



**Middle School Standards-Based
Grading and Instruction
Family Guide**

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Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to share with our families the why, what, and how of Standards-Based Grading and Instruction in the Appleton Area School District.

For the past several years, the Appleton Area School District has studied methods of grading that more accurately reflect and report student learning.

This work has resulted in a standards-based approach that we call Standards-Based Grading and Instruction (SBG).

Ultimately, we believe Standards-Based Grading and Instruction will assist our teachers to more authentically and accurately communicate student achievement on our course standards.

By changing our mindset around how we respond to assessments and shifting our grading practices to reflect what students know and are able to do, student achievement will improve.

So ...What is Different?

In a **traditional grading system**, a student's performance for the grading period is certified through the accrual of points, often converted to percentages, which includes assignments introduced as practice or first attempts in learning.

The essential question answered in a traditional grading system is: **How many points have I accrued on everything evaluated throughout the grading period?**

A **standards-based grading system** certifies a student's demonstration of performance on a standard by the end of a grading period.

The essential question answered in a standards-based system is: **To what degree has the student demonstrated the necessary knowledge or skill as described in the standard?**

Ultimately, we believe Standards-Based Grading and Instruction will assist our teachers to more **authentically** and **accurately** communicate student achievement on our course standards.

AASD Standards-Based Grading and Instruction Belief Statement

We believe that effective grading practices need to meet four overarching criteria for success. They need to be **accurate, meaningful, consistent, and support learning**.

Grades need to be an **accurate** and reliable reflection of student achievement in the subject/content. Each student's grade should accurately reflect his/her degree of progress in achievement of the identified learning goals and standards for that subject/content.

Grades need to be **meaningful** and must communicate useful information to students and to everyone interested in and needing to know about their learning. Grades are most meaningful when learning/work habits are reported separately. In the AASD, we refer to these habits as Career and Life Skills Essential Traits. These traits are an important factor in a student's preparation to be college, career, and community-ready.

Grades need to be **consistent** across teachers. The grades that students receive should not be a function of who their teacher is. Performance standards need to be the same from teacher to teacher for a similar subject/course. Students achieving at the same level in a similar subject/course should get the same grade regardless of context.

Grades need to **support learning**. Grades should reflect student achievement and are an indicator of what the student has learned, rather than a reflection of simply doing the work or accumulating points. We want students to understand that school is about learning and that their grades reflect the evidence of their learning progress.

The goal of grading for learning is to improve student learning by reporting grades that are **accurate, meaningful, consistent, and support learning**.

Adapted from: *A Repair Kit For Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades* by Ken O'Connor

Grading Practices within the Standards-Based Grading and Instruction System

An academic grade should reflect what a student knows and is able to do within a specific standard. In order to ensure that grades are an accurate reflection of the student's academic achievement, the following grading practices have been adopted. They can be found in the teacher's syllabus.

Academic Integrity

We expect ethical behavior from all students. Dishonest and unethical behavior, such as lying, cheating, or plagiarism, will not be tolerated. If these behaviors occur, they will be documented through an Office Discipline Referral per district procedures and may impact the Career and Life Skills frequency rating. Students will be given an alternative assessment as determined by the teacher.

Attendance

Regular attendance is essential to student success, and the ability to master content may be impacted by missed instruction due to absences. Student attendance will not be used in the calculation of academic scores. Upon returning from an absence, students are expected to make arrangements to learn content that was missed and complete any necessary assessments.

Extra Credit or Bonus Points

Students may have the opportunity to demonstrate new or deeper understanding of the standards. However, such opportunities may not be used to improve a grade unless additional learning of the standard has occurred.

Grading on a Curve

A curve will not be used to determine grades; instead, students will be assessed on their proficiency of the standard.

Grading Group Work

Only individual work will be used in a student's grade; group scores will not be included.

Late Work

Students are required to submit both formative and summative tasks on the due date. Work submitted late will not receive an academic consequence; however, students will have until two weeks after the completion of a unit to turn in missing work.

Separating Behavior from Academics

Grades will be a representation of what students know and are able to do in relationship to the standard. Because of this, student learning habits (effort, participation, adherence to class expectations, etc.) are not included in the letter grade but instead reported in the Career and Life Skills as a frequency rating.

Reassessment

The Appleton Area School District believes that the purpose of an assessment is for students to demonstrate their learning in certain standards. Because all students do not learn at the same pace, a reassessment process will be used for students to show additional learning, resulting in higher levels of proficiency on assessed standards.

Effective reassessment practice:

- Reassessment is available for all students on any piece of evidence that will determine the student's grade, regardless of the level of proficiency they demonstrated on the initial assessment.
- Students will receive full credit for the reassessment, and the reassessment score will replace the initial assessment score only if the reassessment score is higher.
- Reassessments will cover the same standard(s) as the initial assessment, but the format of the assessment may be different.
- Students must complete the initial assessment in order to have the opportunity to reassess.
- Students should show specific evidence of additional learning prior to reassessing, as determined by the teacher in collaboration with the student.
- Students will be given the opportunity for reassessment up to two weeks past the last day of the unit.
*Reassessment deadlines at the end of the school year will be determined by the site.
- If the end of the unit assessment/project takes a while to grade (beyond the end of the unit date), that two-week reassessment window can start when students receive that feedback/grade.
- Reassessment opportunities can be woven into assessments taken later in the semester. If the reassessment happens naturally in future assessments, change the previous grade to reflect the current level of mastery.
- Unless an assessment is interwoven (ie. essay), students will be allowed to redo just portions of the assessment in which they would like to show evidence of additional learning.

Grading and Reporting

Traditionally, schools have utilized the typical A through F grading system. In Appleton, our schools are moving to a grading system that provides students more details on what they are expected to learn and the progress they have made in their learning.

Gone are the days when students receive grades with no understanding of their strengths or the areas to work on. Instead, instruction and assessments have clear learning targets aligned to local, state, and national standards. Appleton students earn grades on assignments, tests, and projects that clearly reflect their progress towards mastery of standards. This will help them to be successful in school and beyond.

While middle school students will still receive a letter grade, we're adding more specific feedback on students' progress. Schools across the country are making the switch because it's a better way of measuring what students know and can do. The emphasis is on learning, not the accumulation of points.

Districtwide, feedback will take many forms, like written, verbal, large group, and individual. Research shows that measuring and giving specific feedback about a student's progress on specific standards during the process of learning is the most effective way to advance learning.

If students struggle with what they are supposed to learn, they'll be given additional time and support through relearning opportunities and retakes. Intelligence is not fixed and can improve as a result of extended effort and dedication to learning. This is called a growth mindset.

Report cards in our district will continue to include both academics and behaviors that we call "Career and Life Skills". Throughout the school year, student progress in academics will be evaluated separately from Career and Life Skills Essential Traits: lead, care, and contribute.

We know that for some, this is a change, and our educators in Appleton are confident this is the best thing for students.

Assessments will be scored using a 4-point proficiency scale.

Classroom Standards-Based Assessment Rubric

Learning Mastery	Rubric	As specified by the grade level/course level standard:
Mastery	4	The student demonstrates a solid understanding of knowledge and skills for which they use to both apply and analyze.
Competent	3.33	The student demonstrates an understanding of knowledge and skills for which they use to either apply or analyze.
Developing	2.83	The student demonstrates limited understanding of knowledge/skills and is inconsistent in their application.
Beginning	2.33	The student demonstrates minimal understanding of knowledge/skills and is not yet able to apply .
Insufficient Evidence	1.33	The student has not yet shown minimal signs of understanding to justify a passing level. Either whole pieces of evidence are missing or the submitted evidence is incomplete or inaccurate.
No Evidence	0	The student has not yet submitted any evidence of learning.

A final letter grade will be reported using the percentage of the averages of all assessments and practice work.

AASD Middle School Grading Scale	
Letter Grade	Percentage Range
Mastery/ A	100% to 88%
Competent/ B	< 88% to 75%
Developing/ C	<75% to 63%
Beginning/ D	<63% to 50%
Insufficient Evidence/ F	<50%

AASD Career and Life Skills

Learning/work habits play an important role in a student's success and are also an important factor in your student's preparation for college and careers. Our students will require many skills to be college, career, and community-ready, which are referred to as Career and Life Skills in the AASD Standards-Based Grading and Instruction framework.

AASD Middle-Level Career and Life Skills				
Standard 1	4 Consistently	3 Usually	2 Occasionally	1 Rarely
Social and Cross-Cultural Skills	The student consistently demonstrates respect and regularly contributes to the diverse learning community by: Honoring the ideas and opinions of others Interacting effectively and appropriately with others	The student usually respects and contributes to the diverse learning community by: Honoring the ideas and opinions of others Interacting effectively and appropriately with others	The student occasionally respects and contributes to the diverse learning community by: Honoring the ideas and opinions of others Interacting effectively and appropriately with others	The student rarely respects and contributes to the diverse learning community by: Honoring the ideas and opinions of others Interacting effectively and appropriately with others

AASD Middle-Level Career and Life Skills				
Standard 2	4 Consistently	3 Usually	2 Occasionally	1 Rarely
Productivity and Accountability	The student consistently takes ownership of work and actions in order to: Complete assignment and/or assessments on time Arrive prepared and on time Manage time Work submitted reflects academic integrity	The student usually takes ownership of work and actions in order to: Complete assignments and/or assessments on time Arrive prepared and on time Manage time Work submitted reflects academic integrity	The student occasionally takes ownership of work and actions in order to: Complete assignments and/or assessments on time Arrive prepared and on time Manage time Work submitted reflects academic integrity	The student rarely takes ownership of work and actions in order to: Complete assignments and/or assessments on time Arrive prepared and on time Manage time Work submitted reflects academic integrity

Standards-Based Grading and Instruction Glossary

Standards

District approved knowledge and skills that all students should know and be able to do. Not all standards are reported on in the progress report but all are taught.

Reporting Standards

High priority content standards that are reported to parents in each content area. These standards are essential for student success and selected based on their endurance (need for this standard beyond a single unit/test), leverage (knowledge and skills that will be of value in multiple disciplines), and readiness (knowledge and skills required for the next level of learning).

Learning Intention

A daily lesson-sized learning goal derived from a standard that communicates what students should know and are able to do as a result of the day's instruction.

Proficiency Scale

A clearly identified and articulated rubric that describes what students know and are able to do at each skill level.

Frequency Rating

A rating earned by students that communicates the frequency and consistency in which the student demonstrates the skills and behaviors of the Career and Life Skills Essential Traits Rubric.

Formative Assessments (Practice)

Methods to continuously assess student learning and reporting out of a learning target or standard in order to monitor and inform instruction, such as homework, enter/exit slips, surveys, think/pair/share, etc. The results of formative assessments determine next steps of instruction.

Summative Assessments

An assessment that demonstrates proficiency of the selected standard(s) at the conclusion of a defined instructional period. Example: Final paper/final exam.

Supporting Research: Articles

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