

TRADITIONAL VS. STANDARDS-BASED GRADING

Questions and Answers

Question	Traditional	Standards-based
What is the purpose of the report cards?	Grades are issued in on the percentage a students has learned inclusive of homework, effort, etc.	Grades and reporting communicate what students have learned, what they can do, and whether their learning status is in line with expectations for that level.
How are the report cards different?	Grades are given for each subject area/course.	Subject areas are sub-divided into a list of skills and knowledge that students need to learn or master. Each skill on the list is scored separately.
How are grades determined?	<p>Grades reflect an averaging of points collected throughout the marking period to determine a letter or percentile grade for a subject area. They focus on if a student has met a learning objective at a certain point in time during the marking period.</p> <p>Students' scores are generally derived from written tests and quizzes, homework, class participation, as well as non- achievement factors, such as behavior, work ethic, timeliness, and compliance. Students receive points based on what they do, mixed with what they know.</p>	<p>Grades reflect the level of proficiency on specific standards for each subject area. The end goal is the learning of the standards, not necessarily that they were learned by a specific date.</p> <p>The report card grade is summative information about the learning targets taught at each marking period. Therefore, the grades throughout the year communicate a student's progress as compared to where we would expect him/her to be at that point in time. By the end of the year/course, it is desired that students be proficient for each standard.</p> <p>Separate grades/comments are reserved for the non-achievement factors.</p>
How does the report card affect student learning?	Parents and students understand traditional grading. Grades reflect individual teacher expectations and instruction.	Knowing where the students are in their progress to meeting the standards is crucial for planning and implementing effective instruction. The grading system is designed to give teachers more information about the level of proficiency toward each standard, which will be used in designing instruction.
Are grades calculated in the same way?	Grades earned throughout the marking period are traditionally averaged to determine a report card grade. A few bad grades might significantly affect a student's grade.	Evidence is collected throughout the marking period with the final goal the progress on the standards. This recognizes that students learn at different rates.
How do the grades reflect student learning?	<p>Grades reflect teacher's expectations.</p> <p>If the classroom teacher chooses assignments that match the state/ district core curriculum the grades summarize the work completed by the student about the standard.</p>	Report card levels reflect progress relative to the district's scoring guides, which are written to directly address the state's grade level expectations.

	If the teacher does not choose assignments that match the state/ district core curriculum then the grades do not summarize the student's progress towards meeting state standards.	
My child used to get all high grades but doesn't in this system. Why is this?	Grade inflation is more likely to occur in a traditional reporting system. These grades reflect a combination of ability and compliance.	Learning target grades are reported separately from behavior and compliance issues.
How does this type of grading affect student motivation?	Some students (and parents) are motivated by grades and set achievement expectations. Traditional grading encourages this. Other students who start the year "failing" will most likely give up early in the year since the prospect of passing is not likely.	Students can be motivated to achieve by grades in a standards-based report cards. Students who start the year off behind still have the time to right the situation.
What are the advantages to each type of system?	Most adults are familiar this type of grading system from their experiences as students.	<p>Focuses on student achievement. Clearly defines where the child is in terms of curricular expectations.</p> <p>Learning targets are consistently identified and reinforced to students throughout instruction.</p> <p>Students and parents and teachers can easily see which learning targets have been mastered and which are in need of re-teaching or enrichment.</p> <p>Creates more consistent curriculum between teachers on the same grade level.</p> <p>Homework completion and compliance issues are reported separately from mastery of concepts and skills.</p> <p>Work habits and effort are reported separately.</p>
What are the disadvantages to each type of system?	<p>The grade summarizing a content area such as reading or math doesn't tell the parent which standards the child knows or doesn't know.</p> <p>Students are sorted and selected at a very early age and may give up.</p> <p>Grades are significantly dependent on what to what teacher a child is assigned.</p>	<p>Change takes time to build understanding in everyone involved.</p> <p>Traditional grading practices are ingrained in the community and they, too, will have to go through the change process.</p>

Is there research to indicate which type of grading significantly increases student achievement?	---	Research on standards-based grading shows overwhelmingly that students learn their subjects and perform better when instruction and assessment are each implemented with great fidelity.
Is one type of grading more work for teachers?	Traditional grading initially is less work, primarily due to the learning curve of standards based grading. The development and implementation of new grading practices will be an adjustment.	This system is designed to be fair to students and increase achievement. Initially it might be more cumbersome due to the learning curve and establishment of systems. However, it will save time in the future. Rather than having to assign and grade a predetermined number of assignments, teachers will need to gather only the evidence required to demonstrate a student's level of proficiency. Teachers and students use information specific to learning targets to plan instruction designed for individual student needs. Students clearly understand the target, their needs, and the course of action to achieve the target. Once students are familiar with the system, they work with the teacher to reach for the proficient and/or advanced scores. This partnership makes teaching and assessing more efficient.
How do curriculum, instruction and assessment align?	With a grading system that promotes academic as well as non-achievement factors, there is less likelihood that curriculum and instruction will be as focused on student learning and the standards.	Curriculum focused on the CCLS, instruction and learning targets that are consistent between all teachers, and a grading system focused on student learning provides the complete package.

Information on this chart was partially adapted from: Quakertown Community School District in Pennsylvania and Park Hill School District in Missouri.