

Standards-Based Grading

Parent Update: 10/18/19

What is Standards-Based Grading (SBG)? Standards-Based Grading (SBG) is a system of grading and reporting that measures student achievement of identified standards, skills and topics at each grade level and course. The goal of SBG is to better assess, monitor and communicate what each student knows and is able to do according to a clear and prescribed set of academic expectations.

Many in the field of education view SBG as the natural next step in the implementation of content standards and a standards-based education system. On Guam, the first iteration of the Guam Content Standards and Performance Indicators was adopted in the spring of 1999. The revised content standards were adopted in 2010 and the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Math were adopted in 2012. The grading system, however, was never changed to reflect these adoptions and thus the direct reporting of student performance based on these standards was never achieved. This initiative addresses this.

Standards-Based Grading Policy Proposals

The following items in this update identify the main policy proposals being prepared by the department for consideration by the Guam Education Board. These are the policy proposals that the planning committee, which is comprised of teachers, administrators and central office personnel, has identified as the most critical for full-implementation of Standards-Based Grading throughout the district. Beginning this month and over the next few months, these policy proposals are being shared with administrators, teachers, students and parents for their consideration and input. They include:

Identification of Priority Standards, Skills and Topics (PSSTs):

Teacher representatives from each school and content area will convene every three to five years to collaboratively identify the Priority Standards, Skills and Topics (PSSTs) for each course taught in the GDOE. These PSSTs will be the focus of all assignment, projects, quizzes, tests and other coursework which will be collectively called Artifacts & Evidence (A/E). These Artifacts and Evidence (A/E) will be the basis of determining a student's Proficiency Level of each PSST.

Shifting to the 5-Point Proficiency Scale:

The most visible or noticeable characteristic of Standards-Based Grading will be the shifting from a Percentage Grade to a Proficiency Level on a 5-Point Scale (Proficiency Scale). The 5-point Proficiency Scale represents the following levels of proficiency or achievement of the PSST:

- 4- Advanced Proficiency of the Priority Standards, Skill or Topic (PSST),
- 3- Meets Proficiency of the PSST,
- 2- Achieving the Prerequisites for the PSST,
- 1- Foundational, Basic Knowledge of the PSST,
- 0- No Understanding or Demonstration of the PSST.

At the end of the reporting period or semester, a comprehensive or composite score for all PSSTs taught in the course will be averaged and then converted to the more familiar letter grade of A+, A, A-, B+, B, B- etc... using a common conversion scale adopted for the district.

Quality of work over Quantity

Having all class assignments, projects, quizzes, tests and other coursework aligned to and rated on a Proficiency Scale means that a student's grade will not be based only on work submission, but on the quality and type of work submitted along with the level of the material covered. Student work and evidence must demonstrate mastery of the PSSTs. Final grades for the course will ultimately be based on students' demonstrated level of proficiency of the course's PSSTs. This may be a huge shift in thinking for many who view grades as a reflection of simply how much work a student does rather

than actual, demonstrated proficiency. Our focus will essentially be the quality and type of work rather than just the quantity.

Raising expectations for student achievement:

With the use of Proficiency Scales aligned to course standards as the primary determiner of student grades, we believe that student grades themselves will be a more accurate reflection of student achievement at all levels and in all content areas. With that understanding, the natural question is: what level of achievement should be considered ENOUGH to pass a class? The proposal we have for this policy change is that it be at a minimum, level 2.0. Based on our proposed conversion scale, this would be a C-. That means, we are proposing that for the GDOE, “passing” will no longer be a D-like it is now. But rather, a student will need to achieve at least a C- in a course to be considered passing. Of course, although a C- is not yet meeting the standard, the logic is that the student will at least have a fighting chance to succeed in the next course, a chance that they would most likely not have with a lower grade.

Addressing character, behavior and career readiness skills:

Because Academic Grades will now focus on students’ achievement of the prescribed standards of the course, there needs to be a consistent way for us to teach, assess and eventually grade character, behavior or skills identified as important for job/career readiness. These include, but are not limited to skills and attributes such as: attendance and punctuality, compliance with rules and policies, ability to meet deadlines, neatness, and ability to work well with others.

Option 1

Right now, these areas are all addressed by each teacher in different ways. Some include them as part of their grade, some don’t. With Standards-Based Grading, we need to be able to clearly distinguish between a student’s Academic Grade and these other important characteristics. So, to address this, we are discussing two options at this time. The first option is to include character, behavior and career readiness skills as part of a student’s overall grade, essentially combining it with a student’s Academic Grade. This is similar to what is done now, except that the parameters and guidelines on how this will be done will be consistent throughout the district. If this option is selected, we will need to determine what percent of the total grade will the character, behavior and career readiness grade be? 10%? 15%? Or 20% of the total grade?

Option 2

The second option would be to have a separate grade for character, behavior and job/career readiness. With this option, a student would have two separate grades for a class: one for Academics and one for Character/Behavior/Work Readiness. This is similar to how we now have both a course grade and a citizenship grade. The difference here is that we will clearly define what goes into that second, citizenship grade, making it consistent throughout the district.

Stakeholder input

These policy proposals will be the focus of the department over the next few months. During this time the planning committees will be engaging stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, administrators and anyone interested in student grading in discussions to provide more information, answer questions, and solicit input, prior to submitting proposals to the Guam Education Board for their review and consideration.

Schools will continue to have **parent informational sessions on a quarterly basis** and the **Division of Curriculum and Instruction will be sponsoring a series of regional sessions over the next few months**. Parents and students are encouraged to ask questions and provide input into these policy proposals through their child’s school or during the regional sessions.

Additionally, to provide input into these policy proposals, stakeholders are also invited to email the project directly at sbgi@gdoe.net or call the **SBG Hotline at 300-1363** (voicemail is active, so please leave a message and staff will return your call).

For more information on Standards-Based Grading, please contact your child’s school. For additional questions, comments or concerns regarding SBG, please email the project office at sbgi@gdoe.net or call the SBG Hotline at **300-1363** (voicemail active, so you can leave a message). You may also contact the Division of Curriculum and Instruction at 300-1635 or 1247.