

Pittsburg Community Middle School

USD250



Standards-Based Learning

2019-2020

Parent Guide

Pittsburg Community Middle School

USD 250

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What is standards-based learning?

Standards-based learning focuses a student's learning on the essential standards for a class, or how well the student understands and can apply the key material in class. At the beginning of every unit, the teacher will break down the outcomes for the unit into smaller components and criteria using a detailed rubric. During the unit, the student is frequently assessed to gauge understanding and application of the material. Teachers will use a variety of assessments, such as traditional pencil-and-paper tests, projects, discussions, or reports. The class grade will be based on all of the evidence the teacher collects demonstrating a student's mastery of the essential standards.

The goal of this approach is to provide the teacher, student, and parent as accurate a picture as possible of the student's learning and to encourage a conversation about how the student can master the material for the class. In particular, because learning is a process that takes place over time, the teacher will provide feedback to the student about what to focus on next, and the student will be allowed to show improved learning over time by being reassessed. If the new evidence shows a higher level of mastery, that new score replaces the old one.

How is standards-based learning different from traditional grading?

In the traditional 100-point grading system, a student's grades are typically based on all of the work assigned in class, including classwork, homework, projects, quizzes, and tests. These scores are often arranged in the grade book based on the type of assignment rather than on the essential standards for the class. The grade may also include points for non-academic factors, such as participation, effort, or attitude.

Standards-based learning looks at how well a student has mastered the essential standards, so the grade book does not separate out tests, homework, or projects. Instead, all of the work a student does is used to assess the student's mastery of the essential standards. A student's scores from their work are tracked by essential standards that give the teacher, student, and parent a very detailed picture of each student's learning. Non-academic factors like behavior, attitude, and attendance are not included in the outcome grade, but are recorded and reported separately.

Why is Pittsburg Community Middle School using standards-based learning?

The goal of Pittsburg Community Middle School is to improve student learning by reporting grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning, and the shift to standards-based learning is an effort to reach that goal. Here is how standards-based learning addresses each of those four criteria.

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 a rubric that describes exactly what the student will need to master. The rubrics establish clear expectations for mastery at the beginning of a unit and are referenced consistently throughout the unit and semester.

Meaningful: A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place. In a standards-based classroom, scores are recorded by the essential standards rather than by type, such as tests or homework, making it easier to identify areas of strength and to address areas of concern for each student.

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.

What does the number scale (4, 3.5, 3, 2.5, 2, 1.5, 1) on the rubric mean?

The scores on the scale represent a learning continuum and are NOT equated to grade point average. Each of the levels builds on the others and explains the learning students have to demonstrate in order to earn a score (See the rubric in this document). Students must demonstrate proficiency as they move up the scale. For example, a student may not earn a 3 until they demonstrate proficiency of the level 2 concepts or skills. The scale designations are as follows:

4 – The student exceeds an in-depth understanding of the material and demonstrates advanced applications of the material.

- 3.5–In addition to a level 3 score, the student exceeds an in-depth understanding of the material and demonstrates advanced applications with partial success.

3 – While engaged in grade appropriate tasks, the student demonstrates proficiency of all foundational material and can apply key concepts, processes and skills.

- 2.5–The student demonstrates no major errors or omissions regarding level 2 elements and a partial knowledge of level 3 elements.

2 – The student demonstrates an understanding of all foundational material, but is still working to proficiency.

- 1.5 – The student demonstrates an understanding of all level 2 elements with support and independent understanding of some level 2 elements

1 – The student demonstrates an understanding of all level 2 elements or some level 2 elements of the foundational material with support.

What is the grade scale for standards-based learning on the grade card?

Standards-based grading focuses on measuring students' mastery of a specific set of outcomes. The number scale grade reflects the level of proficiency achieved for each outcome. Outcome scores are averaged at the end of the semester and translated to a letter grade. In order to translate the number score into a traditional letter grade, we adjusted the cutoffs to reflect the 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 scale. The resulting scale is shown below.

4.0-3.8	A+
3.79-3.5	A
3.49-3.2	A-
3.19-2.9	B+
2.89-2.7	B
2.69-2.5	B-
2.49-2.4	C+
2.39-2.2	C
2.19-2.0	C-
1.99-1.8	D+
1.79-1.6	D
1.59-1.5	D-
Below 1.5	F

What does “INC” mean?

INC stands for “Incomplete.” This score is used when the student has not completed the necessary assessments to be given a grade for a standard due to absences or other factors. An INC is calculated as a one in the student’s grade to show the effect of not completing the assessment, but this score will be replaced by the student’s actual score once the student completes the necessary assessments. Any INC’s left in a student’s grade at the end of the semester will become ones.

How will my student be assessed?

A student’s learning is assessed using a variety of formative and summative assessments. These tools include formal assessments such as traditional paper-and-pencil tests, projects, written papers, lab reports, or verbal assessments, but they may also include informal assessments such as classroom discussions or teacher observations. Essentially, everything that a student does in a standards-based class provides the teacher with evidence of the student’s learning.

What can my student do to raise their grade in a standards-based class?

The goal in a standards-based class is to ensure that students master the essential standards 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 fill out a reassessment agreement to 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, so extra credit points are not used in standards-based classes.

What does my student need to do in order to be reassessed?

After completing an assessment in a standards-based class, the student can ask for a reassessment using the process described below. The reassessment agreement is included at the end of this document.

1. The student gets a copy of the reassessment agreement from the teacher and completes the “Outcomes to Reassess” section to choose what outcomes to be reassessed on and at what levels.
2. The student completes the “Preparation Information” by picking a few activities that would help with relearning the material. The student then arranges a meeting with the teacher to discuss the agreement. The teacher may require specific activities to prepare for the reassessment, such as completing missing assignments. Any activity selected by the student or teacher must have evidence that it has been completed.
3. Together, the student and teacher will decide when, where, and how the student will be reassessed in the “Reassessment Information” section.
4. Once all of the relearning activities have been completed, the student will show the necessary evidence to the teacher, and both the teacher and student will sign the “Reassessment Approval” section of the agreement.
5. The student is now ready to be reassessed as described in the “Reassessment Information” section.
6. A copy of the agreement will be sent home to parents.

The reassessment agreement supports a student’s learning by:

- § Ensuring that relearning takes place before reassessment.

- § Identifying the specific steps the student must complete to be reassessed.
- § Clarifying the reassessment process for both the student and the teacher.
- § Identifying exactly how the student will be reassessed so there are no surprises.

If you have any additional questions about the reassessment process, please contact your student's teacher.

Why should my student do the classwork or homework assigned in class if it isn't included in the grade?

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 are they missing an opportunity to practice a skill, they also miss an opportunity to display mastery of an outcome to their teacher. The student's lack of classwork or homework will be reflected on the Student Performance Expectations Rubric (See the rubric in this document).

Why doesn't my student have a grade yet?

Because standards-based learning focuses on the learning a student demonstrates, the class grade may not be updated as frequently as it was when every assignment impacted the grade. This shift is especially noticeable at the beginning of the semester when it may take a few weeks for the teacher to collect enough evidence to determine each student's level of mastery. However, while the overall outcome grade may not change as frequently, the teacher is still recording performance on other learning tasks, such as homework, quizzes and in-class activities that provide important feedback about what work is being done. Please contact your student's teacher at any time if you have questions about your student's grade.

Are non-academic factors, such as effort, attitude, participation, and behavior part of the class grade?

These factors have always been and will continue to be an important part of every student's success. However, in standards-based learning, these factors will be communicated separately from the student's academic grade. These factors will be reflected on the Student Performance Expectations Rubric (See the rubric in this document).

How can I get more information about my student's grade or about standards-based learning?

If you have questions or concerns about your student's learning in a class or if you would like more information on standards-based learning, please contact PCMS administration or the teacher of a specific class for more information. There is also a video on the PCMS website that will help you navigate PowerSchool.

Pittsburg Community Middle School Standards-Based Learning Rubric Explanation

A rubric is given to the students for each essential outcome covered in a standards-based class. Each of the levels builds on the others and explains what learning the students have to demonstrate in order to earn that score. The students must master each level as they move up the rubric. For example, students cannot earn a 3 until they have shown mastery of level 2.

The wording in bold is used in every rubric given to students. *The wording in italics is an explanation of each level.*

Score	Description	Additional Notes:
4	<p>In addition to a level 3 score, the student exceeds an in-depth understanding of the material and demonstrates advanced applications such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>These are not just harder tasks, but learning that requires deeper or more rigorous thinking.</i> • <i>Examples of this type of learning may include: applications for real-world use, teaching another person the material, using information to solve problems in a different context, explaining connections between ideas, demonstrating a unique insight, and/or creative application of skills.</i> 	
3.5	<p><i>In addition to a level 3 score, the student exceeds an in-depth understanding of the material and demonstrates advanced applications with partial success.</i></p>	
3	<p>While engaged in grade appropriate tasks, the student demonstrates proficiency of all foundational material and can apply key concepts, processes and skills such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This level is the focus for the entire rubric.</i> • <i>This is the expected level of performance for all students.</i> • <i>This level includes essential outcomes, state standards, and related skills and processes.</i> <p>No major errors or omissions with level 2 or 3 elements.</p>	
2.5	<p>The student demonstrates no major errors or omissions regarding level 2 elements and a partial knowledge of level 3 elements.</p>	
2	<p>The student demonstrates an understanding of all foundational material, but is still working to proficiency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This level is the basic learning necessary and serves as the foundation for the higher levels of learning.</i> • <i>Examples of this type of learning may include recall questions, fact-based skills, and basic applications.</i> • <i>This level does not represent partial understanding of the level 3 elements.</i> <p>However, there are major errors or omissions with level 3 elements.</p>	
1.5	<p>The student demonstrates an understanding of all level 2 elements with support and independent understanding of some level 2 elements.</p>	
1	<p>The student demonstrates an understanding of all level 2 elements or some level 2 elements of the foundational material with support.</p>	

Reassessment Study Activities

Select from the activities below to complete the "Preparation Information" section of the reassessment agreement. You can also check with your teacher to see if there are any particular activities that are recommended. If you need any additional explanation or information about any of these ideas, please see your teacher.

Sample Activities

- Complete missing assignments
- Make flashcards
- Create practice assessment
- Tutoring with a teacher
- Study your notes-20 minutes minimum
- Complete internet activities provided by teacher
- Design a review game
- Make a poster explaining a topic or process
- Create a web diagram
- Write a summary for each topic on the rubric
- Complete review exercises in the text book

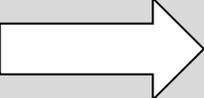
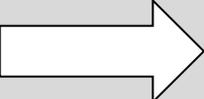
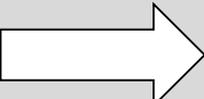
Possible Evidence of Completion

- Completed assignments
- Completed flashcards
- Completed practice assessment with answer key
- Signed note documenting tutoring time
- Study log
- Submission of work
- Completed game
- Completed poster
- Completed diagram
- Completed summaries
- Completed exercises

Other activities provided by your teacher:

Additional Notes:

STUDENT PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS	Exemplary (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Needs Improvement (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING 	Student is always prepared and eager to learn	Student is usually prepared and eager to learn	Student is frequently unprepared for class and not ready to learn	Student is usually unprepared for class and not ready to learn
PAYS ATTENTION IN CLASS 	Student always follows directions and engages in curricular instruction	Student usually follows directions and engages in curricular instruction	Student frequently does not follow directions and does not engage in curricular instruction	Student usually does not follow directions and does not engage in curricular instruction
USES TIME WISELY 	Student always stays on task and works to learn	Student usually stays on task and works to learn	Student frequently does not stay on task and does not work to learn	Student is usually off task and does not work to learn
ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR BEHAVIOR 	Student is a role model for others to follow for learning	Student usually displays behavior that is conducive to learning	Student frequently displays behaviors that are disruptive to learning	Student usually displays behaviors that are disruptive to learning