



Getting REAL about Learning

Building a Bridge for Parents and Standards Based Grading

As this school year has gone by, Woodland Park educators have been continually reminded that parents have their own school experiences from which they draw upon as they send their children to high school. They remember doing homework, sitting in the lunchroom, and how much fun they had on field trips or the many activities in which they participated.

Like every industry, education has evolved over the years. But unlike other industries, the prior knowledge and experiences that parents have about schooling can present a challenge when it comes to schools being able to implement new and innovative ideas. People tend to fear what they don't know or understand, especially when it concerns their children. Standards Based Grading (SBG) has brought with it, some of those concerns. However, once understood - Standards Based Learning and SBG are hard to argue with. Here's a great TED TALK by Salman Kahn (of Kahn Academy notoriety) talking about these concepts.



FAQs

Q: When will we start seeing letter grades for courses in Infinite Campus?

A: To help with the transition, we will be updating letter grades for Standards Based classes every Monday during the month of December.

Q: How will grades show up on transcripts?

A: Grades will be reported as A, B, C or NY (Not Yet) on transcripts. A "N"Y means the student can go back and work on gaining proficiency in the standards and thereby improving the grade to a C rather than taking an F and having to re-do the entire class next year.

Q: How will "NY" affect my GPA?

A: The "NY" counts a zero on a GPA because the class has not yet been completed, so work meet those standards right away to finish the class.

Let's consider the report card, a part of the schooling process that parents certainly remember from their youth. To parents recalling their own K-12 experience, the **report card** was a document that schools would send home quarterly reporting of how well (or not well) they were doing in school at that point in time.

In the traditional grading environments that existed when today's parents were school-age children, students were measured on points and percentages. Report cards fit that instructional method — they reported how students were doing at a given point in time using a letter or number grade.

In standards-based grading, students are evaluated based upon many assignments, assessments, and learning experiences around a learning standard that are given over the entire semester (or year). Instead of a letter grade or percentage judging student performance, for example, educators share where students are along the "mastering a skill" continuum.

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Here is a great three minute video explaining what Standards Based Grading is all about.



So if the traditional report card is insufficient in standards-based learning settings, how can we report student progress in a way that allows parents to embrace the initiative instead of pushing back on it because they don't understand it?

We believe a key to the successful implementation of standards-based grading is frequent parent communication. Woodland Park High School has multiple ways for parents to know and engage with the learning that their son/daughter is responsible for.

We have redesigned the Infinite Campus gradebook for those courses being assessed using Standards. Remember - these are likely your child's CORE classes (while some electives have joined as early adopters). You'll notice when you look at the scores in the grade book - your child will have a score between 0-4. While we are teaching and learning with a score of 3 in each standard as our goal - a score of 2 is minimum for proficiency.

Courses will have MULTIPLE standards for which students must demonstrate proficiency. Therefore, EACH standard gets its own score. That's what you see in Infinite Campus when you check progress. Remember - a score of 2 or above is necessary. Where you see scores below this - the student needs to improve or re-demonstrate his proficiency. The scores you see are your son/daughter's "currently level of proficiency" for individual standards.

An interactive gradebook...

Parents are able to access student scores on specific demonstrations of learning (assignments/tests) by accessing our interactive standards-based gradebook. This allows parents to view student progress over time, drill into any assignment, and keep the standards-based terminology part of the regular communication between home and school.

Our 9th grade parents were all signed up for the communications that come from our REAL LEARNING PLATFORM partner (Summit) to keep parents "in-the-know" each day. This information is available in multiple formats, including text messages, the online platform and emails. Now, we can be sure that progress on standards is being communicated much more frequently than through a traditional report card or progress report.

We believe the lack of frequent communication about student performance on learning standards is the primary reason parents question the standards-based grading initiative. That's why we've been so diligent regarding in-person communication with many parents attending regular "Coffee with Kevin" parent meetings on the Third Thursday morning of every month. As well, we have hosted "Pizza with the Principal" for those who prefer an evening meeting. Another will happen soon. Pay close attention to the school's website for details.

When educators are given the right set of tools to streamline reporting about what students know (and are able to do), and when those tools are paired with a parent reporting mechanism that is easy to understand and updated frequently, we believe that the likelihood of a successful adoption of standards-based grading will happen smoothly, because parents are better able to support the journey.