

West Northfield District 31

Standards-Based Grading

Family Guide and Handbook

*Understanding Your Child's
Growth and Progress*



**Helping students become confident, independent learners*



About This Handbook

This guide is designed to help families understand how student learning is communicated in District 31.

Inside you'll learn:

- ✓ **Why we use Standards-Based Grading**
- ✓ **What you'll see in Skyward**
- ✓ **How to understand your child's academic progress**
- ✓ **How learning behaviors are reported**
- ✓ **How you can support learning at home**

Our goal is simple: To provide every family with clear, meaningful information about their child's learning.



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A Message to Families

Dear District 31 Families,

As parents, one of the most common questions we ask is:

"How is my child doing in school?"

At District 31, we believe the answer should be about more than a single letter or percentage. We believe families deserve meaningful information that answers questions like:

- What is my child learning?
- What has my child mastered?
- What skills are they still developing?
- How can I support learning at home?

Standards-Based Grading helps us answer those questions.

Rather than simply reporting a final grade, Standards-Based Grading communicates your child's progress toward specific learning standards. It provides clearer feedback about strengths, identifies areas for continued growth, and helps students understand what they need to do next.

At Winkelman Elementary School, students develop the foundation for future success. As they build essential academic skills, they are also learning to become confident, curious, and independent learners. Our grading and reporting system is designed to support that growth while providing families with meaningful information that strengthens the partnership between home and school.

At Field Middle School, we know that Middle school is an important time in a child's development. Students are becoming more independent, learning to advocate for themselves, and taking greater ownership of their learning. Our grading and reporting system is designed to support those skills while providing families with meaningful information that strengthens the partnership between home and school.

Our goal isn't simply to assign grades.

Our goal is to help every student become a confident, reflective learner.

This handbook is designed to help you better understand your child's learning journey and the many ways we can work together to support their success.

Section 1: Why Standards-Based Grading?

Standards-Based Grading: Part of District 31's Long-Term Vision for Student Success

Standards-Based Grading is not a stand-alone initiative or a recent change. It is one part of District 31's long-term commitment to improving student learning. When our Board of Education adopted the District's Strategic Plan in 2022, Student Growth & Achievement became Goal 1. As part of that goal, the District committed to creating a standards-based, differentiated curriculum aligned across grade levels to inform curriculum, instruction, assessment, grading, and reporting. Our work in Standards-Based Grading is one step in fulfilling that commitment.

Why This Matters

Standards-Based Grading supports the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan by helping:

- Students understand what they are expected to learn.
- Teachers provide clear, meaningful feedback aligned to grade-level standards.
- Families better understand their child's strengths, progress, and next steps.
- Schools create a consistent, aligned system that supports learning from kindergarten through eighth grade.

Our mission is to empower every student to make a positive impact on tomorrow's community. Standards-Based Grading supports that mission by helping students understand their learning, take ownership of their progress, and build the knowledge and skills needed for future success.

Our 5 Core Principles Rooted in Helping Students Learn, Grow, and Succeed

- **Principle 1: Clearer Feedback**

Students and families can see exactly which skills have been mastered and which skills need additional practice.

- **Principle 2: Student Ownership**

Students understand:

- What they're learning
- How they're progressing
- What they should work on next

- **Principle 3: Focus on Growth**

Learning takes time.

Standards-Based Grading communicates progress throughout the learning process—not simply a final average.

- **Principle 4: Stronger Home-School Partnership**

Parents receive more meaningful information that helps them support learning at home.

- **Principle 5: Preparing Students for the Future**

Students develop important habits such as:

- Self-reflection & Goal-setting
- Perseverance
- Applying feedback for growth

These skills prepare students for success in high school, college, careers, and beyond.



WHY STANDARDS-BASED GRADING IS RIGHT FOR D31



Our focus is not better grades—It's better learners. 

Because every student's growth matters.

1



PROVIDES CLEARER FEEDBACK ABOUT LEARNING.

Parents and students can see exactly what skills have been mastered and where additional support is needed—not just one overall grade.

You'll know what your child knows and what comes next.

2



HELPS STUDENTS TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR LEARNING.

Students understand what they're learning, how they're progressing, and what they need to do next to improve.



3



FOCUSES GRADES ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

Academic grades reflect what students know and can do, while work habits and learning behaviors are reported separately.

ACADEMIC LEARNING
(What my child knows)

LEARNING BEHAVIORS
(How my child learns)

Two important pieces of the whole child.

4



SUPPORTS GROWTH DURING AN IMPORTANT STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT.

Middle school is a time when students are building independence, confidence, and self-advocacy—skills that prepare them for high school and beyond.

 Build Confidence

 Develop Independence

 Prepare for the Future

5



ALIGNS GRADING WITH OUR DISTRICT'S MISSION.

Our goal is to help every student grow as a learner by providing meaningful feedback that supports learning, achievement, and future success.

Empowering every student to make a positive impact on tomorrow's community.



We're committed to helping students **understand** their learning, **celebrate** their growth, and **know** what to do next.



Every Step. Every Student. Every Day.



Five Big Ideas About Standards-Based Grading

Everything we do is centered on helping students learn, grow, and succeed.

1. Learning Comes First: We grade what students know and can do.

Standards-Based Grading focuses on a student's understanding of important learning standards—not simply the number of points they've earned.

Parents gain a clearer picture of what their child has learned.

2. Feedback Fuels Growth: Learning improves with meaningful feedback.

Students learn best when they understand:

- ✓ What they're doing well
- ✓ What they still need to learn
- ✓ What their next step is

Specific feedback helps students improve more than a single score ever could.

3. Growth Takes Time: Learning is a journey—not a single event.

Students aren't expected to master every concept the first time. They learn through:

- Practice - Multiple opportunities to demonstrate skills
- Feedback - Specific, actionable feedback from the teacher to improve skillsets
- Reflection - Personally identifying what went well and what needs further attention

Students build understanding through practice, meaningful feedback, and reflection.

4. Academic Learning and Learning Behaviors Both Matter: They simply answer different questions.

Academic learning answers the question, “What does my child know”?

Characteristics of a Successful Learner answers the question, “How does my child approach learning”?

Reporting these separately gives families a clearer picture of their child's progress.

5. Families Are Essential Partners: Learning is strongest when home and school work together.

The clearer we communicate student learning...

- The easier it is for families to celebrate success,
- Support areas for growth,
- Have meaningful conversations,
- Help students become independent learners.

Our goal isn't simply to report grades.
Our goal is to help every student understand their learning and continue growing.

Section 2: Understanding the Performance Scale

What Makes Standards-Based Grading Different from Traditional Grading?

THE PERFORMANCE SCALE IN EVERYDAY TERMS

Standard/Goal: To ride a bike by yourself

LEVEL	SCORE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
 EXTENDING Above the standard	4	 Wow! You not only ride a bike on your own, but you can pop a wheelie, jump ramps, and perform other bike stunts.
 MEETING At the standard	3	 Congratulations! You are successfully riding a bike by yourself.
 DEVELOPING Approaching the standard	2	 You are making great progress! With a little support and continued practice, you're building the skills needed to ride independently.
 BEGINNING Below the standard	1	 You are getting started. You are riding a bike, but using training wheels.

What this example illustrates

- Learning is a progression. Students build understanding through instruction, practice, feedback, and perseverance.
- Meeting means your child has successfully learned the grade-level expectation.
- Developing means your child is making progress and continues to build independence.
- Extending means your child has mastered the expectation and can apply the skill in more advanced ways.
- The goal is to provide meaningful feedback that helps students understand their progress and their next steps.

D31 Standards-Based Grading Designations

Note: Meeting is the highest possible designation for Winkelman students. Extending is the highest possible designation for Field students)

PERFORMANCE SCALE: WHAT THE LEVELS MEAN

E	EXTENDING Beyond Grade Level Expectations	4		The student independently extends their knowledge and understanding beyond grade level proficiency expectations and/or applies their learning in new and increasingly complex ways.
M	MEETING At Grade Level	3		The student independently demonstrates an understanding of grade level concepts and consistently applies learned knowledge and skills.
D	DEVELOPING Approaching Grade Level	2		The student demonstrates a partial understanding of the concept and/or occasionally applies learned knowledge and skills.
B	BEGINNING Below Grade Level	1		The student does not yet independently demonstrate an understanding of the concept.
	These performance levels show where a student is in their learning journey and help identify next steps for growth.			

Key Reminders

- Meeting (3) is the expected level of proficiency for grade-level learning.
- Students are not expected to begin every new skill at "Meeting." Learning develops over time through instruction, practice, and feedback.
- Students may move between performance levels as they learn new concepts and demonstrate growth.
- The purpose of the performance scale is to communicate where a student is in their learning journey and what their next steps are, not simply assign a grade.

Section 3: From Performance Levels to Meaningful Feedback

Now that you've seen what each performance level represents, let's look at how those performance levels provide families with a clearer picture of student learning.

Two students could earn the same traditional grade, yet have very different strengths and areas for growth. Standards-Based Grading reports learning by individual standards, giving families meaningful information about what students know, what they are still learning, and where support may be needed.

The example below compares the same student's work reported in two different ways.

One Student. Two Gradebooks. Very Different Information.

Same work. Same student. Very different information.



TRADITIONAL GRADEBOOK

All scores are averaged together into one grade.

What does this really tell us?

Assignment / Assessment	Score	Points Earned
Adding Fractions Quiz	100%	20/20
Multiplying Fractions Quiz	100%	20/20
Dividing Fractions Quiz	20%	4/20
Vocabulary Quiz	80%	16/20
Unit 1 Test	70%	35/50
AVERAGE	73%	C



If you only see a "73% (C)", you don't know:

- What skills are strengths
- What skills need more support
- What to focus on next

**SAME STUDENT
SAME WORK**

STANDARDS-BASED GRADEBOOK

Each standard is reported separately.

Now we can see the full picture!



Learning Standard (What we want students to learn)	Current Level
Add fractions with unlike denominators (e.g., $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4}$)	✓ MEETING
Multiply fractions (e.g., $\frac{2}{3} \times \frac{3}{4}$)	✓ MEETING
Divide fractions (e.g., $\frac{1}{2} \div \frac{3}{4}$)	○ DEVELOPING
Use fraction vocabulary accurately (e.g., <u>numerator</u> , denominator)	✓ MEETING



Now you know:

- What your child is strong in
- What they are still working on
- Exactly where to focus support at home

KEY

(Level Descriptions)

- ✓ **EXTENDING**
Your child is going above and beyond grade-level expectations.
- ✓ **MEETING**
Your child is meeting grade-level expectations.
- **DEVELOPING**
Your child is still learning this standard.
- **BEGINNING**
Your child needs more intensive support.



STANDARDS-BASED GRADING GIVES YOU BETTER INFORMATION.

It shows what your child knows, what they are learning, and how they are growing.

More information. More clarity. More ways to support learning at home.



Clear Learning Targets. Clear Expectations. Clear Feedback.

Before students begin learning, they should know exactly what they're expected to learn.

One of the biggest differences in a standards-based classroom is that teachers clearly communicate learning targets before instruction begins. These learning targets help students understand:

- What they are expected to learn
- What successful learning looks like
- How they will demonstrate their understanding
- What they can do to continue growing

The proficiency table below is an example of a tool teachers use to communicate learning expectations and provide meaningful feedback throughout a unit.

Sample Proficiency Table for 6th Grade Math:

6th Grade Math Chapter 2 Proficiency Table					
Grade 6 Chapter 2: Operations with Fractions & Decimals					
Standard	Report Card Language	Extending <i>Students can...</i> 	Meeting <i>Students can....</i> 	Developing <i>Students can....</i> 	Beginning 
6.NS.1	Interpret and compute quotients of fractions, and solve word problems involving division of fractions by fractions	Solve a multi-step, contextual word problem involving division of fractions by fractions and explain the reasonableness of their answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a visual fraction model to represent a division of fractions problem • Compute quotients of fractions procedurally • Divide fractions by fractions in contextual situations • Create an equation to model a contextual situation involving division of fractions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a fraction division problem, but makes mathematical errors when computing solutions • Produces a visual model, but model does not represent division problem • Can solve using fraction models or procedures, but not both • Missing/incomplete work 	Student does not yet independently demonstrate an understanding of the concept
6.NS.3	Fluently add, subtract, multiply, and divide multi-digit decimals using the standard algorithm for each operation.	Solve a multi-step decimal word problem, that requires interpreting the operation in a real-world context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the standard algorithm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Add decimals ◦ Subtract decimals ◦ Multiply decimals ◦ Divide decimals • Divide decimals accurately using the standard algorithm • Solves real-world, contextual problems accurately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies strategies for computing with decimals, but has computation errors • Decimal points are not lined up correctly when solving, resulting in incorrect solutions • Solves procedural problems accurately, but has errors when solving word problems • Missing/incomplete work & solutions 	Student does not yet independently demonstrate an understanding of the concept

PARENT PAUSE

 **Instead of asking,**

“What grade did you get?”



 **Try asking,**

“What learning target are you working on?”

or

“Can you show me what ‘Meeting’ looks like for this standard?”





These questions help your child focus on their learning, build independence, and celebrate growth every step of the way.

From Learning Targets to Student Work

The assessment [here](#) is directly aligned to the proficiency table on the previous page. Because every question is connected to a specific learning target, teachers can provide meaningful feedback about what students know rather than simply calculating a percentage.

As You Review This Example...

Notice how the teacher can identify:

- ✓ Which standards the student has mastered
- ✓ Which skills are still developing
- ✓ Where additional practice may be helpful
- ✓ What the student's next learning steps should be

Look closely at the proficiency table and assessment.

Notice:

- ✓ Every question is connected to a specific learning target.
- ✓ Students know what they are expected to learn before they are assessed.
- ✓ Teachers can provide specific feedback about individual skills—not just one overall score.
- ✓ Families can clearly identify strengths and areas for continued growth.

Reflection Question

If this were your child's assessment...

Would you rather know they earned an 82% or know exactly which skills they have mastered and which skills still need practice?



WHY THIS MATTERS

Standards-Based Grading provides meaningful information about your child's learning—*beyond a single percentage.*

INSTEAD OF...

Telling a family,

“Your child earned a 73%.”



TEACHERS CAN SAY...

Teachers can say,

“Your child is independently adding and multiplying fractions, but continues to develop their understanding of dividing fractions.”



What your child knows



What they are still learning



Specific areas for growth



How you can support at home



This information is much more meaningful because it clearly communicates **what the student knows, what they are still learning, and how families can support** continued growth.



AHA!

WHY DON'T TEACHERS JUST GIVE ONE GRADE?

Imagine going to the doctor for a checkup.

INSTEAD OF SAYING...

“You’re 82% healthy.”



YOUR DOCTOR EXPLAINS...



	Your blood pressure is healthy.
	Your vision is strong.
	Your cholesterol needs attention.
	Here are your next steps.



That information is far more useful because it identifies **specific strengths** and **areas for improvement**.



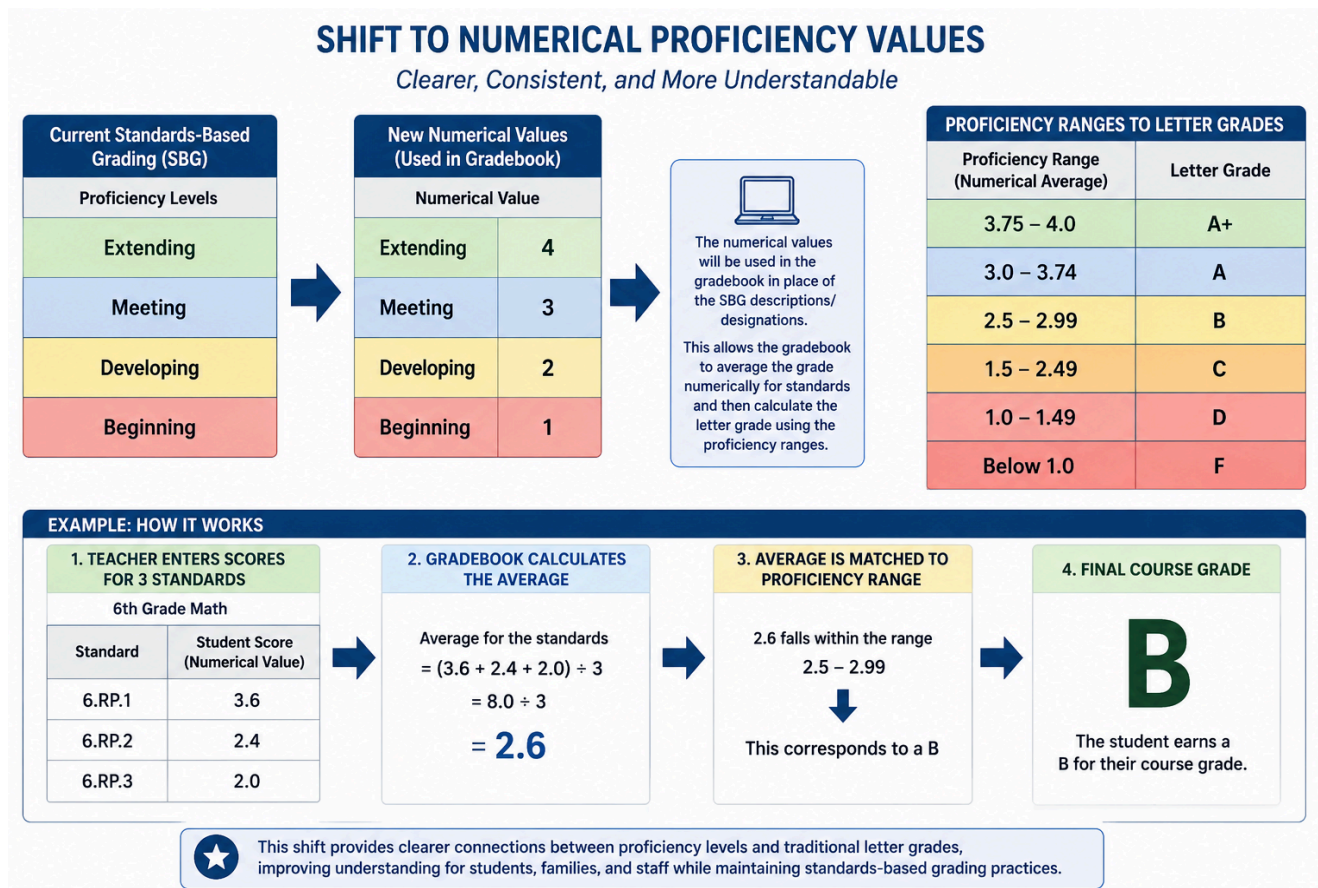
Standards-Based Grading works the same way. Rather than combining many different skills into one grade, it **reports each learning target separately** so students and families receive meaningful feedback about learning.

Hybrid Grading | Field's Grading Model

How Standards-Based Grading Connects to Letter Grades

Why are numbers used in Field's gradebook?

To make grading more consistent and easier to understand, District 31 uses numerical proficiency values in the electronic gradebook. These numbers do not replace Standards-Based Grading—they simply provide a way for the gradebook to calculate an overall course grade while still keeping the focus on student learning.



Here's how it works

- **Step 1:** Teachers continue to evaluate student learning using our four performance levels:
- **Step 2:** The electronic gradebook uses these numerical values to calculate an average across the standards assessed during the grading period.
- **Step 3:** That average is matched to a traditional letter grade for the final course grade.

What This Means for Families

- Teachers continue to assess learning using Beginning, Developing, Meeting, and Extending.

- Students and families will see numerical proficiency values (1–4) in the online gradebook because they provide a consistent way to calculate a final course grade.
- The focus of classroom feedback remains on the performance level and the learning standard—not the number itself.
- The final report card will include a traditional letter grade (A–F) for each course while still providing detailed information about student learning throughout the grading period.

A Helpful Way to Think About It

The numbers are simply a translation tool for the gradebook—they are not a new grading system. Teachers continue to evaluate student learning based on grade-level standards and performance levels. The numerical values simply allow the electronic gradebook to calculate a final letter grade in a clear and consistent way.

Section 4: Grading Learning Behaviors: Characteristics of a Successful Learner

Why are work habits reported separately? Learning isn't just about what students know—it's also about how they learn.

Academic grades communicate your child's progress toward learning standards. The Characteristics of a Successful Learner communicate the habits and behaviors that help students succeed in school and beyond. The specific characteristics on the report card are based on our Portrait of a District 31 Graduate. These are the values and characteristics we wish to see demonstrated by our students when our vision is fully achieved.

D31 Portrait of a Graduate Characteristics



DISTRICT 31

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

Prepared for today. Ready for tomorrow.

District 31 graduates leave middle school with the knowledge, skills, and mindset to thrive in high school, college, career, and life.

 <p>CRITICAL THINKERS</p> <p>We analyze information, ask questions, and make thoughtful decisions.</p>	 <p>PROBLEM SOLVERS</p> <p>We find solutions to challenges using creativity, perseverance, and resourcefulness.</p>	 <p>COLLABORATORS</p> <p>We work effectively with others, value diverse perspectives, and achieve more together.</p>
 <p>EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS</p> <p>We express our ideas clearly, listen actively, and adapt our communication to our audience.</p>	 <p>EMPATHETIC</p> <p>We show kindness, understand others' feelings, and respect the experiences of those around us.</p>	 <p>RESPONSIBLE GLOBAL CITIZENS</p> <p>We care about our community and the world, and we act with integrity and respect.</p>
 <p>SELF-ADVOCATES</p> <p>We understand our strengths, set goals, and speak up for our needs and our learning.</p>	 <p>RESILIENT</p> <p>We embrace challenges, learn from setbacks, and keep moving forward.</p>	 <p>CURIOUS LIFE-LONG LEARNERS</p> <p>We ask questions, explore interests, and pursue learning throughout our lives.</p>



These characteristics shape who we are.
Together, they prepare us to
MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON TOMORROW'S COMMUNITY.



These characteristics are reported separately because they answer a different question. We based our Characteristics of a Successful Learner on our Portrait of a District 31 Graduate. These are the values and characteristics we wish to see demonstrated by our students when our vision is fully achieved.

How Does Each School Report Student Learning Behaviors?



CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL LEARNER

How We Report Student Learning Behaviors

WINKELMAN ELEMENTARY		VS.	FIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL	
 GRADING SCALE	<p>Winkelman uses a 3-level proficiency scale.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="background-color: #90EE90; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; width: 30%;">  MEETING The student consistently demonstrates the characteristics of a successful learner without prompting. </div> <div style="background-color: #FFD700; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; width: 30%;">  DEVELOPING The student sometimes demonstrates the characteristics of a successful learner and may require some prompting. </div> <div style="background-color: #FF6347; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; width: 30%;">  BEGINNING The student rarely demonstrates the characteristics of a successful learner, even with prompting. </div> </div>	 GRADING SCALE	<p>Field uses traditional letter grades.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="background-color: #90EE90; border-radius: 50%; width: 30px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-weight: bold; color: white;">A</div> <div style="background-color: #90EE90; border-radius: 50%; width: 30px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-weight: bold; color: white;">B</div> <div style="background-color: #FFD700; border-radius: 50%; width: 30px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-weight: bold; color: white;">C</div> <div style="background-color: #FFA500; border-radius: 50%; width: 30px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-weight: bold; color: white;">D</div> <div style="background-color: #FF0000; border-radius: 50%; width: 30px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-weight: bold; color: white;">F</div> </div> <p>Grades reflect the student's level of demonstration of each learning behavior over time.</p>	
 WHAT IS REPORTED	<p>Winkelman reports on 9 specific characteristics across three skill areas.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="background-color: #90EE90; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; width: 30%;"> Independence and Initiative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocates for self and others Accepts responsibility for choices Exhibits curiosity </div> <div style="background-color: #9370DB; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; width: 30%;"> Communication and Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respects self, classroom, and school community Engages effectively in collaborative activities Contributes to a culture of acceptance </div> <div style="background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; width: 30%;"> Work Habits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perseveres and problem solves Completes assigned tasks on time and with quality Organizes and manages work/materials </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px;">A total of 9 characteristics are reported.</p>	 WHAT IS REPORTED	<p>Field reports on 3 broader categories.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="background-color: #90EE90; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; width: 30%;">  INDEPENDENCE & INITIATIVE How students take ownership of their learning and show initiative. </div> <div style="background-color: #9370DB; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; width: 30%;">  COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION How students interact, contribute, and work with others. </div> <div style="background-color: #4682B4; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; width: 30%;">  CLASSWORK How students manage their responsibilities and complete classwork on time. </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px;">A total of 3 characteristics are reported.</p>	
 TERMINOLOGY	<p>Winkelman uses the term "Work Habits" to describe this area of learning behaviors.</p>	 TERMINOLOGY	<p>Field uses the term "Classwork" for this area of learning behaviors.</p>	


Empowering every learner to make a positive impact on tomorrow's community.


How Are Letter Grades Determined for Characteristics of a Successful Learner at Field Middle School?



Field’s Characteristics of a Successful Learner | Deeper Dive

Classwork

Reflects a student's responsibility for completing and submitting classwork on time.

Teachers consider whether students:

- Complete assigned classwork
- Submit work on time
- Make productive use of class time

Independence & Initiative

Reflects how students take ownership of their learning.

Teachers look for behaviors such as:

- Beginning work independently
- Demonstrating perseverance when learning is challenging
- Taking responsibility for learning
- Seeking help appropriately
- Showing initiative and self-direction

Communication & Collaboration

Reflects how students work and communicate with others.

Teachers consider whether students:

- Listen respectfully
- Participate appropriately in discussions
- Work cooperatively with peers
- Contribute positively to group learning
- Communicate respectfully with others

Section 5: Retakes & Reassessment

At Field Middle School, our standards-based grading practices are designed to communicate what students know and are able to do in relation to grade-level standards. Because learning is a process, students may have opportunities to reassess their learning after receiving feedback, engaging in additional practice, and demonstrating readiness. Our reassessment process is designed to promote **growth, mastery, and student ownership of learning**.

- The formal reassessment and retake guidelines apply to **Field Middle School students only**.
- Students who score **below Meeting** on a summative assessment may have an opportunity to reassess.
- Reassessment is an opportunity to demonstrate **new learning after feedback and additional practice**—not simply to retake an assessment for a better grade.
- Students play an active role in the process by requesting a retake, completing required learning and practice, and preparing to demonstrate their understanding again.
- When a student reassesses, the higher score is recorded, **up to Meeting**.
- The goal of reassessment is to ensure grades reflect a student's **current level of understanding** while reinforcing responsibility, perseverance, and continued growth.

The infographic below provides additional information about why we offer reassessment and how the middle school retake process works.



MIDDLE SCHOOL REASSESSMENT & RETAKE GUIDELINES

These guidelines apply to *Field Middle School* students only.

In a standards-based grading system, the goal of assessment is to determine what students know and are able to do in relation to grade-level standards. Retakes provide another opportunity to demonstrate learning after feedback and practice.

WHY RETAKES SUPPORT LEARNING & GROWTH



Learn from Feedback

Students reflect on what they have not yet mastered and use teacher feedback to improve.



Demonstrate Growth

A reassessment allows students to show what they know after additional learning and practice.



Focus on Mastery

Grades communicate a student's current level of understanding of the standards—not just one assessment on one day.



Build Ownership

Students take an active role in requesting a retake, doing the work, and preparing to show their learning again.

HOW THE RETAKE PROCESS WORKS

1

RECEIVE FEEDBACK



A student who scores below *Meeting* on a summative assessment may have an opportunity to reassess.

2

REQUEST A RETAKE



The student initiates the request for a retake within **3 days** of receiving feedback.

3

PREPARE & PRACTICE

Before reassessing, the student must:

- Complete missing assignments or work.
- Complete additional learning/practice assigned by the teacher.
- Use teacher feedback to strengthen their understanding.

Examples: digital practice, redo tasks from the unit, teacher-selected review activities, and more.

4

REASSESS



The reassessment takes place within **5 days** of the student's request.

Students have **one retake** opportunity per assessment.

5

UPDATE THE EVIDENCE OF LEARNING



The higher of the original or reassessment scores is recorded, up to *Meeting*.

IMPORTANT DETAILS FOR FAMILIES

- ✓ Retakes are available for summative assessments when a student's initial level is below *Meeting*.
- ✓ Retakes are not used to move a score from *Meeting* to *Extends*.
- ✓ A reassessment may use the original assessment or another appropriate opportunity to demonstrate learning.
- ✓ For projects, essays, and multi-step performance tasks, students must apply teacher feedback to their work before being eligible to reassess.
- ✓ Teachers will make every effort to update reassessment scores before the end of the *grade mark period*. If a reassessment is already in progress, updates may be made through the date report cards are issued.
- ✓ A retake request may be denied when a student has an unexcused absence during the retake period at the end of the *grade mark period*.



IMPORTANT REMINDER

Retakes are not about doing the same work until a student gets a better grade. They are about providing another opportunity to demonstrate learning after feedback, practice, and growth.



THE BIG IDEA: LEARNING IS A PROCESS



Feedback



Practice



New Learning



Reassessment



Growth



Questions? Contact your child's teacher.
We're here to support your child!



A PARTNERSHIP
IN LEARNING

Section 6: Supporting Learning at Home and Using Skyward to Access Grades at Home

Families play an important role in helping students develop confidence, ownership, and a growth mindset.

One of the greatest benefits of Standards-Based Grading is that it gives families meaningful information about what students know, what they are learning, and where they may need additional support. By focusing conversations on learning—not simply grades—families can help students become more reflective, resilient, and engaged learners.

What You'll See in Skyward

When reviewing your child's grades online, you'll be able to see:

- Individual assignments and assessments
- The learning standards or learning targets being assessed
- Your child's current performance level for each standard
- Grades for the Characteristics of a Successful Learner
- This information provides a much clearer picture of your child's learning than a single percentage or letter grade.

SHIFT THE CONVERSATION

Small changes in our questions can make a big difference in our children's learning.

?	INSTEAD OF ASKING...	→	TRY ASKING...	
	"What grade did you get?"	→	"What are you learning?"	
	"Did you pass the test?"	→	"What learning target are you working toward?"	
	"Why isn't this higher?"	→	"What feedback did your teacher give you?"	
	"Are you done?"	→	"What is your next learning goal?"	



These conversations help students reflect on their learning, take ownership, and build confidence for the future.



Supporting Different Performance Levels

If your child is Meeting or Extending

Celebrate their success while encouraging continued growth.

Ask questions like:

- What helped you be successful?
- Can you teach me how you solved that problem?
- Which learning target are you most proud of?
- What are you learning next?

If your child is Developing or Beginning

Remember that these performance levels mean your child is still learning—not failing.

Ask questions like:

- What are you learning right now?
- What part is making sense?
- What part is still challenging?
- What feedback did your teacher give you?
- How can I help you practice before the next assessment?

Supporting the Characteristics of a Successful Learner

In addition to academic learning, you'll also receive information about three important learning behaviors:

- **Classwork:** Encourage your child to complete assignments on time and ask for help when needed.
- **Independence & Initiative:** Talk about perseverance, responsibility, organization, and setting personal goals.
- **Communication & Collaboration:** Ask your child how they worked with classmates, shared ideas, and listened respectfully to others.

Family Resource - Keep the Family Guide Nearby

We've created a one-page Family Guide: Supporting Your Child in a Standards-Based Grading System to serve as a quick reference throughout the school year.

The guide includes:

- Questions to ask during homework and after assessments
- Ways to support students at each performance level
- Conversation starters focused on learning rather than grades
- Tips for understanding the Characteristics of a Successful Learner
- Quick reminders for interpreting information in Skyward

Whether you're checking grades online, preparing for conferences, or talking about learning at home, the Family Guide is designed to help make those conversations easier and more meaningful.



FAMILY GUIDE

Supporting Your Child in a
Standards-Based Grading System



*Helping your child learn—
not just earn a grade.*



WHAT YOU'LL SEE ONLINE

When you view grades online, you'll have more information about your child's learning.

- ✓ Individual assignments and assessments
- ✓ The learning standard (what your child is expected to know or do)
- ✓ Your child's current level of performance on each standard
- ✓ Characteristics of a Successful Learner (work habits and learning behaviors)

UNDERSTANDING THE LEVELS



EXTENDING

Your child is going above and beyond grade-level expectations.

Shows deep understanding and can apply learning in new ways.



MEETING

Your child is meeting grade-level expectations.

Shows solid understanding of the standard.



DEVELOPING

Your child is still learning this standard.

Shows progress toward understanding but needs more practice and support.



BEGINNING

Your child needs more intensive support.

Shows very limited progress toward understanding.



The goal isn't to ask,
"What grade did you get?"

Instead, ask,
"What are you learning?"

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD



If you see **MEETING** or **EXTENDING**
Celebrate their learning!

- What helped you be successful with this skill?
- Can you teach me how you solved this problem?
- Which standard are you most proud of?
- What's the next thing you'll be learning?



If you see **DEVELOPING**
Remember: Developing means your child is still learning—not that they've failed.

- What are you learning right now?
- What part is making sense?
- What part is still challenging?
- What feedback did your teacher give you?
- What can you do before the next assessment?
- Is there anything I can help you practice?

ASK ABOUT LEARNING TARGETS



Instead of...

"Did you get an A?"

Try asking...

- What learning target are you working toward?
- Which standards have you mastered?
- Which standards are you still practicing?
- How have you improved since the beginning of the unit?
- What are you hoping to improve next?

These conversations help students reflect on their learning and take ownership of their growth.

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP



You don't need to reteach every lesson.

The most powerful support is showing interest in your child's learning.

- ✓ Celebrate growth, not just high scores.
- ✓ Encourage effort and perseverance.
- ✓ Read teacher feedback together.
- ✓ Ask questions before giving answers.
- ✓ Help your child set one small goal for improvement.



UNDERSTANDING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL LEARNER

In addition to academic standards, you'll also see feedback on important learning behaviors.



CLASSWORK

Reflects how consistently students complete and engage in assigned work.

Ask:

- Did you finish your work today?
- Did you ask for help when you needed it?
- Are there any assignments you still need to complete?



INDEPENDENCE & INITIATIVE

Reflects responsibility, perseverance, and self-management.

Ask:

- What did you do when something felt difficult?
- Did you try solving the problem before asking for help?
- What goal are you working on this week?



COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION

Reflects how students communicate respectfully and work with others.

Ask:

- How did your group work together today?
- Did you share your ideas?
- Did you listen to others' perspectives?



Remember...

A "Developing" today doesn't mean your child won't be successful tomorrow. Learning takes time, practice, feedback, and persistence.

AT-A-GLANCE CONVERSATION STARTERS

Instead of asking...

"What grade did you get?"



Try asking...

"What are you learning?"



Instead of asking...

"Did you pass the test?"



Try asking...

"Which standards did this assessment measure?"



Instead of asking...

"Why isn't this higher?"



Try asking...

"What feedback did your teacher give you?"



Instead of asking...

"Are you done?"



Try asking...

"What is your next learning goal?"



Remember...

Learning takes time, practice, feedback, and perseverance. Standards-Based Grading helps students—and families—focus on growth every step of the way.

Every conversation about learning is an opportunity to help your child build confidence, ownership, and a lifelong love of learning.

Section 7: Additional Resources and Glossary of Terms

Books:

- [A Repair Kit for Grading](#) by Ken O'Connor
- [Standards-Based Learning in Action](#) by Tom Schimmer, Garnet Hillman, and Mandy Stalets
- [Get Set Go](#) by Thomas Guskey
- [On Your Mark](#) by Thomas Guskey
- [Fair Isn't Always Equal](#) by Rick Wormeli
- [Grading Exceptional and Struggling Learners](#) by Lee Ann Jung and Thomas Guskey
- [How to Grade for Learning](#) by Ken O'Connor
- [What We Know About Grading](#) by Thomas Guskey and Susan Brookhart
- [Grading from the Inside Out](#) by Tom Schimmer
- [Grading for Impact](#) by Tom Hierck and Garth L. Larson
- [The Grade Cleanse](#) by Danny Hill and Garnet Hillman
- [The Standards-Based Classroom](#) by Emily Rinkema and Stan Williams
- [Grading for Equity](#) by Joe Feldman

Articles:

- [3 Big Shifts for Standards-Based Grading](#) by Matt Townsley, Megan Knight
- [A Repair Kit for Grading](#) by Ken O'Connor
- [Getting Started for Standards-Based Grading](#) by Cathleen Beachboard, Erika Kersey
- [Seven Reasons for Standards-Based Grading](#) by Patricia L. Scriffiny
- [Undoing the Traditions of Grading and Reporting](#) by Thomas Guskey
- [Fair and Equitable Grading for ALL Students in Inclusive Settings](#) by Kearns, Reyes, Thurlow, and Wakeman
- [Standards-Based Learning: Why Do Educators Make it So Complex?](#) by Thomas Guskey

Video:

- [What is Standards-Based Grading?](#) By TeacherEase
- [Rick Wormelli on Standards-Based Grading](#)
- [These Changes Won't Prepare Students for the REAL World!](#)
- [Show Me Some Research This Actually Works!](#)

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Academic Levels of Proficiency	<p>The description of proficiency for academic learning related to each focus standard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting = The student independently demonstrates an understanding of grade-level concepts and consistently applies knowledge and skills learned. • Developing = The student demonstrates a partial understanding of the concept and/or occasionally applies knowledge and skills learned. • Beginning = The student does not yet independently demonstrate an understanding of the concept.
Accommodation	Adaptations that provide access for any student to the general curriculum but do not fundamentally alter the grade-level standard or proficiency level
Characteristics of a Successful Learner	<p>Behavioral characteristics that are aligned with our District 31 Portrait of a Graduate that articulate the behaviors necessary to become a self-sufficient, lifelong learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence and Initiative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advocates for self and others ○ Accepts responsibility for choices ○ Exhibits curiosity • Communication and Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Respects self, classroom, and school community ○ Engages effectively in collaborative activities ○ Contributes to a culture of acceptance • Work Habits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Takes risks, perseveres, and problem solves ○ Uses class time effectively ○ Organizes and manages work/materials

Content Standard	<p>The learning expectations from which more specific grade-level curriculum is developed. Content standards describe what students should know and be able to do in a specific grade level and content area by the end of the school year.</p> <p><u>Illinois Learning Standards</u></p>
Focus Standards	<p>Also called Priority Standards; “a carefully selected subset of the total list of the grade-specific and course-specific standards within each content area that students must know and be able to do by the end of each school year in order to be prepared for the standards at the next grade level or course” (Ainsworth, 2013, p. xv)</p> <p>These are the standards you will see listed on the standards-based report card for each grade level and content area.</p>
Formative Assessment	<p>Assessment <i>for</i> learning; the assessments are used daily/weekly by educators to monitor student learning, provide ongoing feedback to students, and determine the next steps for instructional planning</p>
IEP	<p>An Individualized Education Plan is also known as an IEP. This is a plan or program developed to ensure that a child with an identified disability who is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services.</p>
Learning Target	<p>“I can...” statements, which help students and educators identify what important concepts students will learn and what essential actions they will be able to do.</p>
Modification	<p>Adaptations to the curriculum that fundamentally alter the grade-level expectation but do not fundamentally alter the content standard. Modifications are provided <i>only</i> to students who qualify for special education services or highly capable students. Modifications typically include reducing the cognitive load, altering the</p>

	methodology or delivery of instructions, and/or modifying the performance criteria.
Standards-Based System	A system where the curriculum, instruction, and assessments are clearly aligned to the learning standards and designed to help students attain these standards.
Summative Assessment	Assessment <i>of</i> learning; a summative assessment is any standards-aligned task with grade-level rigor that is completed <i>after</i> the student has had access to teaching, practice, and feedback; these are done with independence, unless the standard calls for collaboration
504 Plan	A 504 Plan is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment.