



**High School Standards-Referenced
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-Referenced Grading and Instruction in the Appleton Area School District.

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-referenced approach that we call Standards-Referenced Grading and Instruction (SRG).

Ultimately, we believe Standards-Referenced 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- referenced 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-referenced system is: **To what degree has the student demonstrated the necessary knowledge or skill by the end of term?**

AASD Standards-Referenced 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 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-Referenced 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. 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 been demonstrated.

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 their assessment(s) on the due date(s). Any assessment(s) not submitted by the due date(s) will only be accepted up to the last day of the unit. The last day of the unit will be communicated to the student and family, minimally two weeks prior to the end of the unit, through a Canvas Message and Canvas Announcement.

Separating Behavior from Academics

Grades will be a representation of what students know and are able to do in relationship to the standard. In an effort to balance the need for timely completion of assigned student practice and separating behavior from academics, 70% of each student's term grade will come from summative assessments designed to show what students know and are able to do in relationship to the standard, and 30% of the grade will come from traditionally formative work, such as quizzes and practice assignments. When a student's behavior is impeding academic performance, teachers will reach out to families for support and work with student services to help students develop behaviors that are conducive to academic achievement.

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 students are expected to learn and the progress they have made in their learning; however, final grades are still reported in terms of A through F, and grades are transcribed using a 4.0 grade point scale.

Gone are the days where 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 reflect their progress towards mastery of skills and concepts that reference standards. This will help them to be successful in school and beyond.

While high school students will still receive a letter grade and GPA on their transcripts, we're adding more specific feedback on student's progress through the use of rubrics, emphasizing learning over 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 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.

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

A final letter grade will be reported using the rubric average of all assessments and practice work (70% assessments, 30% practice).

Points	As specified by the grade level/course level standards:	Proficiency Level	Grade	Scale % Range	Letter Grade
4	The student demonstrates a solid understanding of knowledge and skills for which they use to both apply and analyze.	<i>Mastery</i>	A	97.00 - 100 93.00 - 965.99 90.00 - 92.99	A+ A A-
3.5	The student demonstrates an understanding of knowledge and skills for which they use to either apply or analyze.	<i>Competent</i>	B	87.00 - 89.99 83 - 86.99 80.00 - 82.99	B+ B B-
3	The student demonstrates limited understanding of knowledge/skills and is inconsistent in their application.	<i>Developing</i>	C	77.00 - 79.99 73.00 - 76.99 70.00 - 72.99	C+ C C-
2.5	The student demonstrates minimal understanding of knowledge/skills and is not yet able to apply .	<i>Beginning</i>	D	67.00 - 69.99 63.00 - 63.99 60.00 - 62.99	D+ D D-
1.5	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.	<i>Insufficient Evidence</i>	F	<60	F
0	The student has not yet submitted any evidence of learning.	<i>No Evidence</i>	F	0	F

Standards-Referenced Grading and Instruction Implementation

The Appleton Area School District is rolling out Standards-Referenced Grading and Instruction course by course due to the number of courses we offer students. AASD secondary standards-referenced course will utilize a standards-referenced instruction and assessment model that involves using rubrics to measure student proficiency on well-defined course standards.

Standards will be grouped together and these clusters will be analyzed and will continue to be converted to traditional letter grades. This grade will appear in Infinite Campus at the end of each reporting period.

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 life ready, which are referred to as Career and Life Skills in the AASD.

Lead, Care, Contribute

District and community members came together to consider important traits that will help all students find success upon graduation. This work led to three overarching characteristics, "Lead, Care and Contribute."

- **Lead:** Our students will set an example for others to follow by thinking critically, solving problems, and communicating effectively.
- **Care:** Our students will show care for themselves, others, and their community by displaying empathy, compassion, and respect.
- **Contribute:** Our students will contribute to their classrooms, schools, communities, and the world by being self-directed, productive, and accountable.

Standards-Referenced 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.

Formative Assessments (Practice)

Methods to continuously assess student learning and reporting out of a learning target or standard in order 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 for teachers and learning for students.

Summative Assessments

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

Supporting Research: Articles

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- Wormeli, R. (2011). Redos and retakes done right. *Educational Leadership*, 69(3), 22-26. [[pdf](#)]

Ways to Learn More

Websites:

[All Things Assessment](#)
[The Assessment Network](#)
[Ken O'Connor](#)
[Lee Ann Jung](#)

[Tom Guskey](#)
[Matt Townsley](#)
[Myron Dueck](#)
[Rick Wormeli](#)

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Facebook groups:

Standards Based Learning and Grading

YouTube Playlist:

[Standards-Based Grading and Instruction Resources](#)