

Grading Policies and Practices in K-12

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In the following report, Hanover Research examines common grading practices in K-12 education, paying particular attention to standards-based grading approaches, and the process and implications of implementing new grading practices.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

DISCUSSION

Grading policies and approaches in K-12 education vary considerably, partly as a consequence of widespread education reform and policy changes. Although no studies of the distribution of different grading practices appear to exist, the volume of literature on different practices suggests that standards-based grading and teaching is gaining recognition as the approach with the “greatest potential to realize the best outcomes at the least cost.”¹

The implementation process at the districts we examined indicate that the process is a lengthy and involved one—often requiring almost ten years from inception to completion—but studies have shown that both teachers and students perform better in standards-based pedagogical approaches than in traditional systems. Instead of relying on point systems and percentages, standards-based grading approaches measure the degree to which students’ are able to meet pre-defined grade-level standards in all subject areas. This manner of assessment more accurately represents students’ academic proficiency, encourages the student to take ownership of their education, and empowers teachers to adjust their curriculum to individual pedagogical needs. Implementation requires trust and collaboration between administrators and educators, as well as the support of other district stakeholders such as parents. Teachers require professional development and support throughout the implementation process. And clear and frequent communication and feedback from all stakeholders is essential to a successful transition to standards-based grading.

KEY FINDINGS

- Our review of secondary literature revealed a variety of approaches for assessing student performance, although no studies or surveys were found that indicated how widely each approach has been adopted. Each approach measures different indicators associated with educational outcomes and each is deemed to suit particular types of student needs, class formats, or educational objectives. A form of competency-based grading, often called “standards-based” grading (SBG), is quickly gaining support from educators and academics because it integrates effectively with academic learning standard reforms and can be used to assess many types of material equally well. Although most examples of thoroughgoing implementation of SBG are relatively recent, reports and studies of its effectiveness appear promising.
- The core tenets of standards-based grading are that students advance upon mastery; competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students; assessment is meaningful and a positive learning

¹ “Proficiency-Based Instruction and Assessment: A Promising Path to Higher Achievement In Oregon Education.” *Oregon Education Roundtable*. March 2009, p. 1.
http://depts.washington.edu/uwcel/e3_obc/proficiency_based_education_whitepaper_oregon.pdf

experience for students; students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs; and learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include the application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions.

- In an SBG approach, students do not earn grades in the typical sense; rather, they are measured based on the degree to which they can meet subject-specific grade-level standards. Typically the metric employs several scores, one indicating competency beyond the standard, one indicating performance that fulfills the standard, one indicating partial fulfillment of or progress towards the standard, and one indicating current inability to meet the standard. Students are scored regularly (typically at least once a week) in a variety of formative assessments, which typically do not count toward the students' term grade.
- The adoption of new grading practices is typically a lengthy and involved process. Based on the districts we examined that have undergone or are undergoing the implementation of new grading approaches, the process from inception to full implementation throughout a district typically takes a little less than a decade and may include the following steps:
 - The decision to implement a new grading approach is typically made in conjunction with multiple stakeholders. District administrators at districts that we examined have encouraged consideration of a new approach by sponsoring professional development and discussions about standards-based grading and discussions with teachers in the district.
 - One of the first steps toward implementation is the development of materials and grading metrics, and piloting the implementation for a full year. Teachers are given extensive professional development and support to assist the development of compatible assessments, curriculum, and practices, and surveys and open forums are used to receive feedback and disseminate information throughout the process.
- A few pilot schools implement the practices to test and refine the materials. Typically, implementation progresses a few grade levels at a time, rather than proceeding one school at a time. In order to ensure a successful implementation of a new grading approach and avoid common pitfalls, districts should encourage trust and collaboration between teachers and administrators in the district. By approaching the transition as a collaborative endeavor and making sufficient support and professional development resources available to help with the transition, districts can ensure that the teachers take ownership of the transition and make it effective.
- Good communication with all stakeholders is another essential component for a successful transition. Schools should be proactive, transparent, and engage with parents to show them how the new standards will help their students achieve greater success and prepare them to compete in today's marketplace.

SECTION I: OVERVIEW OF GRADING PRACTICES

Grading practices have long been a controversial issue among educators and academics. Although grades are accepted as a standard part of the U.S. education system, there is some disagreement as to their function. There has been much debate over whether grades should be designed to communicate a student's performance in a variety of areas, including behavior and participation, or whether they should just represent a student's proficiency in a given subject.

Our review of secondary literature revealed a variety of approaches for assessing student performance, although no studies or surveys were found that indicated how widely each approach has been adopted. Each approach measures different indicators associated with educational outcomes and each is deemed to suit particular types of student needs, class formats, or educational objectives. Some districts, for example, provide alternate assessment opportunities for students with special needs.²

COMMON APPROACHES

John J. Venn, a professor in the Department of Exceptional Student and Deaf Education at the University of North Florida, has compiled and published the following descriptions of common grading approaches:³

Multiple Grading: Multiple grading enables teachers to assign grades in more than one area. For example, students can earn two grades: one for effort and one for performance. Multiple grading provides a way to grade students based on ability.

Grading for Effort: Some teachers use grading for effort with students whose ability is so low that they are unable to meet even minimum performance standards.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Grading: Grades are assigned on the basis of student progress in meeting IEP objectives [this approach is commonly adopted in special education settings].

Pass/Fail Grading: Pass/fail grading involves establishing minimum criteria for a passing grade. Students who meet the criteria receive a grade of "pass." Those who fail to demonstrate the required skills and knowledge receive a grade of "fail."

Portfolio-Based Grading: Teachers assign portfolio grades based on evaluation of the authentic samples of student work that appear in a portfolio. Rather than emphasizing

² "MAP-A Assessment." Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education.

<http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/mapa.html>; "Secondary Alternate Programs." Board of Education Burnaby School District 41. <http://sd41.bc.ca/programs/daps/>

³ Descriptions quoted verbatim from: "Alternate Grading." JohnVenn.com.

http://www.johnvenn.com/assessment/assessment_alternate_grading.html

grades such as test scores, the portfolio approach relies more on holistic grades. This encourages reflective teaching, learning, and assessment.

Competency-Based Grading: With competency-based grading, also often called standards-based grading (SBG), students demonstrate attainment of required skills. Teachers establish criteria for successful attainment of competencies prior to instruction so that students know what is expected. Students then receive grades based on their progress in reaching specified criterion levels for each competency or skill. Teachers often list the required competencies on a checklist, which helps monitor student progress. Teachers assign grades according to the number of successfully mastered skills.

Point Systems: Point systems assign points for successfully completing learning activities, tests, and assignments. A sample point system may consist of the following: 10 points for each of 10 homework assignments completed, 20 points for each of five class quizzes, 50 points for completing the class project or paper, and 10 points for daily participation in class. Students can earn all the points or partial points for each assignment. Students receive an overall grade based on the total points earned. Students with the highest point total earn an "A"; students with lower points earn lower grades.

Contract Grading: Contract grading involves having the teacher and the student sign a contract that describes the work that the student will complete within a specified time period. Students may contract for grades of "A," "B," or "C" depending on the amount or quality of work they complete. For example, students who contract for an "A" may be expected to write an extra paper during the grading period or complete specific enrichment activities such as documenting books, articles, or chapters read on a particular topic. The contract is written and signed prior to instruction. The teacher and the student then monitor progress in fulfilling the contract, and the teacher assigns a final grade at the end of the grading period.

Qualitative Grading: Qualitative grading relies on narrative statements that the teacher writes to describe the quality of a student's performance. Qualitative grading avoids numbers like point totals or letter grades from A to F. Instead, the narrative statements describe student performance, effort, attitude, behavior, interest, and learning style. For example, team teachers in an inclusion class may decide to evaluate the performance of a student with severe disabilities using qualitative rather than letter grading.

MOST COMMON APPROACHES

Although each approach to assessing student proficiency offers different advantages and is most suitable for different educational environments, the point systems approach is the most common and is typically described as the "traditional" approach.

Some research indicates that portfolio-based grading approaches are being tried in a variety of contexts outside of the visual arts—where the approach is most naturally suited⁴—including in K-12 education.⁵ Research on the effectiveness of portfolio-based approaches, however, is limited and shows mixed results. One literature review suggests that “wide variations in portfolio design and implementation likely account for most of this heterogeneity.”⁶

A form of competency-based grading, often called “standards-based” grading (SBG), is quickly gaining support from educators and academics as an alternative to the “traditional” approach. It is considered suitable for widespread adoption because it integrates effectively with academic learning standard reforms and can be used to assess many types of material equally well.⁷

Although most examples of thoroughgoing implementation of SBG are relatively recent, reports and studies of its effectiveness appear promising. Lindsay Unified High School in California, for example, piloted an SBG system and subsequently “had the highest growth among all the schools in the district” in its Academic Performance Index; the “highest performing students were the . . . same learners who engaged in [SBG] education.”⁸ A whitepaper produced by the Oregon Education Roundtable based on the experience of a few districts with SBG indicates that their “initial results surpass conventional assessment and instruction . . . a conference of leading Oregon educators identified proficiency-based assessment and instruction as the practice that can probably improve student learning the most and at the least cost.”⁹

Because of its flexibility, apparent popularity, and early indications of its effectiveness, this report focuses primarily on standards-based grading practice and its implementation.

STANDARDS-BASED GRADING APPROACH

Much of the debate surrounding grading practices features the question of what should be included in grades. How this question is answered shapes the specific aspects of individual grading practices. The grading practices traditionally used by many teachers are designed to communicate student performance in a number of areas, including both academic achievement and behavioral factors such as student effort, conduct, and attitude.¹⁰ In

⁴ Madeja, S., et al. “Alternative Assessment Strategies for Schools.” *Arts Education Policy Review*. May/June 2004. 105, 5. p. 8.

⁵ Sinioris, M., et. al. “Learning Portfolios as a Tool for Advancing Health Care Management and Leadership.” *The Journal of Health Administration Education*. Winter 2010, p. 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷ “The Universal Design of Topics.” Always Formative. January 25, 2010.

<http://alwaysformative.blogspot.com/2010/01/universal-design-of-topics.html>

⁸ “It’s Not a Matter of Time: Highlights from the 2011 Competency-Based Learning Summit.” International Association for K-12 Online Learning. July 2011. p. 13. <http://www.inacol.org/research/bookstore/detail.php?id=25>

⁹ “Proficiency-Based Instruction and Assessment: A Promising Path to Higher Achievement In Oregon Education.” *Oregon Education Roundtable*. March 2009. Op. cit., p. 1.

¹⁰ Allen, J. “Grades as Valid Measures of Academic Achievement of Classroom Learning.” *The Clearing House*. May/June 2005. 78:5. <http://www.tcnj.edu/~senate/resources/documents/GradesasValidMeasures.pdf>

contrast to these practices, some educators now recommend that grades should not be based on behavior and other non-academic factors, but only on students' mastery of the material in a given subject. Grading only on achievement is a key element of standards-based grading—the model focuses solely on “students’ proficiency on well-defined course objectives.”¹¹

CompetencyWorks was created by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) as an online resource for information on SBG, or “competency education,” as the practice is also known. CompetencyWorks facilitated a meeting of 100 “innovators in competency education” who wrote the following “working definition of high quality competency education.”¹²

- **Students advance upon mastery:** The core element of a competency-based approach is that students progress to more advanced work upon demonstration of learning by applying specific skills and content.
- **Competencies include explicit, measureable, transferable learning objectives that empower students:** In competency-based practices, a course is organized into measurable learning objectives that are shared with students. Students take responsibility for their learning, thereby increasing their engagement and motivation.
- **Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students:** In a competency-based model, the traditional approach to assessment and accountability “of learning” is turned on its head with assessments “for learning.” Formative assessments are aligned with learning objectives. Students receive immediate feedback when assessment occurs . . . to encourage students to return to difficult concepts and skills until they achieve mastery.
- **Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs:** The core idea of a competency-based model is that all students will master the desired competencies. This requires a rapid response capacity on the part of the educators to support students.
- **Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions:** Competencies emphasize the application of learning. A high quality competency-based approach will require students to apply skills and knowledge to new situations to demonstrate mastery and to create knowledge. Competencies will include academic standards as well as lifelong learning skills and dispositions.

¹¹ Scriffiny, P. “Seven Reasons for Standards-Based Grading.” *Educational Leadership*. October 2008. Vol. 66, No. 2. http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/oct08/vol66/num02/Seven_Reasons_for_Standards-Based_Grading.aspx

¹² Bullet points adapted from: “What is Competency Education.” CompetencyWorks. <http://www.competencyworks.org/about/competency-education/> and “Detailed Definition of Competency-based Pathways.” Competency-Based Pathways. <https://sites.google.com/site/competencybasedpathways/home/understanding-competency-based-approaches/definition>

The whitepaper produced by the Oregon Education Roundtable articulated several characteristics of a standards-based grading and teaching approach (here called “proficiency-based instruction”), which provide a helpful complement to the definition articulated by CompetencyWorks:¹³

- **It is student centered:** Proficiency-based instruction expects that *all* students will achieve at a proficient level and move on successfully. In effect, it does away with the bell curve.
- **It is standards-based and focused on student proficiencies:** Standards form the foundation for proficiencies that students can demonstrate and that teachers can assess in a variety of formats such as tests, written papers, oral presentations, individual or group projects, collections of evidence, and performance in a work or service setting. Assessments may be diagnostic (to form a baseline of where students are before they start a learning program), formative (an ongoing part of the learning process), or summative (to determine what students have gained as a result of the learning program).
- **Ongoing assessment is integral to instruction and learning:** In a proficiency-based system, formative assessment drives instruction and therefore has primacy over summative assessment. The teacher employs assessment as part of a daily and weekly learning feedback loop to determine what a student still needs to learn to achieve proficiency. The student works at gaps in proficiency until they are closed.
- **Students know where they’re going, propel themselves, and take various paths:** In a proficiency system, students take more responsibility for their progress. The teacher makes it clear from the beginning precisely what proficiencies they are expected to master and what they will have to be able to do to demonstrate that they have attained those proficiencies. Then the teacher (or the teaching team) gives them ample support and allows them to move at their own pace in a variety of learning activities.
- **Teaching flourishes:** The teacher deploys a broader array of learning tools, engages students in a wider range of formats, and gauges student progress daily and weekly. Managing a learning environment in this way is less restrictive and more creative than direct instruction.

¹³ Bullet points adapted from: “Proficiency-Based Instruction and Assessment: A Promising Path to Higher Achievement In Oregon Education.” *Oregon Education Roundtable*. March 2009. Op. cit., p. 3, 5-6.

SECTION II: ANALYSIS OF POLICIES AT LARGE DISTRICTS IN THE WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA

Although the literature can make different grading practices seem clearly distinct and mutually exclusive, in practice, policies often permit or occasionally encourage a hybridization of approaches. This hybridization is evident in the policies from a sample of districts with similar characteristics to our partner.

Using data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES), we compiled a peer list of public school districts with over 75,000 students from the Washington Metropolitan Area, shown in Figure 2.1, below.

Figure 2.1: Public School District Peer List

District Name	Students	Schools	Approach
Fairfax County Public Schools	174,479	212	Adopting SBG (elementary only) ¹⁴
Montgomery County Public Schools	144,023	205	Adopting SBG
Prince George's County Public Schools	126,671	207	Traditional-Hybrid
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	75,481	125	Traditional-Hybrid ¹⁵
Baltimore City Public Schools	83,800	196	Traditional-Hybrid ¹⁶
Baltimore County Public Schools	104,160	173	Adopting SBG (elementary only) ¹⁷

Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

An examination of the grading policies in place at the districts listed in Figure 2.1 revealed a diversity of approaches and policies. Because of similarities in these policies and to limit redundant information, not all of the districts listed above are profiled in this report. Instead, we only profile those districts that represent a distinct grading approach. Surprisingly, the schools associated with each approach appear to have nearly identical policies with each other: both of the districts which have implemented the traditional-hybrid approach made the same innovation on traditional grading structures—modifying a typical score/percentage based grading approach by replacing letter-grades with labels designed to communicate proficiency—and all the districts that are adopting SBG appear to be encouraging the same practices and following similar implementation schedules.

¹⁴ "Elementary Progress Report: Communicating Achievement to Parents." Fairfax County Public Schools. <http://www.fcps.edu/is/elemprogreport/>

¹⁵ "Regulation II-RA – Grading." Anne Arundel County Public Schools. p. 8 ff. http://www.aacps.org/aacps/boe/board/newpolicy/Sections/section_600/adminregIIRA.pdf

¹⁶ "Administrative Regulation IKA-RA." Baltimore City Public Schools. p. 3 ff. http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/Domain/5623/IKA_-_RA_-_Grading_and_Reporting_FINAL.pdf

¹⁷ "Elementary Report Card Information." Baltimore County Public Schools. <http://www.bcps.org/parents/ReportCard/default.html>

DISTRICT PROFILES

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Montgomery County Public Schools is in the process of converting their grading practices to a standards-based grading approach. Consequently, their grading policies vary by grade level.

The district began developing the standards-based curriculum and reporting materials in 2007, and began phasing in use of the new system with voluntary implementation for kindergarten and Grade 1 in 2009. In 2011-2012 all kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms were required to use the new materials, and voluntary implementation has begun for Grades 2 and 3.¹⁸ A traditional point system and number grades tied to percentages are still in use for most students in Grades 4 and higher, although some elementary schools have implemented standards-based grading through Grade 5.¹⁹

Montgomery County's implementation process began with the development of the necessary materials, including standards-based report cards, an electronic grade book, explanatory guides for key stakeholders, and curriculum guides for teachers. All of these materials were developed with substantial input from key stakeholders—parent representatives, for example, helped develop the report card and explanatory guides.²⁰

When the materials for a particular grade level are ready, the district initiates an optional implementation period, which lasts two school years per grade-level. The district provides support for the transition process by planning professional development activities and events and “supporting individual schools through visits and consultations.” In addition, the district sponsored an Elementary Curriculum Implementation Self-Assessment for all of its elementary schools to enable “all elementary school principals to reflect on their implementation status . . . as well as their readiness to implement . . . in Grade 3 for the 2012-2013 school year.” District support for the implementation process is ongoing: “Following completion of the self-assessment, community superintendents and directors of school performance met with principals to gather school responses, identify effective practices to share across clusters, and collect feedback that outlined suggestions for improvements.” Furthermore, relevant on-site support is provided in the early stages of adoption.²¹

¹⁸ “Memorandum: Update on Curriculum 2.0 Implementation for 2012-2013.” Montgomery County Public Schools. May 8, 2012, p. 1. <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/boe/meetings/agenda/2011-12/2012-0508/3.0%20Update%20on%20%20Curriculum%202.0%20Implementation.pdf>

¹⁹ “Report Cards.” Montgomery County Public Schools. <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/grading/report-cards.aspx>

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

The description of the district’s grading and reporting policy is contained in a few points in its policy document:²²

- Grades must be based on individual demonstration of skill and understanding.
- Grades for elementary content areas are based on evidence of the attainment of assigned grade level or course expectations.
- Grades for middle and high school courses are based on evidence of attainment of course expectations.

The district has delegated to its Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs the responsibility of “developing curricula . . . that establish grade level expectations at the elementary level and course expectations at the middle and high school levels aligned with [Maryland State Department of Education] standards and assessments.”²³

The district’s elementary report cards illustrate the shift to standards-based grading and provide some insight into their processes. The report card shows a variety of performance measures, including the student’s attainment of content area objectives, their instructional reading level, and their learning skills. For students receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages training (ESOL), a section mapping their progress is also included. Each performance measure has its own scale, although all the scales are based on measuring proficiency.

Figure 2.2: Standards-Based Grading Metric, Montgomery County Public Schools

Mathematics	SEM 1	SEM 2
Counting and Cardinality		
Geometry		
Measurement and Data		
Number and Operations in Base Ten		
Operations and Algebraic Thinking		

Source: Montgomery County Public Schools

For example, the measurement of content area objectives is displayed in a table like Figure 2.2, above, where the grade-level standards for each content-area are listed on the left, and the student’s score is listed on the right. Grey boxes indicate that no score is required. Figure 2.3 displays the grading scale used by the district for regular course objectives.²⁴

²² Bullet points quoted verbatim from: “Regulation IKA-RA Grading and Reporting.” Montgomery County Public Schools. p. 3. <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdf/ikara.pdf>

²³ “Regulation IKA-RA Grading and Reporting.” Montgomery County Public Schools. p. 5. Op. cit.

²⁴ “How Do I Read My Child’s Progress Report Card? Kindergarten.” Montgomery County Public Schools. p. 1. <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/info/grading/how-to-read-the-curriculum-2.0-kindergarten-report-card.pdf>

Figure 2.3: Standards-Based Grading Scale, Montgomery County Public Schools

Score	Description
P	Meets the grade-level standard by demonstrating proficiency of the content or processes for the Measurement Topic
I	In progress toward meeting the grade-level standard
N	Not yet making progress or making minimal progress toward meeting the grade-level standard
M	Missing data – No grade recorded
NEP	Not English Proficient (for ESOL)

Source: Montgomery County Public Schools

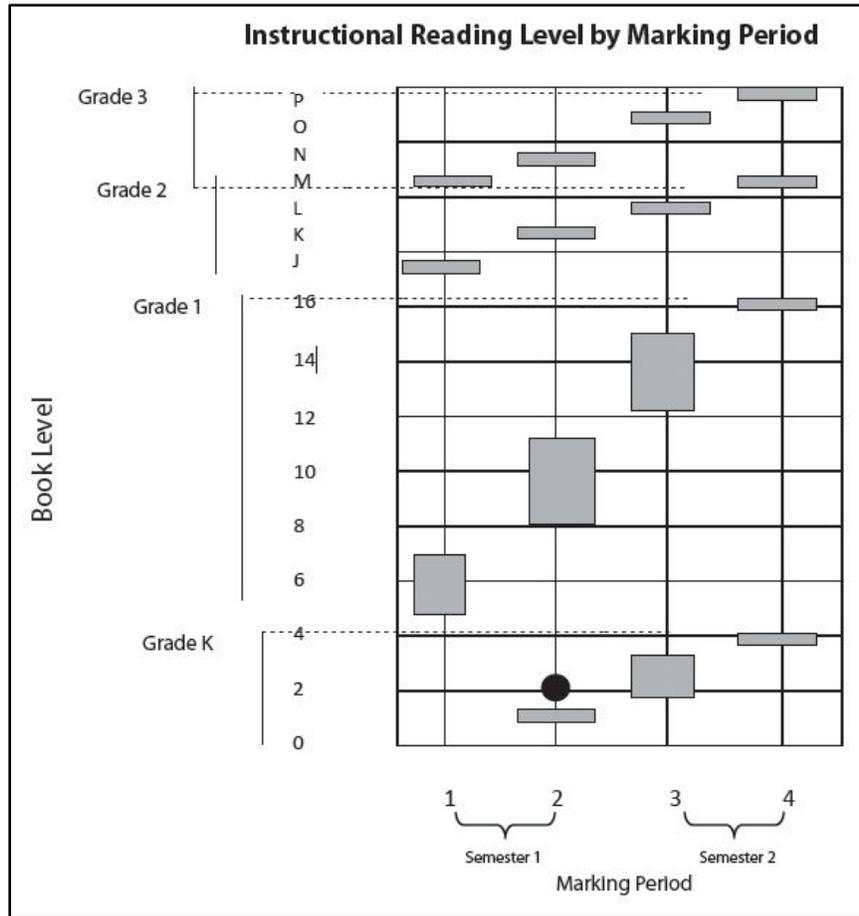
Learning skills are displayed in a similar manner, although the grading scale differs; students are given one of three marks: DEM, PRG, or N, which stand for Demonstrating, Progressing, and Not Yet Evident, respectively.²⁵

Rather than displaying in a table, the student's instructional reading level is graphed in a chart like the one reproduced in Figure 2.4, below. The black dot is the student's level, and the grey boxes mark the expected reading level of students in the grade and semester indicated by the axes. The book level is determined "by the complexity of vocabulary, the number of words on a page, and content."²⁶

²⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 1.

Figure 2.4: Instructional Reading Level Report



Source: Montgomery County Public Schools

PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Prince George’s County Public Schools publishes distinct grading policies for elementary, middle, and high school level students. The elementary grading and reporting procedures seems to indicate an adherence to several principles of standards-based grading; namely, an emphasis on using grades to indicate individual levels of achievement rather than class ranking, the elimination of non-academic factors from grade reporting, and a correspondence between the achievement of learning goals and the grade earned. The policy document stipulates three principles that guide the implementation of the policy:²⁷

- Grading and promotion within the Prince George’s County Public School System will be based upon the degree of success an individual student has achieved in completing the educational program designed to meet his/her unique needs.

²⁷ “Administrative Procedure 5121.1 Grading and Reporting for Elementary Schools Early Childhood through Grade Five.” Prince George’s County Public Schools. p. 2. http://www1.pgcps.org/uploadedFiles/Offices/Academics/Grading_Policy/ElementaryPolicy.pdf

- Every student will have the opportunity to earn grades that reflect his/her ability to demonstrate learning outcomes and be graded only in accordance with their achievement on material or information based on specified learning outcomes and approved curricula.
- The bell curve will not be used as a basis for determining student grades.

While the principles that motivate grading at Prince George’s County Public Schools seem to accord with the spirit of standards-based grading, the district’s grading practices appear to resemble more traditional policies. All students are graded based on three factors: class work, assessments, and homework. Students in grades prior to Grade 2 are assessed using the following scale, which is also tied to traditional percentage points.²⁸

- PR = Proficient – child can demonstrate indicator independently 90 – 100%
- IP = In Process – child can reliably demonstrate indicator 80 – 89%
- EM = Emerging – child demonstrates indicator with assistance 80 – 79%
- ND = Needs Development – child does not demonstrate indicator 50 – 69%

Students in Grade 2 through Grade 5 are assessed using a slightly modified letter-grade scale (no plus or minus signs are indicated) that is also correlated to traditional percentage points.²⁹

- A = Excellent progress at the level of instruction indicated 90 – 100%
- B = Above Average progress at the level of instruction indicated 80 – 89%
- C = Average progress at the level of instruction indicated 70 – 79%
- D = Below Average progress at the level of instruction indicated 60 – 69%
- E = Unsatisfactory progress (failure) at the level of instruction indicated 50 – 59%
- A grade of 0 (zero) can only be used in the event that a student does not attempt to complete an assignment.
- I = Incomplete. The “I” grade may be used for elementary students who have been lawfully absent from school and have not had an opportunity to make up missed work in a timely manner.

Reading skills are assessed separately from the term grade for students in second through fifth grade. They are assessed as either Above Grade Level (ABL), On Grade Level (OGL), or Below Grade Level (BL) based on the following percentage scale increments:³⁰

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

- ABL = 80 – 100%
- OGL = 60 – 79%
- BL = 0 – 59%

All students in middle or high school are assessed using the same letter-grade scale as students in second through fifth grade, with one exception: some classes can be graded according to a pass/fail metric rather than a traditional grading scale.³¹

³¹ “Administrative Procedure 5121.2 Grading and Reporting for Middle Schools Grade Six through Grade Eight.” Prince George’s County Public Schools. p. 2.
http://www1.pgcps.org/uploadedfiles/Offices/Academics/Grading_Policy/5121.2_Secondary_1.5.10%5B1%5D.pdf ;
“Administrative Procedure 5121.3 Grading and Reporting for High Schools Grade Nine through Grade Twelve.” Prince George’s County Public Schools. p. 2.
http://www1.pgcps.org/uploadedfiles/Offices/Academics/Grading_Policy/5121.3_High_9.17.10.pdf

SECTION III: IMPLEMENTING NEW GRADING PRACTICES

Implementation of a new grading practice requires advance planning and the adoption of new processes and systems. In this section Hanover Research examines the experience and practices of several districts that have successfully implemented standards-based grading.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The adoption of new grading practices is typically a lengthy and involved process. Several districts have documented and published the detailed steps they took to fully implement standards-based instruction in their schools. The **Madison Metropolitan School District** in Madison, Wisconsin—which consists of 24,806 students in 54 schools³²—began adopting a standards-based instruction and assessment approach in 1997 and completed the implementation in 2008. After ensuring support from stakeholders in the district, they began implementation with a review of the literature on standards-based grading and the design of a report card, which was tested through use at a few pilot schools.³³ A copy of their schedule is included in the Appendix, Figure A.1.

Throughout the implementation process, the teams responsible for leading the implementation followed a prescribed cycle: they surveyed the relevant teachers; used the information they gathered to define process, create forms, and write supporting materials; which they then piloted and revised before full implementation. Interestingly, it appears from Madison Metropolitan School District’s implementation schedule that the district waited until the preliminary assessment materials and processes were in place before initiating substantial communication with external stakeholders through their newsletter.³⁴

Quakertown Community School District (QCSD) in Quakertown, Pennsylvania has also published a history of their standards-based grading implementation process.³⁵ Although the district only serves 5,333 students at 11 schools, its implementation schedule is far more detailed than Madison Metropolitan School District’s, and so merits inclusion for analysis.³⁶ The implementation history at Quakertown Community School District is also reproduced in the appendix, Figure A.2.

³² “Madison Metropolitan School District.” National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?Search=1&details=1&InstName=madison+metropolitan+school+district&DistrictType=1&DistrictType=2&DistrictType=3&DistrictType=4&DistrictType=5&DistrictType=6&DistrictType=7&NumOfStudentsRange=more&NumOfSchoolsRange=more&ID2=5508520

³³ “Implementation of Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment 1997-2008.” Madison Metropolitan School District. https://secedweb.madison.k12.wi.us/files/seced/ms_report_cards/docs/ms_report_card_timeline.pdf

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “The History of SBG at Quakertown.” Quakertown Community School District. <http://www.qcsc.org/Page/348>

³⁶ “Quakertown Community SD.” National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?Search=1&details=1&InstName=quakertown+&DistrictType=1&DistrictType=2&DistrictType=3&DistrictType=4&DistrictType=5&DistrictType=6&DistrictType=7&NumOfStudentsRange=more&NumOfSchoolsRange=more&ID2=4219890

The implementation schedule shows that QCS D dedicated significant resources to professional development activities throughout the implementation process: they hired external consultants, organized teacher workshops, sponsored forums for parents and students, and trained students on the approach.³⁷ Some research suggests that investments like these are essential for a successful transition.³⁸

Similarities in the process from both districts can provide a general guide to the implementation process:

- Both districts began implementation proceedings after some support for a standards-based curriculum was expressed by teachers in the district.
- Both districts developed materials and grading metrics first, and piloted their implementation for a full school year before implementing them throughout the district.
- Both relied heavily on surveys and forums for gathering and disseminating information throughout the implementation process.
- Both took approximately a decade to fully implement the new grading practice in all grades and at all schools.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The day-to-day aspects of standards-based grading differ widely due to differences in approach and practice. As the profiles of large districts in Section II demonstrated, not all practices associated with the standards-based grading literature are applicable or desirable in all circumstances. Nonetheless, the discussion that follows should provide a glimpse of the teaching process in a standards-based grading classroom.

Warren Hills Elementary School in Liberty, Missouri has implemented standards-based grading and has published a website with some relevant information about their ongoing grading process.

In accordance with state and district learning standards, the school has articulated learning goals for each grade and each content area. These goals are distributed to parents at the beginning of each term and are represented on the student’s report card.³⁹ The students are assessed with respect to each goal with a mark between 1.0 and 4.0—a common indicator in schools that have adopted standards-based reporting—the meanings of which

³⁷ “The History of SBG at Quakertown.” Op. cit.

³⁸ “Urich, L. “Implementation of standards-based grading at the middle school level.” *Graduate Theses and Dissertations Iowa State University*. 2012. Paper 12492, pp. 81-3.
<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3499&context=etd>

³⁹ “Kindergarten.” Warren Hills Elementary. <http://wh.liberty.k12.mo.us/assessment/kindergarten> ; “Standards-Based Reporting.” Warren Hills Elementary. <http://wh.liberty.k12.mo.us/assessment>

are reproduced in Figure 3.1, below. Figure 3.2 reproduces an illustration of this grading metric applied to a specific goal: “to ride your bike by yourself.”⁴⁰

Figure 3.1: Grading Marks, Warren Hills Elementary

Mark	Meaning
4.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Above and Beyond ■ 3.0 content applied in a new situation ■ Increased level of difficulty
3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Target learning goal
2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Simpler, but important content, processes, or skills ■ Academic vocabulary
1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Making minimal progress toward meeting the standard ■ Students need help to reach the level of understanding

Source: Warren Hills Elementary School⁴¹

Figure 3.2: Grading Marks Example, Warren Hills Elementary

Mark	Meaning	Description
4.0	Expert	Wow! You not only ride a bike on your own, you can pop a wheelie, jump ramps, and other bike stunts.
3.0	Meeting the Goal	Congratulations! You’re successfully riding a bike by yourself.
2.0	Almost There	You’re pedaling well and staying upright as long as I’m holding on and giving you a little push.
1.0	Getting Started	You are riding a bike but using training wheels.

Source: Warren Hills Elementary School⁴²

Warren Hills Elementary has followed an implementation process similar to those described previously. Discussions between administrators, teachers, and external consultants began in 2006 as curriculum, assessments, and reporting mechanisms were designed. Training and professional development began in 2008, and intensified in 2009. Some teachers began piloting the new grading practices in 2012.⁴³

A grading metric like Warren Hills Elementary School’s is also recommended by Jason Buell—a standards-based grading advocate and teacher in Mountain View Whisman School District in San Jose, California. His experience with standards-based grading, frequent writing on the subject, and active participation in the online community of standards-based grading advocates suggests that his advice has proven useful to teachers using SBG—especially to teachers accustomed to other grading practices, as he teaches in a district that does not require SBG. His implementation guide is a resource for understanding what SBG looks like in practice, and how teachers effectively implement it in the classroom.

⁴⁰ “Standards-Based Reporting.” Warren Hills Elementary. Op. cit.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Buell's **metric/scoring system** is slightly different than the one used by Warren Hills Elementary, but the principle is the same.⁴⁴

- 0 = No evidence of learning
- 1 = Can do most of the simple stuff with help
- 2 = Can do all of the simple stuff
- 3 = Can do all of the simple stuff and all of the complex stuff
- 4 = Can go beyond what was directly taught in class

The primary benefit to using a grading metric like this, Buell notes, is its flexibility:

Everything can be evaluated against that scale. What knowledge did you demonstrate? Well, it looks like you included the 2.0 standards and partially demonstrated your 3.0 standards. This poem/powerpoint/interpretive dance is a 2.5 . . . There is no soft option because the exact same level of knowledge needs to be demonstrated regardless of how it is done.⁴⁵

The flexibility a standards-based grading approach permits is one of the primary reasons it is considered as a potential replacement for the “traditional” grading approach in many schools.

After establishing a metric for the evaluation of the learning standards that require assessment, Buell suggests *grouping the standards relevant to the class into topics* which can be taught as units in the term’s curriculum. The curriculum can also be organized by skills as well, a grouping which can sometimes work better for certain subjects like mathematics.

Then, for each topic, the teacher should *define the work that earns a ‘3’*: “What are the complex ideas/concepts/skills that I want my students to know or be able to do? . . . Your primary concern here is twofold: What do my students need to learn? and At what depth do they need to learn it?”⁴⁶

Once the ‘3’ level is defined, *plan the steps from a level ‘2’ understanding to a level ‘3’ understanding backwards* (starting from level ‘3’) for each standard: “You’ll need to break these standards into a learning progression. Ask yourself, What do my students need to know to be able to do this stuff?”⁴⁷ Having established a level ‘3’ and level ‘2,’ the teacher can then *determine a level ‘4’ understanding for each standard*.

⁴⁴ “SBG Implementation: Topic Scales.” Always Formative. May 29, 2010.

<http://alwaysformative.blogspot.com/2010/05/sbg-implementation-topic-scales.html>

⁴⁵ “The Universal Design of Topics.” Always Formative. January 25, 2010. Op. cit.

⁴⁶ “SBG Implementation: Topic Scales.” Always Formative. May 29, 2010. Op. cit.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Finally, Buell suggests that teachers write their **assessments** for each topic: “It will be a back and forth process of writing problems based on your standards as well as revising your standards because you realize that’s not quite what you wanted your students to do.”⁴⁸ Buell employs five principles when designing his assessments:⁴⁹

- It doesn’t matter when you learn it as long as you learn it.
- My assessment policy needs to direct my remediation of your skills.
- My assessment policy needs to incentivize your own remediation.
- My assessment policy should do as much of the work as possible.
- The ultimate goal is self-assessment. Any assessment policy should help students to become better self-assessors.

When the assessment is a test, Buell designs questions geared to test for each level of understanding. He attempts to provide immediate feedback on all assessments—grading and reviewing them in class the same day—so the students can evaluate their own progress toward learning goals/standards and immediately begin remediation on any concepts/skills that require additional work.⁵⁰

A SBG **gradebook** should clearly communicate—to anyone with access—what the student has and has not learned. In order to help focus attention on the student’s learning rather than the particular assignments, Buell does not list specific assignments in his gradebook, but rather assesses scores by topic. He tracks their progress on a weekly basis, but zero-weights the weekly scores so that only the unit’s cumulative assessment, which Buell adjusts based on the highest degree of aptitude the students demonstrate, affects their term grade.⁵¹ Students have to answer all of the level ‘2’ questions correctly to earn a ‘2’ mark, and all of the level ‘2’ questions plus all the level ‘3’ questions correctly to earn a ‘3’ mark. Buell uses half points in his scoring as well, when it is helpful.⁵²

COMPATIBLE SOFTWARE

Adjusting for new grading practices often requires significant redesign of pedagogical systems and processes. In order to simplify the transition from one grading approach to another and ensure quality and transparency to parents and administrators, several companies have begun offering software solutions for use by districts, schools, and individual teachers.

ActiveGrade is an online grading and evaluation program created by ex-teaching professionals to maximize the “potential of standards/competency-based grading for

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ “SBG Implementation: Creating Assessments.” Always Formative. June 6, 2010.

<http://alwaysformative.blogspot.com/2010/06/sbg-implementation-creating-assessments.html>

⁵⁰ “SBG Implementation: Tracking Progress.” Always Formative. June 6, 2010.

<http://alwaysformative.blogspot.com/2010/06/sbg-implementation-tracking-progress.html>

⁵¹ “SBG Implementation: Setting up the Gradebook.” Always Formative. June 13, 2010.

<http://alwaysformative.blogspot.com/2010/06/sbg-implementation-setting-up-gradebook.html>

⁵² “SBG Implementation: Tracking Progress.” Always Formative. June 6, 2010. Op. cit.

creating a classroom focused on true learning and meaningful, effective feedback.” The program is created based on three core beliefs:⁵³

- Assessment and grading should be about helping students learn and improve, not about ranking.
- Clear, regular communication about expectations empowers students to be active in their own learning process.
- Giving meaningful feedback shouldn’t take all day.

GlobalScholar also offers software that is compatible with SBG pedagogical practices.⁵⁴

AVOIDING PITFALLS/OBSTACLES IN IMPLEMENTATION

TEACHER SUPPORT

Laura Urich, a recent graduate of Iowa State University’s graduate Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department, wrote her dissertation on the “Implementation of standards-based grading at the middle school level.” Her research involved extensive interviews with twelve middle school teachers who had participated in a transition to standards-based grading practices.⁵⁵

All twelve teachers indicated that “**active engagement of administrators was identified as a crucial component** in the transformation to [SBG] . . . Allowing the process to happen *with* the teachers versus *to* the teachers was weighted as a priority.”⁵⁶

Urich also notes that her respondents indicated that **trust between the teachers and administrators was necessary** during the implementation process, that “taking the time to honor teacher readiness in the learning process around grading and assessment practices is essential for generating teacher ownership,” and that a culture of collaboration and a sense of joint learning creates a “a safe culture of shared beliefs where teachers are comfortable taking risks.”⁵⁷

Her interviews with the teachers also convinced Urich that **a number of resources and practices were essential to the successful transition** to standards-based grading practices:

providing professional development synchronized with time that 1) differentiated with the inclusion of teacher choice and readiness, 2) included professional readings and research from numerous experts, 3) focused on the formative assessment

⁵³ Bullet points quoted verbatim from: “About Active Grade.” ActiveGrade. <http://activegrade.com/about/>

⁵⁴ “Standards-Based Education.” Global Scholar. <http://www.globalscholar.com/products/standards-based-education.aspx>

⁵⁵ “Urich, L. “Implementation of standards-based grading at the middle school level.” *Graduate Theses and Dissertations Iowa State University*. 2012. Paper 12492. Op. cit.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 81.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 82-3.

process, flexible grouping, and differentiated strategies, and 4) provided opportunities for structured collaboration among peers.⁵⁸

The teachers also indicated that standards-based grading practices helped them become better teachers. One teacher indicated that “I’m a much better teacher than I was previously . . . [standards-based reporting] was really a natural response to better teaching practices.”⁵⁹

COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Good communication is one of the most significant features of a good implementation process. Because the adoption of new grading practices has implications for student performance—and thus for the accessibility of federal and other funding opportunities—students, parents, and staff throughout the district will need to be aware of and participate in the process so that the students can be supported in helpful ways.

Above all, **schools should be proactive, transparent, and engage with parents and other stakeholders** to show them how the new standards will help their students achieve greater success and prepare them to compete in today’s marketplace.

Meeting with parents and stakeholders in person can be the most helpful approach to communicating the goals and structure of SBG. It offers administrators and teachers an opportunity to present physical examples of students’ successful, quality work. They can reassure concerned adults and answer questions in a personalized manner. Many schools, such as those profiled in this report, **publish pamphlets or other materials to distribute to parents** about the SBG system. Fairfax County Public School district has published an extensive Grading and Reporting Handbook for parents and other stakeholders that describes a history of the district’s reporting policies, what SBG is and how it compares to the traditional approach, the teachers’ grading guidelines, the new grading metric, and how to read the progress reports.⁶⁰

Reading and interpreting new student report cards is one of the more significant adjustments students and parents will have to make, and it is important to communicate the changes and their rationale. Strategies such as posting or linking to research on SBG, providing explicit outlines of grade-level standards, offering translations into foreign languages, and providing a discussion board or contact information are used in varying degrees by different schools and districts to provide more information and opportunities for discussion.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 83.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 88.

⁶⁰ “Elementary Grading and Reporting Handbook for Parents.” Fairfax County Public Schools.
<http://www.fcps.edu/is/schoolcounseling/documents/ElementaryGradingandReportingHandbookparents.pdf>

For example, Vermont’s Agency of Education offers a clear, online handout of the standards students must achieve in the framework and content-area documents.⁶¹ Baltimore County Public Schools, which has used SBG at the elementary level since 2009, provides a 25-page parents’ guide to the new grading system and examples of the report card for each grade. The guide and report cards have also been translated into five different languages for the benefit of non-English speaking parents.⁶² Similarly, Montgomery County Public Schools provides translations of their report cards and parent guides in Spanish, Chinese, French, Vietnamese, and Korean.⁶³

Urich’s study indicated the importance of stakeholder communication as well—all of the teachers she interviewed “expressed the importance of articulating information pertaining to [SBG] with competence and confidence.”⁶⁴ In particular, Urich concluded that:⁶⁵

- The ability for teachers and administrators to confidently and competently articulate [SBG] is crucial.
- Parent education is paramount throughout the process.
- Expect pushback from some stakeholders.
- A reporting tool for [SBG] that is parent-friendly is important for effective, ongoing communication.
- Staff development embracing newly hired teachers in the [SBG] process is essential for sustained success in implementation.

⁶¹ “Vermont’s Framework of Standards & Learning Opportunities.” July 27, 2011. Vermont Agency of Education. <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pubs/framework.html>

⁶² “Elementary Report Card Information.” Baltimore County Public Schools. <http://www.bcps.org/parents/ReportCard/default.html>

⁶³ “Report Cards.” Montgomery County Public Schools. <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/grading/report-cards.aspx>

⁶⁴ Urich, L. “Implementation of standards-based grading at the middle school level.” *Graduate Theses and Dissertations Iowa State University*. 2012. Paper 12492. Op. cit., p. 91.

⁶⁵ Bullet points quoted verbatim from: Ibid., p. 93.

APPENDIX A: IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINES

Figure A.1: Madison Metropolitan School District Implementation Schedule

When	What	Who
1997	Wisconsin Model Academic Standards (WMAS) published by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The MMSD Board of Education adopts the WMAS.	DPI; Board of Education
1998-1999	Elementary Principals initiate request for a district-wide report card.	Elementary Principals
1998-1999	National literature review is begun on standards-based grading and reporting.	Teaching & Learning
1999-2000	Elementary classroom teachers are surveyed regarding standards-based content and skills at each grade level. Prototype standards-based report is designed. Pilot schools recruited.	Teaching & Learning; Elementary Principals
2000-2001	12 elementary schools pilot report card. Principals or pilot schools provide information to parents and support teachers' use of report cards. Teaching & Learning revises based on pilot.	Elementary Schools; Elementary Principals; Teaching & Learning
2001-2002	All Elementary schools use report card.	Elementary Schools
202-2003	Grading Guides are created. Electronic report card for 4 th Grade created and used.	Teaching & Learning; Research & Evaluation
2003-2004	Electronic report card created and used at 3 rd and 5 th grades.	Teaching & Learning; Research & Evaluation
2004-2005	Middle school teachers work in teams to identify standards-based content and skills at each grade level.	Teaching & Learning; Middle Schools Leadership Teams.
2005-2006	Prototype of middle school standards-based report card designed in content areas.	Teaching & Learning; Middle Schools Leadership Teams
2006-2007	Infinite Campus Student Information System launched. Inter-departmental middle school report card committee meets on regular basis to resolve grading issues. Middle school report card implementation scheduled for 2008-09.	Research & Evaluation; Teaching & Learning; Special Education; and ESL
12/06	Middle School Grading and Reporting website launched to support school-based professional development.	Teaching & Learning
4/07	Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) Survey is administered to all middle school teachers.	Teaching & Learning; UW-Wisconsin Center for Education Research (UW-WCER) / Systemwide Change for All Learners and Educators (SCALE)
5/07-8/07	CBAM data analyzed.	UW-WCER/SCALE

When	What	Who
9/07-11/07	Inter-departmental SCALE Leadership Academy designs district-wide support systems for implementation of standards-based instruction and grading.	Teaching & Learning; SCALE; Special Education; ESL; and Learning Coordinators
9/07	Presentation of CBAM data and middle school standards-based instruction & assessment plan to principals.	Research & Evaluation
9/07-6/08	Bi-weekly 2.5 Professional Development Sessions for Learning Coordinators	Teaching & Learning; Research & Evaluation
9/07-4/08	Grade Level Standards for World Languages, Technology and Social Studies completed.	Teaching & Learning; Middle School Teachers; Learning Coordinators
10/07-3/08	Middle School Standards-based Leadership Teams convene to build capacity for change and redefine standards-based grade book prototypes.	Teaching & Learning; Middle School Teachers; Learning Coordinators
10/07-6/08	Articles for inclusion in school newsletters to inform parents and community are written.	Teaching & Learning
12/07	Technology template for middle school standards-based report card determined.	R&L; Teaching & Learning
1/08-2/08	Consider the change to standards-based reporting when finalizing the middle school calendar for 2008-2009.	Assistant Superintendent; Management Team
2/08-3/08	School-based content teams review grade book (electronic or paper) prototypes to facilitate standards-based grading. Send any questions or comments to Teaching & Learning.	Principals; Teaching & Learning
3/08	School-based content teams review electronic grade book prototypes for grade computation.	Principals; Teaching & Learning
4/08	Develop progress report model.	Teaching & Learning; Research & Evaluation
4/08	Complete online “dry runs” or pilots for report card and progress report on Infinite Campus. Feedback collected and forwarded to Teaching & Learning and Research & Evaluation.	Teaching & Learning; Research & Evaluation
5/08-7/08	Revisions are made based on pilot. Report card is integrated into Infinite Campus.	Teaching & Learning; Research & Evaluation
6/08-8/08	Professional development offered for Grade book.	Teaching & Learning
2008-2009	Middle School Standards-based Report Card implemented	Middle Schools

Source: Madison Metropolitan School District⁶⁶

⁶⁶ “Implementation of Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment 1997-2008.” Madison Metropolitan School District. https://secedweb.madison.k12.wi.us/files/seced/ms_report_cards/docs/ms_report_card_timeline.pdf

Figure A.2: The History of Standards-Based Grading at Quakertown

Date	Description
1999	The conversation about standards-based grading began in Quakertown between administrators and teachers.
1999-Present	Curriculum was revised and aligned to standards in preparation for standards-based grading.
2000	QCSD began development of district benchmark statements.
2000-Present	Teachers were trained on benchmark development, formative assessment, and standards-based grading.
2002	QCSD began implementation of district benchmark assessments.
2004	Standards-based grading was implemented in all elementary grades.
2005	A pilot group of secondary teachers were trained and implemented standards-based grading in their classrooms. They trained other secondary teachers.
2006	Teachers founded Professional Learning Communities across the district for teachers interested in learning about standards-based grading.
	QCSD developed a Strategic Plan that called for the expansion of standards-based grading district wide.
2007-08	International speaker and standards-based grading expert Rick Wormeli came to work with all QCSD teachers on the rationale, purpose, and practices of SBG.
	In conjunction with the work with Rick Wormeli, the district adopted the original set of required grading practices.
	Teachers and administrators planned for initial practices to be implemented during the 2008-2009 school year and beyond.
2008-09	Implementation of six required grading practices.
	Seven public presentations on standards-based grading were held to provide background information and opportunities to ask questions.
	Professional development was provided for teachers to identify targets for formative assessment and SBG and to align curricula to standards.
	The Standards-Based Grading Committee, comprised of 65 teachers and administrators, met 15 times to develop guidelines for the management, recording and reporting of standards-based grading across the district.
	The Standards-Based Grading Committee developed Playbooks for each building level to guide teachers through the SBG process.
	Ten additional meetings were held to oversee the integration of the new student management system with standards-based grading.
2009-10	First year of full implementation.
	Teachers and administrators worked together to interface standards-based grading and Power School for communication to students and parents.
	Administrators and teachers fine-tuned standards-based grading practices and built consistency in the criteria for 3s and 4s.
	Professional Learning Communities were created by and for teachers to work through challenges in the transition to standards-based grading.
	The two middle school open houses provided a forum for questions and answers for parents. Parent meetings at all levels continue to provide a forum for discussion.
	Central office personnel visited every building to hold question and answer sessions on standards-based grading for the faculty.
	Half-day work sessions were held with math, English, science, social studies, and world language for Freshman Center and Senior High School teachers to provide support and address concerns.

Date	Description
	<p>Both middle schools were brought together for half-day work sessions by subject area to provide support and address concerns.</p> <p>District staff, K-12, worked with Webb’s Depth of Knowledge to build a common foundation for determining advanced and proficient work.</p> <p>The district began the process of assessing our implementation of SBG through a survey process for students, parents, teachers, building administrators and district administrators.</p> <p>The standards-based grading committee has provided input into suggested changes for next year based on the feedback from the above surveys.</p> <p>International experts on standards-based grading, Dr. Thomas Guskey and Dr. Lee Ann Jung, from the University of Kentucky, provided training for approximately 25% of the district’s teachers. Guskey and Jung also conducted a question/answer session for parents and students. Feedback from Guskey and Jung indicated that QCSD has done a great job on first implementation. With some adjustments this year, we should be well on our way to full implementation, which takes several years.</p>
2010-11	<p>In response to needs identified by students, parents and teachers in surveys completed last year, we worked over the summer to enhance communication regarding SBG:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A brochure went home to every family providing background on SBG. ■ Business cards with resources were made available to all students. ■ Students were taught how to track their progress toward learning targets in such a way they could share it with their parents. ■ Students received handouts that outlined their responsibilities as the learner in a standards-based system. ■ Every classroom teacher and every administrator had information to share with the students about the expectations of SBG. <p>District Staff continued to develop their understanding and application of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge and to create SBG guides for each course.</p> <p>A student advisory committee was established to identify concerns with the implementation of SBG and to develop appropriate solutions. Representatives from 8th through 12th grade participate.</p> <p>Worked on questioning techniques to ensure rigor and the significance of “every student, every question, every time.”</p> <p>Emphasized the role of student reflection through tracking.</p> <p>Began to offer SBG seminars to other districts beginning this journey.</p> <p>Established a PLC to investigate student effort and its impact in a standards-based environment</p> <p>Interviewed 200 students for feedback on student effort in a standards-based environment.</p> <p>Surveyed teachers to solicit suggestions and feedback on SBG.</p> <p>A student-created brochure suggesting how parents can support their children in a standards-based environment went home to all families.</p> <p>A student-generated glossary to help families understand the SBG conversation was also sent home.</p> <p>Continued curriculum work to complete SBG guides for every course.</p> <p>Developed a public relations committee to help disseminate accurate information to all stakeholders.</p>

Date	Description
	Continued emphasis on student and teacher reflection.
	Offered SBG seminars to other districts whenever there was sufficient demand.
	Began traveling to other districts to present SBG in a way that met their needs.
	Continued meeting with the Student Advisory Council.
	Increased professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to focus on Best Practices in standards-based environment.
	Expanded use of our student management system to increase access for parents and efficiency for teachers.
2011-12	A student-created brochure suggesting how parents can support their children in a standards-based environment went home to all families.
	A student-generated glossary to help families understand the SBG conversation was also sent home.
	Continued curriculum work to complete SBG guides for every course.
	Developed a public relations committee to help disseminate accurate information to all stakeholders.
	Continued emphasis on student and teacher reflection.
	Offered SBG seminars to other districts whenever there was sufficient demand.
	Began traveling to other districts to present SBG in a way that met their needs.
	Continued meeting with the Student Advisory Council.
	Increased professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to focus on Best Practices in a standards-based environment.
	Expanded use of our student management system to increase access for parents and efficiency for teachers.

Source: Quakertown Community School District⁶⁷

⁶⁷ "The History of SBG at Quakertown." Quakertown Community School District. <http://www.qcsd.org/Page/348>

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