

McBride Middle School

“Shaping generations of creative thinkers”

Standards-Based Education Handbook

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Our Standards-Based Grading Mission

The goal of McBride Middle School is to improve student learning by reporting grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning.

Our Approach

Grades need to be meaningful and accurate. Research supports aligning grading and reporting to standards. The purpose of standards-based grading is to improve student achievement on the essential standards. This measures mastery of the learning targets and understanding the standards. As we are basing students' grades on standards for each discipline, final grades are first and foremost determined by our teachers' professional opinions of your child's work against those standards. Teachers use evidence of student learning using a variety of methods. Please don't hesitate to inquire how grades for your student were determined if you are unsure.

McBride Standard Based Education

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Standards-Based Grading

Standards-based grading measures the mastery and depth of knowledge of the learning objectives. It is based on a specific set of standards that students need to meet for each grade/content level. Marks are not a comparison of one student to another, but rather a way to measure how well students are doing on grade-level/course level standards. A standards-based approach allows parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected of students and how to help them be successful in their educational program.

The Goal of Standards-Based Grading

The primary goal of standards-based grading is to improve student achievement by focusing instruction and the alignment of curriculum with the essential standards. Standards-based grading and reporting will provide better communication to students, parents, teachers, and administrators on what each student knows and is able to do according to the identified standards.

Standards-Based Grading at MMS

The goal of McBride Middle School is to improve student learning by reporting grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning.

Accurate: By basing a student's grade solely on academic factors, the teacher creates a clear picture of what the student has learned without the influence of other factors. These other factors, such as effort and attitude, are still essential, but are not part of the student's academic grade and are communicated separately.

Consistent: For each unit, the teacher will provide an explanation that describes exactly what the student will need to master. The teacher will communicate clear expectations for mastery at the beginning of a unit and these will be referenced consistently throughout the unit and semester.

Meaningful: A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place and where each student is in relation to the target. Students are taught that learning is a process, not an outcome, and their role as self-reflective learners is the most important piece of the process: Standard based education is something done with students, not to them.

Supportive of Learning: This approach supports learning by focusing on the material that has or has not been learned rather than on accumulating points to reach a certain total. The reassessment policy also supports student learning by allowing new levels of learning to replace old when a student shows improvement on an outcome.

**McBride Standard Based Grading
Statement / Beliefs**

Guiding Principle	Explanation	Classroom Practices
Fair is not always equal:	Students learn at different rates, with varied needs and demonstrate mastery in a number of ways. Demonstration of mastery and instruction will reflect the needs of all students to achieve full competencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Retakes and Revisions are allowed, for full credit ● Grades will report only what students know and can do after a period of instruction, not the routes they used to get there. ● Assessment and grading practices will be monitored to be developmentally appropriate. ● Use of differentiated instructional approaches to match student needs.
Growth Mindset: Students, teachers and families should practice a growth mindset by recognizing a failure is an opportunity to learn.	Students, teachers and families understand that risk taking is acceptable and that we learn the most from the process of falling short of mastery and continuing to work to achieve mastery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage our students to embrace and understand the process, not the outcome. ● Empower students to evaluate their situations, with respect to revisions, edits, and retakes. ● Embrace the power of “Yet” through student reflection on where they are in the process. (i.e. “eventually I will/can”).
Grades are communication, not compensation.	Students do not earn a grade. A grade is a way for students to communicate their knowledge of mastery and teachers to communicate student mastery to all stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess multiple times to establish patterns of learning. ● Feedback on all assignments. ● Grades are not used as rewards or punishments. ● Teachers will ensure that grades are accurate reports of evidence of learning.

<p>Mastery: Teach for subject mastery, not short-term memory; however, some concepts must be memorized to advance learning.</p>	<p>Students need to fully understand the material and topic, not just memorize the data for a test.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avoid assessments that only ask for basic recall. ● Ask students to apply, adapt, and re-imagine what they are learning to ensure that their understanding is both broad and deep. ● Spiral curriculum to give students opportunities to demonstrate mastery.
<p>Grading: Anything that diminishes the accuracy of a grade is removed from grading practice. Compliance is not evidence of mastery.</p>	<p>Students will be assessed on things that are directly related to the subject and their level of mastery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grades based on skill, not task completion. ● Standards will be assessed and reported individually (not averaged) to provide accurate reports of learning. ● Use only evidence of performance that is based on the standards (no extra credit, reading minutes, behavior, supplies, class participation, neatness of notebooks, homework, attendance, effort, etc.) ● Encourage students to embrace the process, not the outcome.
<p>Homework: Enables students to practice what they have already learned in class and is used for feedback.</p>	<p>Practice is essential for mastery and homework is a form of practice in which feedback is used to develop mastery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Homework practice is differentiated for student needs. ● Feedback is emphasised for student revision and academic growth. ● Practice is assigned to further students' proficiency in relation to the standard. ● Homework is a form of practice and will be not be counted in the final grade calculation.

Building Grading Practices

Guidelines

Grades will be based on proficiency scales which are connected to prioritized standards. Entries in the gradebook that count towards the final grade will be limited to course or grade level standards.

1. Extra credit or behaviors will not be included in academic grade reporting.
2. Reassessment opportunities are important for all students. Students will be encouraged to practice specific skills and offered multiple opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of standards in various ways. Retakes and revisions will be part of the process and will receive full credit: Most recent data replacing previous data.
3. Teachers will determine gradebook entries by considering multiple points of data, emphasizing the most recent data, and providing evidence to support their determination.
4. Students will be provided multiple opportunities to practice standards independently through homework or other class work. Practice assignments and activities will be consistent with classroom standards for the purpose of providing feedback. Practice assignments, including homework, will not be included as more than 5% of the final grade.
5. Increased grading consistency school wide is important. Student work will be graded on a 4 point scale. Rubrics are used to assess learning on that scale.

Grading Calculations

Report cards are given to students at the end of each of the first three Marking Periods and mailed home at the end of the year. All grades are available through MiStar: Parent Connect. If you need access to MiStar or a password, please contact the office. Begin with the classroom teacher when you have questions or concerns about a grade. The middle school years are a great age to encourage and support your student to advocate when he or she is uncertain or has a concern about his or her grade.

As we are basing students' grades on standards for each discipline, final grades are first and foremost determined by our teacher's professional opinion of your student's work against those standards. Teachers use evidence of student learning with a variety of methods. Please don't hesitate to inquire how grades for your student were determined if you are unsure. Below is the 4 point system with the grade equivalent for that scale that best translates to traditional grading practices and expectations.

McBride Grading Scale 2021-2022

Scale	Descriptor
4	Mastered: Student has mastered the standard with evidence to the degree that they can apply the skill/knowledge to a new or unfamiliar situation independently. Performance is consistent.
3	Proficient: Student meets standards with sufficient evidence to the degree that student can apply skill/knowledge with no or limited assistance to common or familiar situations. Performance is consistent.
Level 3 is the target level for student performance.	
2	Developing: Student attempts and is progressing toward standard with some evidence of learning. Student has not independently demonstrated proficiency of the standard, but does show partial understanding that suggests progress. Performance is inconsistent and some misconceptions still exist.
1	Limited: Student attempts, but has not demonstrated evidence to indicate progression toward the standard. Performance is inconsistent and many misconceptions exist.
0	No Evidence: Student did not attempt. No evidence of learning

Traditional vs. Standards-Based Grading

Standards-based grading informs us what students have actually learned and know. This grading method measures students' knowledge of grade-level content over time by reporting the most recent, consistent level of performance. A practice assessment which shows that a student has not reached proficiency in a standard does not indicate an area of concern. Students are not expected to know the content until it has been taught to them. As teaching occurs, they will learn and should demonstrate proficient performance by the end of the grading period. In traditional grading, the student's performance for the whole grading period would be averaged and early quiz scores that were low would be averaged together with proficient performance later in the course resulting in a lower grade. In standards-based grading, a student who reaches proficiency would be reported proficient and the grade would reflect current performance level. In standards-based grading, factors like attendance, effort, work habits, and attitude will be reported separately in order to give a more accurate report of student progress.

Standards-based grading "involves measuring students' proficiency on well-defined course objectives." (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). (Note: *Standards-based reporting* involves reporting these course objectives rather than letter grades at the end of each grading/reporting period.)

The visual below compares traditional grading with standards-based grading practices.



Traditional Grading System	Standards-Based Grading System
Based on assessment methods (quizzes, tests, homework, projects, etc.). One grade/entry is given per assessment.	Based on learning goals and performance standards. One summative grade/entry is given <u>per learning goal</u> .
Assessments are based on a percentage system. Criteria for success may be unclear.	Standards are criterion or proficiency-based. Criteria and targets are made available to students ahead of time.
Use an uncertain mix of assessment, achievement, effort, and behavior to determine the final grade. May use late penalties and extra credit.	Measures achievement only OR separates achievement from effort/behavior. No penalties or extra credit given.
Everything “counts” or goes in the grade book – regardless of purpose.	Selected assessments (tests, quizzes, projects, etc.) are used for grading purposes. Practice is reported but not counted in final grade.
Include every score, regardless of when it was collected. Assessments record the average – not the best – work.	Emphasize the most recent evidence of learning when grading.

Adapted from O'Connor K (2002). *How to Grade for Learning: Linking grades to standards (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Grading and Assessment Definitions

4.0 Rubric: A grading tool used to provide feedback on an identified learning goal; the score signifies the knowledge a student has towards that learning goal

Assessment: An evaluation tool designed to show information about a student's achievement at the end of a period of instruction

Common Assessment: The same assessment that is given and graded by common grade level/subject classrooms at about the same time to collect data

Grade: A simple, clear, and concrete summary representation of student achievement based on what a student knows at the end of a given time period; the number (or letter) reported at the end of a period of time as a summary statement of student performance

Feedback: Communication that tells students how they did in relation to the goal of an assignment; does not include an evaluative component

Learning Target: An objective of what the student should learn, understand, and/or be able to do; the individual learning skills for teaching and/or testing

Mastery: Demonstration of student performance against standard criteria at a pre-established level

Practice (for example: Homework/classwork): Periodic tool for learning that is used to practice or adjust instruction for individual students or a whole class

Standard: Statement that describes what and/or how well students are expected to understand and perform

Standards-Based Education Explanation : An explanation is given to the students for each essential outcome taught in each class. Each of the levels builds on the others and explains what learning the students have to demonstrate in order to earn that score

Standards-Based Grading: Achievement level based on mastery of essential standards—a grading system where scores denote progress toward the understanding of a specific standard.

Questions and Answers

Everyone knows what an A-B-C-D-E and 100 point scale stands for. Why change?

Traditional grading often measures many different factors and compares how well students do compared to their classmates. Standards-based grading measures how well an individual student is doing in relation to the grade level standard/skill, not the work of other students. In the 100 point system, the question becomes “100 percent of what?” We need criteria to have more consistency and accuracy about what students know and are able to do. When a percentage system is applied, it can be misleading. 100 percent correctness on a set of very easy questions is very different than a slightly lower percentage on a set of difficult items. A 100 point scale does not consider difficulty of work and leads to an inaccurate measure of student learning relative to specific learning goals. Grades must be accurate and consistent to be useful. The use of a grading scale that is unequal, such as the 100 point scale, distorts the final grade as a true indicator of mastery. The smaller equal interval scale will cause grading practices to be more accurate and consistent.

How are students involved in the process?

Standard based grading is something done with students, not to them. Teachers carefully consider the following in determining progress: independent daily written or oral tasks, application of skills, periodic assessments (quizzes, tests), performance tasks, and teacher-student questioning. Several different types of practice and assessments will be available and given to students so they can reflect and revise their evidence of learning during the process. Students can re-assess as many times as necessary to provide evidence of skill mastery. Consistent descriptive feedback will be given to let students know what improvements and/or supports they need to achieve mastery.

How is evidence of learning updated?

The evidence that provides the most accurate depiction of students’ learning is the most recent information. If students demonstrate that past assessment evidence no longer accurately reflects their learning, that information must be dropped and replaced by the new information.

Why is averaging scores to determine a grade not the best method?

Averaging does not always provide an accurate description of what students have learned. Teachers must consider other central tendencies such as median, mode, or new learning replacing old.

How are students held accountable for homework or classwork when it's only counted as practice?

Many students feel that in a standards-based class they don't have to worry about anything except their final chapter or unit test. **This is incorrect.** It is important for students to understand that their teacher is evaluating their performance on learning tasks, or homework, each day. Teachers analyze student work to determine growth and improvement towards mastery of a specific skill or content. When assigning a final score, every teacher has the responsibility of taking into account all the work a student does during a semester. So, if a student chooses not to do an assignment, not only is he/she missing an opportunity to practice a skill, he/she also misses an opportunity to display mastery of an outcome to his/her teacher.

How are students held accountable for their effort, behavior and attendance?

These factors have always been and will continue to be an important part of every student's success. However, in standards-based education, these factors will be communicated **separately** from the student's academic grade.

What about extra credit?

Extra credit does not measure learning. In a standards-based system, students are actually able to demonstrate their learning in many different ways and timeframes. In a traditional system in which points determine everything, extra credit and extra points will influence a grade and not reflect any additional learning. For instance, a student that has a 2.0 on a specific learning goal may have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning at the 3.0 level. However, in a traditional system in which extra points are simply added into the overall grade, extra points can be earned regardless of whether or not learning may have occurred.

How can students improve their grades?

The goal in a standards-based class is to ensure that students master the essential outcomes for the class, so any efforts to raise a student's grade will have the same goal. The student should meet with the teacher to determine which outcomes need improvement and create a plan on how to relearn the material and when to be reassessed. If the student demonstrates a higher level of mastery on the outcome assessment, then the newer score will replace the older score. Again, the focus is to improve the student's mastery of the material.

As a parent, what can I do to support my student and help with his or her grade(s)?

The teachers at MMS have several extra supports in place accessible for parents. If you cannot access this information online, please contact the teacher or office.

- Always reach out to the teacher first if you have a concern.
- Parent Portal MiStar access will give you your student's most recent status.
- Read all emails for updates and classroom communications.
- Make sure you share correct and updated contact information, including an email address, with the front office.
- Encourage your student to work with the teacher or support staff to address misconceptions identified through teacher feedback and to strive for mastery on every standard.
- Encourage your child to do reassessments to provide up to date evidence of learning.

What research has the district used in developing standards-based assessment and grading ?

The district has utilized research from the following experts in the field: Dr. Robert Marzano, Ken O'Connor, Jay McTighe, Rick Wormeli, Thomas Guskey, Douglas Reeves, and Rick Stiggins (see below).

Resources:

Heflebower, T., Hoegh, J.K., and Warrick, P. (2014). *A School Leader's Guide to Standards-Based Grading*: Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.

Marzano, R. J. (2010). *practice assessment & standards-based grading: Classroom strategies that work*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.

Marzano, R. J. (2000). "Transforming classroom grading." Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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Wormeli, R. (2013). NASSP Presentation:

http://swcontent.spokaneschools.org/cms/lib/WA01000970/Centricity/Domain/1752/Wormeli_slides_BW.pdf