching	2
69.5	C-	Approaching	2
66.5	D+	Below	1
62.5	D	Below	1
59.5	D-	Below	1
59 and below	F	Insufficient Progress	IP

There seems to be inconsistent use of one grading scale A-F.

There has *always* been an inconsistent use of the grading scale. Traditionally, each teacher has created and implemented their own grading practices. Consequently, students performing at the same level in the same content area, but who are assigned different teachers, have earned different grades. The work underway with standards-based grading will improve this practice for students.

How does this impact homework and the 0% weight to homework?

This answer comes down to the purpose of homework. If the purpose is to practice a skill that the student has learned but needs to refine in preparation for an upcoming assessment, the homework should not be included in grade. We call this independent practice. If the purpose of homework is to introduce a new concept/skill that will be addressed in an upcoming class, the homework would not be included in the grade. The reason for this is that it is not appropriate to grade a student on an assignment when prior instruction has not taken place. Rather, the student's performance on this particular assignment would be formative in nature, and it would guide the teacher in planning instruction.

If the purpose of the homework is to work on a project that takes multiple days to complete, or to finish an assignment that did not get completed in class, it is up to the individual teacher how this particular assignment is included in the overall grade. Perhaps, for example, the assignment is deemed as an assessment where percentage points and a letter grade will be determined.