

# **View Ridge Middle School Standards Based Assessment and Grading**

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**19-20 Parent and Student Guide**

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## Message From Principal

In the course of a pivotal conversation about its core purpose, the staff of View Ridge Middle School came to agreement on a mission that aspires to, “together...prepare all students for high school and beyond by ensuring high levels of character development and academic achievement”. To achieve this lofty goal, we are committed to utilizing practices that align with the highest probability of positive learning outcomes for students. In our exploration of what methods of feedback to students and parents most highly impacts learning, we found the research to be abundantly clear: a grading system in which students and parents receive reports that precisely communicate progress and levels of performance related to what is being learned is far more effective than a model that utilizes point/percentage-derived traditional letter grades. To this end, we began implementing a new grading system in 2017-18.

In our experience, the key indicator students and parents use to evaluate levels of learning success is the report card grade. It is a sensible expectation that we should look to these reports for such information, but when we dig deeper we find very mixed, confusing messages in our most recent system. Traditionally, grades were determined as a percentage of points earned out of total points possible, in many cases with percentages being weighted for various inputs into the grade. In consulting the work of experts on grading, we sought to find what the optimal inputs for grades would be. We found a repeated message: percentage/weighted letter grades do not optimally support high levels of learning. Truth is, in such a system a grade can mean a lot of things. A student may earn a “B” grade as a result of performing strongly on tests, but missing a lot of daily assignments, while another student achieves the same grade while earning poor test scores, but compiling points for the daily work. In the end, students and parents get an unclear message about achievement of intended learning outcomes.

To more accurately communicate the learning a student is experiencing in our school we use a standards based grading system. In this system, explained in detail in this handbook, students and parents gain a precise idea about how students are performing in specific Power Standards--clusters of related standards consisting of Priority Standards (standards which have been defined by VRMS staff to have the most lasting academic impact, highest leverage to support student success on other standards, and best prepare students for state assessments) and Supporting Standards. Each quarter, students and parents see a grade that reflects their performance in relation to academic standards in each Power Standard being assessed. Grades are represented by E (Exceeds Standard), M (Meets Standard), PR (Progressing Towards Standard), BE (Below Standard), or I (Insufficient Evidence). These grades are based on student-produced evidence of learning (tests, projects, writing, teacher observation, etc.). We believe this will place everyone’s focus on what matters most--the academic learning standards.

One concern that arises in a move to such a system is how it addresses other important dispositions and skills we are trying to develop in our students. After all, the mission speaks to “character development” as well as “academic achievement”. In order to appropriately, and precisely provide feedback in this area we have developed a grading system for “Expectations”--reflecting a students classroom behaviors and respect. In this category, students will be assessed using a plus, check, or minus (see pages in this handbook for descriptors).

This handbook serves as a guide and support to parents in interpreting the grades appearing on their child’s report card. We welcome your feedback to contribute ideas to improve its utility.

Sincerely,  
Tony Smith  
Principal, View Ridge Middle School

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to the View Ridge Middle School standards-based grading committee for their efforts in developing and piloting this system and guide for teachers.

Sheila Davis  
Katie James  
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# Why we are Changing

Ridgefield School District aspires to be the state's premier district, and View Ridge Middle School's mission is to prepare all students for high school and beyond. These aims will be realized by implementing practices that are proven as most positively impacting student learning. Standards based grading is one such practice.

We believe standards based grading will...

- help your children be better prepared for high school and beyond by precisely ensuring they, you, and we are measuring skills that will make them successful there
- better inform you and them on their study skills/habits and citizenship
- better inform you on how your child is performing, growing, and behaving than our previous system did

Our previous, traditional grading system contained many flaws that inhibited clear communication in the following ways:

- Points were earned for completion of tasks, assignments, participation, tests, and whatever else teachers deemed important to motivate students to do, many of which were not authentic evaluations of student learning progress
- Points were divided by points possible within weighted categories, then recalculated as a part of the whole grade to generate percentage correlated with a letter grade--representing many steps removed from the actual demonstration of learning
- Performance early in the grading period counted as much as that at the end, punishing early struggles and undervaluing where a student worked to get to in the process of learning
- Standards written in qualitative language which could not be translated into numbers were being translated into numbers
- Behavioral factors could dilute grades from fully communicating about student performance, and strong academic performance could hide poor classroom behavioral performance
- Letter grades could mean MANY things, depending on how the score was calculated, meaning students could have identical grades reflecting drastically different performance

# Guiding Principles

<p><b>Principle 1</b> –Academic grades will be based on learning in relation to standards, and honestly communicate the level at which the student is demonstrating mastery</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="570 331 841 390">Subject</th> <th data-bbox="841 331 1419 390">Standards</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="570 390 841 449">English Language Arts</td> <td data-bbox="841 390 1419 449">Common Core State Standards (ELA)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="570 449 841 508">Mathematics</td> <td data-bbox="841 449 1419 508">Common Core State Standards (Math)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="570 508 841 590">Science</td> <td data-bbox="841 508 1419 590">Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core State Standards</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="570 590 841 672">Social Studies</td> <td data-bbox="841 590 1419 672">Washington State Learning Standards, Common Core State Standards</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="570 672 841 753">PE/Health</td> <td data-bbox="841 672 1419 753">Washington State Learning Standards for Health and Physical Education</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="570 753 841 812">Electives</td> <td data-bbox="841 753 1419 812">Washington State Learning Standards</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Subject	Standards	English Language Arts	Common Core State Standards (ELA)	Mathematics	Common Core State Standards (Math)	Science	Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core State Standards	Social Studies	Washington State Learning Standards, Common Core State Standards	PE/Health	Washington State Learning Standards for Health and Physical Education	Electives	Washington State Learning Standards
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Mathematics	Common Core State Standards (Math)														
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Social Studies	Washington State Learning Standards, Common Core State Standards														
PE/Health	Washington State Learning Standards for Health and Physical Education														
Electives	Washington State Learning Standards														
<p><b>Why?</b></p>	<p><i>By reporting on specific learning standards, standards-based grading provides considerably more feedback about how a student is progressing toward learning each standard. This will allow us to report student learning more accurately and to the degree to which students have attained mastery of learning objectives. It is essential for students to do practice work that is tied closely to essential standards and for students to see those connections. Teachers provide feedback on homework that is assigned to practice new skills.</i></p>														
<p><b>Principle 2</b> – Evidence to support grade determination will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valid</li> <li>• Directly linked to skill and knowledge demonstration in the standard</li> <li>• Derived from at least three assessment events</li> <li>• Most strongly reflective of <b>most recent performance</b></li> </ul>	<p>Used for Grading Academic Content Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter or unit exams</li> <li>• Demonstrated skill based on standards</li> <li>• Performance or product-based assessments</li> <li>• Application of learning</li> <li>• Written assessments</li> <li>• Verbal assessments</li> <li>• Any alternative demonstration of skill/knowledge attainment</li> </ul>														
<p><b>Why?</b></p>	<p><i>Links the basis for curriculum instruction, assessment, and intervention, provides clear focus and makes grading consistent, accurate, meaningful, and supportive of learning. It is the school’s responsibility to use authentic measures to evaluate student learning on a regular basis, and not distort grades with measures not directly related to the work of the standard.</i></p>														

<p><b>Principle 3</b> - Expectations will be assessed separately from academic learning</p>	<p>The diagram illustrates two separate reporting structures. On the left, a table titled 'Content Standards' has columns labeled NA, I, BE, PR, M, and E. A blue arrow labeled 'Criteria' points down to this table. On the right, a table titled 'Expectations' has columns with symbols +, ✓, and -. A blue arrow labeled 'Criteria' points down to this table. This visualizes how behavioral and achievement factors are reported separately.</p>
<p><b>Why?</b></p>	<p><i>Attendance, effort, behavior, participation and other factors are important, but separating these from achievement factors will give parents a clearer picture about their student's learning. Students will be held accountable for these factors but they will be reported separately.</i></p>
<p><b>Principle 4</b> – The following practices will be eliminated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factoring missing assignments into academic grading</li> <li>• Inclusion of behavioral factors in academic grades (attendance, tardies, participation, misbehaviors) or academic factors in behavioral grades</li> <li>• Quantifying success on qualitative standards</li> <li>• Use of extra credit in academic grades</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why?</b></p>	<p><i>Behavioral factors are important to measure and report on, but not in a way that dilutes academic grading's clarity. Standards are not stated in points or percentages and therefore should not be evaluated in that manner. Focusing on meeting and exceeding standard mastery negates the need for extra credit.</i></p>

# Definitions of Proficiency Levels

## **E - Exceeds Standard**

Adult: In addition to meeting standard, student demonstrates deeper understanding of standard(s) and independently and consistently extends work above/beyond level requirements.

Student: I am extremely comfortable with the content or skill. I can explain it to another student. I can apply what I learned to brand new situations and make connections that weren't taught.

## **M - Meets Standard**

Adult: Student independently and consistently meets standard(s), demonstrates consistent application of skills, and applies concepts and skills.

Student: I am comfortable with the content or skill. I can show my understanding without assistance, and I only make a few mistakes. I am right where I am supposed to be.

## **PR+ - Progressing Towards and Near Standard**

Adult: Student is developing toward and has met parts of the standard, but not all aspects. Student may be able to do parts of the standard independently, but needs assistance with a few.

Student: I am almost comfortable with the content or skill, but am hung up on one or two things I need to improve on to meet the standard.

## **PR - Progressing Towards Standard**

Adult: Student is developing independence and consistency in meeting standard(s), but has not yet mastered skills and knowledge. Student needs assistance applying grade level standards.

Student: I am comfortable with parts of the content or skill. I can show my understanding of parts of what was taught, but not all of. Sometimes I can be independent, but sometimes I need help. I am still working on it.

## **BE - Below Standard**

Adult: Student is working below standards and struggles even with assistance.

Student: I am not very comfortable with the content or skill. I am not really sure what is going on. I need help on more than half of the material.

## **I - Insufficient Evidence**



There is not enough evidence of learning to determine a grade at this time

**4= E, 3=M, 3=PR, 1=BE**

# WATERCOLOR



**Homework Policy**

Homework is a useful tool for learning, but it should not have an impact on a student's academic grade within a standards-based grading and reporting system. It provides practice for reaching mastery. Additionally, it is not possible to verify that the student who is assigned the homework completed the homework. Therefore, homework will be used for formative feedback only in regards to academic performance. Homework completion habits may be used as a factor in determination of Classroom Expectations ratings.

Guidelines:

- Provides meaningful, independent practice and reinforces learning
- Never used to learn material for the first time
- Has an allowance for mistakes as part of the learning process
- May be commented on, or checked, but will not count as part of the content grade
- Demonstrates effort, not mastery of a concept
- May be used for Classroom Expectations grade, but not in the formulation of an academic grade

## **Multiple Assessment Opportunities**

An important piece of standards-based grading includes multiple assessment opportunities for each content standard taught in the classroom. When students do not meet standard, they need opportunities to retake assessments in order to show their own growth in learning over time. **All teachers at View Ridge Middle School will allow some form of retake opportunity for each reporting standard. The teachers will use their discretion to determine the exact nature of the retake opportunity, the timing of the retake opportunity, and the range of standards needing to be re-assessed..**

View Ridge staff will utilize the form on the following page to solicit student retake attempts. They are encouraged to coach students through this process.

**Re-assessments of this nature should take place after a series of embedded classroom assessment have occurred over the unit of study and a final assessment of the standard(s) has been administered. Retake opportunities are expected to be completed within two weeks following the final assessment in that unit.**

#### Suggested Strategies for Retakes

- Ask students who redo assignments to submit the original attempt with the new one and to write a brief letter comparing the two. What is different, and what did they learn as a result of redoing the assignment? Teachers are encouraged to use this strategy of error analysis to assist students in strengthening their ability to self-assess and self-correct their assessments. Teachers may also have the student create a SMART goal for how the standard could be reassessed.
- Reserve the right to give alternative versions of the assessment, especially if you think students will simply memorize a correct answer pattern or set of answers. Teachers are encouraged to develop retakes based only on the standards not yet met by the student. Teachers may set parameters regarding timing of the retake opportunity.
- Teachers may choose to employ a spiral assessment protocol that allows the students multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency on each standard. This option allows all students to retake each standard on in-class assessments without having to stay after school.

For example:

Quiz 1 assesses Standard 1 and Standard 2.

Quiz 2 assesses Standard 1, Standard 2 and Standard 3.

Quiz 3 assesses Standard 1, Standard 2, Standard 3 and Standard 4.

The final assessment assesses all previous standards.

Optional: If students earn a 4 consistently on one standard, that 4 carries forward and the student does not need to complete that standard on the final assessment.

### **View Ridge Middle School End of Unit Reassessment Form**

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_  
Assessment/Standard(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Original Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflection: How did you prepare for this assessment? Check all that apply.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read the notes         | <input type="checkbox"/> Completed homework on time                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Made flashcards        | <input type="checkbox"/> Completed online review                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attended study session | <input type="checkbox"/> Completed graphic organizer                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Re-read the text       | <input type="checkbox"/> Studied multiple times prior to assessment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Studied with someone   | <input type="checkbox"/> I did not prepare                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completed study guide  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                                |

To be successful on future assessments, I will do the following three things...

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

(this side completed by student)

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(this side completed by teacher and student)

Action Plan: Complete the checked expectations below.

- Attend a review session (include date/time) \_\_\_\_\_
- Do additional studying at home (see reflection for study ideas)
- Complete the review material
- Finish assignments from the unit (see PowerSchool for incomplete/missing work)
- Make corrections to assessment
- Record retake information in assignment notebook
- Retake work and form are due back on \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Student will complete the retake** \_\_\_\_\_

We understand the expectations of this retake opportunity, and have discussed this reflection form.

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

## Classes With Special Circumstances

**Washington State History:** This semester 7th grade class is required to be passed for a Washington State high school diploma. For this course, passing will be defined as achieving marks on all standards of “PR” or better.

**Algebra 1:** View Ridge Students who take this high school level class will be graded in a consistent manner with the Ridgefield High School students who are taking it, and receive a letter grade on the traditional A-F scale

**Geometry:** View Ridge Students who take this high school class currently take this course at the high school, and receive a letter grade on the traditional A-F scale.

## **Grading for Expectations**

Expectations Rubric	
<b>+</b>	Almost always meets classroom expectations for academic behavior and demonstrates respect for self, others, school rules and expectations, classroom routines, authority, and property.
<b>/</b>	Usually meets classroom expectations for academic behavior and demonstrates respect for self, others, school rules and expectations, classroom routines, authority, and property.
<b>-</b>	Sometimes or infrequently meets classroom expectations for academic behavior and demonstrates respect for self, others, school rules and expectations, classroom routines, authority, and property.

**Expectations ratings will be entered for each week on Friday or by the Monday of the week following.**

The purpose of evaluating these skills is to impress upon students the importance of having “student skills,” while also meeting academic standards. By practicing these fundamental skills, students will have an increased ability to meet the academic standards. Additionally, the qualities mentioned above are crucial to students’ future success in high school, college, and their careers. By helping students to cultivate the qualities of successful learners, we can better guide them toward life and career-readiness.

## **Standards Based Grading of Special Education Students**

Accurate information on learning progress is essential for all students. The grading of students with disabilities within a general education classroom requires accurate information as well. In core content areas (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies), students should be evaluated according to grade-level expectations and school expectations.

Students who receive accommodations and complete grade-level work should not receive any penalty in grading and should be entitled to a full range of grades. Accommodations do not change the difficulty in the work. Accommodations include such practices as extended time, more white space around text or math problems, enlarged print, changes in testing formatting (i.e., multiple choice rather than matching).

Modifications of the curriculum require changes to content, rigor, and grade-level standards. This type of change in instruction should be considered carefully. If students have an IEP then modifications on that plan must be followed. In such cases it is necessary to communicate to parents that curriculum is modified and that the child will be evaluated according to grade level standards as required on that report card.

If students are in the general education classroom for a subject area, they should be evaluated on the same standards as the rest of the students in that classroom. The only time that standards will be adjusted for students is if they are in the special education classroom for a subject area and are taught to adjusted standards. The report card provided to students with disabilities must be as accurate and meaningful as reports cards provided to all other students.

**IEP Goal Progress Reporting:**

Students with individual education plan goals will have progress on those goals reported in an accompanying document with their standards based report card each quarter.

\*No student on an IEP shall be restricted from any school opportunity as a result of content grades below "Meets".

## **Athletic Eligibility**



At View Ridge Middle School we believe student access and opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities such as athletics is an important part of developing strong student character. As a member of the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association, we are required to maintain student-athlete accountability to their responsibilities in the classroom. Because we operate a grading system that is both honest about student performance and fair in what it asks students to do to become eligible, we tie athletic eligibility to factors under the student-athlete's control: Expectations. Students may not come to us with a reasonable expectation of meeting standards in the short-term due to previously developed learning gaps, so to give them a fair and reasonable opportunity to participate we expect them to complete their work in a quality manner and respect staff, fellow students and school rules. To be eligible to compete in interscholastic sporting events, students at View Ridge Middle School must meet the following criteria:

- No “-” grades in Expectations for the week prior
- No office disciplinary action or Refocus Step 4 infractions  
\*In accordance with the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association guidelines, VRMS considers Expectations marks of + and ✓ as “passing grades” and - a non-”passing grade”

Procedures:

- **Grade Checks:** Grades of student-athletes will be checked weekly on Friday.
- **Probation:** Upon the first week of not meeting the above criteria, students will be notified that they are on probation. While on probation, the student may still play in contests, but must exhibit improved Behavior for Learning grades meeting the above criteria to maintain eligibility for contests in the following week.
- **Suspension:** Student-athletes who incur a second week of not meeting the above criteria will not be allowed to participate in athletic contests for the following week and after any other in which they do not meet the above criteria.
- **Removal:** Student-athletes not meeting the above criteria for three or more weeks of the season may be removed from their team.

## Awards of Excellence

At View Ridge Middle School, students will have the opportunity to be recognized at the end of each quarter with an Award of Academic Excellence and an Award of Excellence in Character.

### **Requirements for Award of Academic Excellence**

To achieve the Award of Academic Excellence, students must attain all “Exceeds” or “Meets” grades in content standards, with the exception of two standards with a “Progressing” grade. Students on individual education plans may be recognized with this award if they are making exceptional progress on their IEP goals as recognized by staff.

### **Requirements for Award of Excellence in Character**

To achieve the Award of Excellence in Character, students must earn no more than one total “Expectations” grade lower than a “+”. Students with any “-” grades will be ineligible for this award.

### **Requirements for Award of Excellence in Academic Growth**

Students ranking in the top five students of their grade level for math or ELA growth based on iReady testing will be recognized with an Award of Excellence in Academic Growth.

## **RESOURCES AND EXPERT GUIDANCE IN STANDARDS BASED GRADING**

## Articles

[The Case for Eliminating Letter Grades, According to a School with too Many Straight A Students \(Jenny Anderson, Quartz\)](#)

[Grades that Show What Students Know \(Robert Marzano and Tammy Hefleblower, Educational Leadership\)](#)

[Effective Grading Practices \(Doug Reeves, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development\)](#)

[Letter Grades Deserve an F \(Jessica Lehay, Atlantic Monthly\)](#)

[Motivated to Learn \(Daniel Pink, Educational Leadership\)](#)

[Seven Reasons for Standards Based Grading \(Patricia Scriffiny, Educational Leadership\)](#)

[Standards Based Grading \(Matt Townsley and Tom Buckmiller\)](#)

[Standards Based Grading: What Parents Need to Know \(Joanna Nesbit, School Family\)](#)

[Standards Based Grading will Improve Education \(Marco Munoz and Thomas Guskey, Phi Delta Kappan\)](#)

## Books

*Charting a Course to Standards-Based Grading, What to Stop, What to Start, and Why it Matters*, Tim Westerberg (2016)

*A Handbook for High Reliability Schools*, Robert Marzano, Phil Warrick, and Julie Simms (2014)

*A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades*, Ken O'Connor (2010)

*A School Leader's Guide to Standards-Based Grading*, Tammy Hefflebower, Jan Hoegh, and Phil Warrick (2014)

*Visible Learning for Teachers*, John Hattie (2012)

## **Videos**

[Rick Wormeli Presentation on Standards Based Grading](#)