

Leonard J. Tyl Middle School

Parent Guide to Standards Based Grading

What is standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading communicates how students are performing on a set of clearly defined learning targets called standards. The purpose of standards-based grading is to identify what a student knows, or is able to do, in relation to pre-established learning targets, as opposed to simply averaging grades/scores over the course of a grading period, which can mask what a student has learned, or not learned, in a specific course.

Teachers have set standards in every content area six years ago and have been teaching to standards for all this time. Although our report card has never changed its look until this year, all Tyl teachers are already grading standards. It is our hope that with the change of report card, students and parents will have more specific information about student's strengths and areas in which they still need to make progress.

For the Tyl Standards Based Report Card we have decided to create a hybrid between standards based reporting and traditional reports. Teachers will be grading on a 4 point scale using increments of .5. Teachers will record grades in their ASPEN gradebook utilizing this scale. On the report card, students and parents will see a number between 0 and 4 next to each standard and an average of the standards as an overall grade for each course. For Example;

Reading	3.00
Cite evidence to support analysis	2
Determine and analyze literary elements	4
Determine and analyze text structure	3
Engage in collaborative discussions	2
Determine the meaning of words and phrases	4

The report card will have a key to convert the number to a letter grade. In addition the same scale will be used for 21st Century skills which will focus on work habits. We define them further on in this explanation as well as talk more about the 4 point scale.

How does this improve grading for a parent?

Here is an answer from a parent:

As a parent, when my child has a grade of 3.0 or a B on the report card, I get the general impression that he is doing well. If I want to know what he could do to improve his grade, that 3.0 does not give me a great deal of specific information about what could be improved? When I look at the example above, I see the overall grade of 3.00. That is the same information we have always had in our grades. In addition to the overall grade, I can also look and see how to improve in that course. I look at the standards where the score was 2 and see that he could raise that grade by focusing on "cite evidence to support analysis" and "engaging in collaborative discussions." To me as a parent that translates to having a talk with my child and encouraging them to focus on including reasons and evidence in writing and to contribute more in group discussions.

How does standards-based grading differ from traditional grading?

Unlike traditional grading systems, a standards-based grading system measures a student's mastery of grade-level standards by prioritizing the most recent, consistent level of performance. A student who may have struggled at the beginning of a course, when first

encountering new material, may still be able to demonstrate mastery of key content/concepts by the end of a grading period.

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.

Standards-based report cards separate academic performance from work habits and behavior in order to provide parents a more accurate view of a student's progress in both academic and behavioral areas. 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 marks determined?

A student's performance on a series of assessments both formative (practice exercises) and summative (quizzes and tests) will be used to determine a student's overall grade in a course. Practice assignments (homework) are just that, practice, and thus should serve primarily as a source of feedback and instructional support for both students and teachers. Scores on practice assignments should not be used as a major component of a student's academic grade. These practice exercises will be about 10% of the overall grade. Teachers may require students to complete all of their practice work prior to allowing them to take, or retake, a summative assessment.

Will my student still receive teacher comments on their report card?

No. Rather than teacher comments teachers will be giving marks for 21st Century Skills which are listed below. Each of these will be rated 0-4 and will be assessed for each subject area.

1. Self-discipline; Prepared for class, Completes homework and classwork on time, Organized, Listens and follows directions, Works neatly, Puts in effort until understanding achieved, Works through challenges, Demonstrates pride in work

2. Collaboration/Community; Works cooperatively with peers in group projects and work, Listens carefully, Respectfully addresses differences, Voices opinions in an appropriate (polite) manner, Active community member

3. Independent Learner (Self-direction); Self-reflective, Asks questions in class, Asks for help and utilizes available interventions as needed, Tracks grades in Aspen, Sets goals and works to reach them, Identifies and uses effective strategies and resources, problem solver

3. Leadership/Responsibility/Respect; Produces high quality work, Sets goals and works to reach them, Values peers, Motivates others, Demonstrates personal integrity, Able to organize peers for a purpose

What will each of the numbers in the 4 point scale represent?

1. A score of (4) would indicate that a student exceeds a standard by consistently demonstrating an advanced level of understanding and/or the ability to apply their knowledge at a higher level. A (4) does not indicate above grade level work since standards can be different at each grade level. If standards are the same at each grade level then the content and expectations are more rigorous as students move through the grades.

2. A score of (3) would indicate that a student has independently achieved the standard. The student demonstrates mastery of the standard.

3. A score of (2) would indicate that a student is developing an understanding of a standard, but still may be in need of additional instruction and/or support.

4. A score of (1) would indicate minimal understanding of a standard. The student demonstrates limited evidence of understanding the standard.

How should a student/parent view student think about grades on a 4 point scale compared to the A-F system? What is considered to be an A in the new grading system?

You cannot really compare a traditional grading system to standards-based grading. It is like comparing “apples to oranges”. 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 2.8 or above is defined as meeting grade level standards and indicates that a student has demonstrated mastery of the skills that were expected to be learned by that point in the grading period. A score of 4 means a student has exceeded the standard. Although grades will be reported out as numbers with decimal points, the Tyl report card will provide a conversation scale similar to the one below.

A+	4.0
A	3.7-3.9
A-	3.4-3.6
B+	3.1-3.3
B	2.8-3.0
B-	2.5-2.7
C+	2.2-2.6
C	1.9-2.1
C-	1.6-1.8
D+	1.3-1.5
D	1.1-1.2
D-	1.0
F	Below 1.0

Is it possible to achieve a grade of 4?

Yes it is. However, a score of (4) indicates performance that is consistently above what is expected for mastery at that point in the school year. Level 4 work would indicate a much deeper understanding of a standard, the ability to apply that knowledge, make connections and extend learning beyond the targeted goal.

If a student is being accelerated in any grade level/subject area with above grade level standards or materials, is that student required to get a 4 on his report card?

By definition, level 4 work reflects higher order thinking, application, connection and extension of targeted goals. Students who receive (4) may not be achieving above grade level but are working a level of understanding that indicates they have in depth understanding of the content. Achieving a (4) does not preclude a teacher from suggesting areas for improvement. Receiving a (4) does not guarantee a students’ performance will remain at that level across all reporting periods, or for all course standards.

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

Intervention classes are in place at Tyl Middle School to support learners who are behind in math and reading. 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 interventions both in and outside the classroom will 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.

How will I know if my child needs help?

Receiving a 1.9 or below on a report/report card can be a sign that a student is in need of extra support in the areas where they are receiving low marks. This is one benefit of a standards-based

report card, areas in need of support are clearly evident. As a parent you should reach out to your child's counselor to review intervention opportunities for your child.

How will honor roll and Presidential Scholars be determined?

Using the conversion chart we will utilize the same criteria that is currently in use to determine Honor Roll, Student of the Trimester and Presidential Scholars. That criteria is listed in your child's agenda on pages 13 & 14. There are few exceptions.

High Honor students will need to reach Mastery or above in all content areas. Mastery is a B (2.8-3.0) on the conversion chart. Students may not get a converted grade of a B- (2.5-2.7) and be on High Honors.

All students coming into eighth grade who had High Honors all six prior trimesters are eligible to be a Presidential Scholar. With the switch of grading systems they need to receive 2.8-3.0 or above in all content areas to maintain their standing as potential Presidential Scholars.

SOTT is determined by each teacher picking students with the highest grade averages both academically and in 21st Century Skills. Each teacher chooses 2 students each trimester. Presidential Scholars are students who receive High Honors each trimester for the entire three years at Tyl. It is our intention to continue to recognize and acknowledge the academic accomplishments of our students, as well as those who consistently display strong 21st Century Skills.

Where else in the area is standards-based grading being implemented?

It is important to note that our elementary schools have been utilizing a four point grading system for years, so it will not be new to the majority of our families. It is also under study, or already implemented, in a number of school districts in the area, including elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Currently New London and Norwich Public Schools use standards based reporting. Clark Lane is beginning a pilot this year.