

Excerpts from *How to Grade for Learning* by Ken O'Connor

Standards-Based Grading results in grades that are more meaningful, accurate, consistent, and supportive of learning.

“Standards-Based Grading” means that students are graded on what they know and have learned how to do after they were taught a specific content or skill (a “standard”). In standards-based grading systems, students, parents, and teachers have more accurate information about exactly what students *should be learning* and what they actually *have learned* as a result of instruction.

Standards-Based Grading supports greater accountability for learning

Many school districts across the country are moving to a standards-based grading system because of an increasing need to ensure that students are learning the concepts and skills they need to be successful and responsible citizens in the 21st century. Other skills and attributes, such as effort, organizational skills, courtesy, and timeliness still matter, of course. In a standards-based grading system, however, the main purpose of a grade is to show what was actually learned.

Differences in Grading Practices

The chart below demonstrates some of the differences between a traditional grading system and a standards-based system.

Traditional Grading System	Standards-Based System
Student work may be compared to other students' work (grading on a curve).	Student work is compared to a standard and describes what a student should know and be able to do at a specific grade level or in a specific subject.
Grades may include non-academic factors such as attendance, behavior, and effort.	Grades are a report of academic achievement; non-academic factors such as attendance, behavior, and effort are reported separately.
Students are not necessarily involved in the assessment and grading process.	Students are involved in assessment and grading throughout the learning process.
Individual classroom teachers develop their own measures and basis for evaluating student progress.	Across the district, teachers work together to develop measures and consistent criteria for evaluating student progress.
Homework may count as a large portion of the grade.	Homework and other practice activities have limited influence on a final grade.
Grades communicate achievement based on the teacher's individual interpretation of standards.	Grades communicate academic achievement based on district-defined standards.