



Dear Families:

Welcome to the 2016-17 school year.

We want to inform you that all middle schools in the district will be using standards-based instruction in all classes this year. The purpose for moving to standards-based instruction is that we want to make sure you are fully informed about your child's progress. There will definitely be a change in what you see when you look at your child's grades. The grade will give you a more accurate picture of where your children are in regards to understanding the standards. We know that letting you and our students know their proficiency on each standard will be more valuable than just seeing a percentage associated with each student's classes. This letter will answer some of your questions. Once you read it, please bring us any questions that you may still have.

Why Standards-Based Instruction?

- We want to improve student achievement for all students in every classroom every day; and research supports standards-based instruction as a basis of communication that will help students learn more effectively through better feedback.

What is the value of Standards-Based Instruction?

- Standards-based instruction allows your child to understand his/her strengths and weaknesses and focus on growth. Standards-based scores are true representations of what your child has learned and still needs to learn. Learning is the way to improve the score.
- Standards-based scores are simple and clear. Upon looking at a standards-based score, students, parents and teachers can instantly understand at what level that student is achieving and what they must work on to raise that skill to "meeting" or "exemplary."
- Standards-based instruction focuses on learning. Once in practice, students will know exactly what they need to learn and master.

How does Standards-Based Scoring Work?

Standards-based scoring works by isolating the skills and knowledge required for a student to understand, and then showing that mastery on a four-point scale. The difference you will see in the grading process is that the students won't be given a certain amount of points out of a total, but everything entered in the grade book will be scored on a 4-point rubric. These scores will be grouped together by each of the standards being covered, so we can see how the students are progressing.

The scores on the 4-point rubric are:

4 – Exemplary expectations in the standard

3 – Meeting expectations in the standard

2 – Progressing towards expectations in the standard

1 – Emerging towards expectations in the standard

IE – Insufficient Evidence



Once again, these scores are not out of a certain point total, and you should not try to convert the rubric scores to a percent. So, for example, a 3 doesn't mean 3 out of 4, or 75%. A 3 means that the student is meeting the expectations for that standard and is proficient in that area. We will be looking at all of the rubric scores for the student as a body of evidence for determining a student's level of proficiency in the standards covered during the semester. Each student's score will reflect his/her learning towards grade level standard expectations during that moment in time. The student's final score will reflect the progress toward mastery of grade level expectations.

What this means to you?

- Important skills like effort and work ethic will be measured separately from scores and should be considered just as important a measure, which will be reflected as work habits.
- Every score is an opportunity for discussion with your child, to better his/her understanding. It should be easier to know what skills your child needs to work on in order to improve.
- All work assigned in class is a step in the direction of the standard, and considered an opportunity to practice. Students need to be given time to learn before they are evaluated against a standard. This makes the daily work of the class vitally important. Daily work is where your child learns and practices with opportunities to transfer and apply the skills they have learned.
- Opens parent communication with teachers.

We hope this helps you better understand this new and exciting journey. As you can see, this effort is being made to help your student perform better in school and in life. If you have any questions about standards-based instruction, please bring them to conferences or contact your school for further details. We know that this method of instruction and scoring will give a clearer picture of what each student understands and their progress toward proficiency. It will help the students identify the areas they may need to work on so they can be as successful as possible.

Thank you for your support and patience in this process. We hope that once you get accustomed to this system, you will appreciate how informative and helpful it can be.

Regards,
Thompson School District