

Guam Department of Education

Press Release

Parent and Community Information and Policy Input Sessions on Standards-Based Grading

North: Tuesday, November 19th from 6pm-8pm. Simon Sanchez High School
South: Wednesday, November 20th from 6pm-8pm. Inarajan Middle School
South: Thursday, November 21st from 6pm-8pm. Oceanview Middle School
Central: Friday, November 22nd from 6pm-8pm. GDOE Central Office, Tiyán Barrigada
North: Monday, November 25th from 6pm-8pm. Liguán Elementary School

The Guam Department of Education Division of Curriculum and Instruction is inviting parents, students and community stakeholders to a set of **Information and Policy Input Sessions** on the department's **Standards-Based Grading Initiative**.

What is Standards-Based Grading (SBG)?

Standards-Based Grading (SBG) is a system of assessment, grading and reporting that measures student achievement of identified standards, skills and topics at each grade level and course taught in the GDOE. 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 and behavior 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 version of the Guam Content Standards and Performance Indicators was adopted in the spring of 1999. The revised content standards were adopted in 2010, the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Math were adopted in Spring, 2012, and the Next Generation Science Standards were adopted in Fall, 2018. 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.

According to the Department, implementation of SBG principles and strategies is currently allowed under Guam Education Board policy. This means that any teacher is able to use SBG principles and strategies in their classrooms right now without the need for any policy changes. This is because current grading policies leave all grading decisions entirely up to the teacher with only two parameters: 1) grades cannot be based on emotion and 2) grades must be reflected as either a Percentage Grade, Pass/Fail, or Incomplete. Decisions on what criteria grades are based on, how grades are calculated, and what evidence will be used to determine grades is entirely up to each individual teacher.

Why change the policies if SBG can already be implemented now?

Although, SBG is currently allowable under Board policy, the department would like to have it implemented throughout the district- **in every school, in every grade level, and in every course**. In order to do this, we will need to update our current Board Policies covering grading to reflect SBG principles.

What will need to change?

SBG is not one complete system that can be adopted all at once, but rather a set of grading principles and practices that have to be addressed separately and eventually adopted by the Guam Education Board if we want to enforce district-wide. For full implementation, four priority policy areas will have to be addressed:

1. Transitioning from a Percentage Grading system to a 5-Point Proficiency Level based the student's achievement of that specific standard, skill or topic. This Proficiency Level will then be converted to the more recognizable letter grade of A+, A, A-, B+, B, etc...

2. Adopting a process to determine each course's Priority Standards, Skills and Topics which will then be used as the focus of all instruction, assessments and ultimately students' grades.
3. Establishment of passing grades and criteria for earned credit: because there will now be a greater emphasis on the achievement of the specific standards, skills and topics for each course, the department is proposing to raise the expectations for passing and earned credit to a letter grade of "C" rather than the current "D".
4. Addressing Academic Achievement and Student Behavior separately: One of the primary principles of SBG is that a student's academic grade be a true reflection of the student's achievement of the standards of the course. Student Behavior will be addressed in a separate, but equally important grade.

This round of Information and Policy Input Sessions are the first of two-rounds of regional community sessions meant to give interested parents and community stakeholders an opportunity to ask questions and provide input directly to the district office. These sessions are offered IN ADDITION to the quarterly Informational and Input Sessions provided by all schools this school year.

According to Joe Sanchez, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instructional Improvement: "This initiative is probably one of the largest and most consequential efforts every made in this department with regards to curriculum and instruction. It pulls together everything we do to raise student achievement including our **curriculum standards work, improving instructional quality, our interventions, and our assessment systems.**"

At these sessions, **a short overview of Standards-Based Grading will be provided** followed by a **discussion and question/answer period** regarding the initiative and the proposed policy changes.

The second round of regional sessions will be scheduled for January, 2020.

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.
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