

College Community Schools Standards Based Grading (SBG) Guidebook

Revised September 2025



Rationale for Standards-Based Learning & Reporting

Standards-based learning focuses instruction and the alignment of curriculum with the essential standards and measures the mastery of the standards, or how well students understand the material in a course. It is based on a specific set of standards that students need to meet for each grade/content level. Performance marks are not a comparison of one student to another, but rather a way to measure how well students are doing on grade-level/course level standards. Along with the vital practice of reassessing standards, students and teachers will work collaboratively to ensure individual student learning of content standards.

Work habits, or behavior skills, are reported separately. Work habits, or behavior skills grades, are called Habits of Success at CCSD. The Habits of Success include: Respect, Responsibility, and Persistence. Teachers will assess the Habits of Success separately from all other standards. The K-12 Habits of Success Guidance can be found [here](#).

A Standards-Based Approach is designed to:

1. Create guaranteed practices, language, expectations, and guidance for grading across subjects and grade levels
2. Repair grading practices with a focus on learning rather than grades
3. Ensure all students reach mastery of course power standards.
4. Collect evidence throughout the learning process through practice, formative, and summative assessment
5. Provide timely, specific and targeted feedback to learners, teachers and families regarding a student's level of proficiency on learning targets and mastery of power standards
6. Reinforce the idea that learning is a process that includes relearning, reteaching, and reassessment
7. Separate behavior (attendance, work completion, etc.) from standard proficiency (knowledge, skills, and performance) for a clear picture of a student's academic performance and the impact of a student's behavior on their academic performance.

Traditional vs. Standards Based Grading

TRADITIONAL	STANDARDS BASED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on assessment methods (quizzes, tests, daily work). One grade per subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on standards with a proficiency mark for each standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on a percentage system; often norm-referenced; learning criteria not clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criterion-referenced and proficiency-based using a limited number of levels of learning; standards being measured are known to all
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses an uncertain combination of factors to determine a grade: attitude, effort, and behavior. Uses penalties and extra credit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures only standards content to measure proficiency; behaviors reported separately. No penalties or bonuses given.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes group scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes individual evidence only
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual assignments are weighted based on size or importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A body of evidence is gathered through practice, formative assessment, and summative assessment, with the most recent summative assessment counting

	toward standard proficiency and used to calculate the course letter grade.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes every score regardless of when it was collected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes the most recent evidence of learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher makes decisions about grading and tells the students the decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and teachers discuss the standards, proficiency scales, and evidence of learning progress together throughout the cycle of learning

Adapted from solution-tree.com. O'Connor, 2008. Reproducible.

Reporting Standards-Based Grading

Elementary (K-6)

At CCSD, our elementary teachers use a standards-based, body-of-evidence approach (multiple points of data over time) to determine scores that are documented on a student's report card each semester. Report cards reflect where students are, in relationship to expected proficiency, at the time of reporting. The proficiency of the standard will be scored using a proficiency scale and will be entered in the gradebook using the following proficiency marks:

- E - Exemplary
- M - Meeting
- APP - Approaching
- BG - Beginning
- NE - No Evidence (student completed the summative assessment, but did not show evidence of learning)

In cases where there are multiple power standards within a strand/domain, the teacher will use a synthesis method for determining the reporting score for that strand/domain.

Secondary (7-12)

At CCSD our secondary teachers use a standards based gradebook to collect a body of evidence for course standards. The gradebook and evidence are available to students, parents, and teachers through our Infinite Campus Portal.

Gradebooks

Gradebooks will communicate a body of evidence related to student learning that includes: Practice, Formative Assessment, and Summative Assessment. At least one piece of evidence (Practice, Formative Assessment, or Summative Assessment) will be entered into the gradebook each week.

Body of Evidence:

- Practice: Practice refers to activities students engage in to develop their knowledge and skills during the learning process.

- The regularity of practice entered into the gradebook is at the discretion of the teacher.
- Practice will be entered in the gradebook to communicate student engagement with the learning using:
 - Complete
 - Incomplete
- Practice is not included in the grade calculation, allowing students to experiment, make mistakes, and learn without penalty.
- Formative Assessment is used to gather feedback on where students are in their learning. Formative Assessment data is used to drive instruction and determine support needed for student learning.
 - Every learning target on the proficiency scale for each powered standard will be formatively assessed to support learners in achieving the standard prior to a summative assessment.
 - Formative Assessments will be entered in the grade book to communicate where students are in the learning process using:
 - Proficient
 - Not Proficient
 - Formative Assessment is not included in the grade calculation, but completion of formative assessment is a required and essential component in the learning process.
- Summative Assessments assess student learning of the full standard.
 - The proficiency of the standard will be scored using a proficiency scale and will be entered in the gradebook using the following proficiency marks.
 - E - Exemplary
 - M - Meeting
 - APP - Approaching
 - BG - Beginning
 - NE - No Evidence (student completed the summative assessment, but did not show evidence of learning)
 - Miss - Missing (student did not complete the summative assessment)
 - **The most recent Summative Assessment proficiency mark will count toward standard proficiency and will be used to calculate the course letter grade.**

Composite Letter Grade: 9-12th grade only

- In grades 9-12 and Middle School courses for HS credit, the composite letter grade for each course will be determined by the power standards proficiency marks.
 - A - All power standards are Ms and at least one E
 - B - All power standards are Ms, no more than 1 APP, and no BGs
 - C - All power standards are Ms or APPs, and no BGs
 - D - All composite power standards are BGs with at least one APP
 - F - All power standards are BGs or NEs
 - Students who receive an F have not yet demonstrated proficiency in the course standards. After the end of the term, students will have a three-week window to engage in relearning and additional opportunities to demonstrate mastery. If, after three weeks, proficiency is still not shown, the F will remain on the record.

- Each individual grade entered into the gradebook should be reflective of what a student has learned in relation to the standard or target being taught.
- A final proficiency mark for the standard is reported when sufficient core instruction has been conducted to reasonably expect proficiency (and a full body of evidence has been collected) on that standard during that reporting period.
- Reassessment policy
 - Students will have an opportunity to reassess a standard **regardless of the proficiency level** and add another summative assessment score to the body of evidence in the gradebook.
 - A student's proficiency cannot decrease due to reassessment.
 - If this were to occur, a comment should be added to the reassessment assignment stating "proficiency mark did not improve".
 - Students and teachers will coordinate a plan for reteaching & relearning prior to reassessment within one week after the feedback from the summative assessment is received by the student. This plan will utilize a common form that includes:
 - Timeline for relearning
 - Student reflection of the learning targets within the standard
 - Course alike teachers should have similar relearning requirements that may include:
 - Meeting with the teacher for reteaching
 - Engaging in additional practice
 - Completing formative assessments that are missing
 - Using feedback provided to revise original work
 - If standards are spiraled within a semester, a reassessment plan must be initiated within one week of the summative assessment being returned

Standards Based Learning Terms and Definitions

Body of Evidence

A body of evidence provides a comprehensive picture of how a student is performing relative to a standard and includes Practice, Formative Assessment, and Summative Assessment.

Composite Letter Grade

A letter grade (A,B,C, etc) that demonstrates an overall picture of the students learning in the course.

District Common Assessment

A summative assessment that assesses the full standard and is administered and scored in a common way across a course with results used at the student, class, and system level.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is the ongoing process of checking in on student learning to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas needing improvement. It's all about informing instruction and helping students learn, rather than simply measuring achievement at the end.

Formative Assessments are designed around the best method to assess a student's current level of understanding. Teachers use practice and observation informally as well as more formal (recorded) methods. Typical examples of formative assessment tools include:

- Quizzes
- In-class discussion / presentations
- Focussed observations
- Mid-project checks (including rough drafts)
- Self-assessments
- In-class tasks
- Labs

Formative Assessment happens during learning, teachers use this information to adjust teaching, students use the information to reflect and improve their learning.

Formative Assessments contribute to a body of evidence but do not calculate to the "grade." Formative Assessment feedback is given to students and occurs prior to the "graded" summative assessment attempt.

For Educators:

- Goal: To identify a student's understanding of a learning target during the learning process.
- Focus: Provides ongoing feedback related to learning targets to adjust teaching and student learning strategies.
- Examples: Class discussions, exit tickets (quick questions at the end of a lesson), quizzes, observing student work while they complete tasks.

For Students and Families:

- Imagine it as a "check-in" along the learning journey. It's like a teacher taking the pulse of the class to see if everyone is following along - a check for understanding.
- Think of it as a progress report. It helps teachers identify areas where students need more support in relation to learning targets and adjust their teaching accordingly.
- Examples: A teacher asking questions during a science experiment to see if students understand the steps. A student receiving feedback on their draft essay before finalizing it.

Grades

A grade is a standardized measurement of a student's academic performance. It's essentially a teacher's evaluation of a student's knowledge, skills, and progress in a particular subject or course.

Grades serve as a way for teachers to communicate feedback to students and parents about their understanding of the subject matter.

Grades are a widely used tool in education, but it's important to understand their strengths and limitations, and to use them effectively alongside other forms of assessment to get a complete picture of student learning.

Grade proficiency: A clear and concrete summary of student achievement based on what a student knows at the end of a given period.

Standards Based Grading

Standards-based grading (SBG) is an approach to grading that focuses on a student's mastery of specific course standards, rather than just a cumulative score. Here's a breakdown of its key features:

- **Mastery-based:** Grades reflect how well a student understands the important standards (concepts and skills) of a course, not just their performance on tests or assignments.
- **Focus on learning:** The emphasis is on identifying areas where students need more support and providing opportunities to improve, rather than simply assigning a letter grade.
- **Clear learning goals:** Students know exactly what they need to learn and how well they are demonstrating that knowledge.
- **Feedback-rich:** SBG often uses formative assessments to provide ongoing feedback that helps students track their progress and identify areas for improvement.
- **Reduced emphasis on penalties:** The system typically minimizes penalties for early mistakes, allowing students to learn from them and improve. Reassessment opportunities are common.

Overall, SBG aims to create a learning environment that encourages growth and a focus on understanding rather than just achieving a specific grade.

Habits of Success

Work habits, or behavior skills, are reported separately. Work habits, or behavior skills grades, are called Habits of Success at CCSD. The Habits of Success include Respect, Responsibility, and Persistence. Teachers will assess the Habits of Success separate from all other standards. Habits of Success Guidance can be found [here](#).

Learning Target

Learning targets (aka learning intentions) are specific, measurable statements that describe what students will be able to know or do by the end of a lesson or task. Strong learning targets focus on a particular concept or skill and is achievable within the timeframe of the lesson and contribute to understanding of the broader power standard(s) for the unit. Learning targets are phrased in clear and concise language that students can understand to help students take ownership of their learning and understand the goals they are working towards.

Learning targets provide transparency to the students about where they are going in their learning.. This allows for effective assessment of student understanding.

Learning targets should:

- articulate what learners are expected to learn through a learning experience
- help learners see why they are learning this particular content and skills
- guide teachers in planning their lessons and activities to ensure they are directly addressing the desired learning in course power standards.
- allow teachers to design effective assessments that accurately measure student achievement.

- Increase student engagement and personalization of their learning when they understand the goals and can track their progress towards achieving them.

Power Standard

A power standard is a prioritized academic expectation that educators determine to be the most critical and essential for students to learn.

- Power standards help narrow down the vast amount of content and skills in a subject area by highlighting the most crucial aspects for students to learn deeply.
- Power standards are foundational ones that unlock future learning.
- By focusing on power standards, teachers can ensure students achieve a strong grasp of the most critical concepts and have a solid foundation for future learning within the subject and beyond.
- Power standards are the key focus of intervention when students are struggling with content and/or skills in subject or grade level learning

Practice

The practice of content and skills in a classroom refers to the “ungraded” activities students engage in to develop their understanding and proficiency in a particular subject area. The goal of practice is to move students beyond simply memorizing facts to a deeper level of understanding where they can apply their knowledge and skills during the learning process prior to attempting an assessment.

Practice can take many forms, but some common examples include:

- Solving problems
- Writing
- Conducting science experiments
- Participating in class discussions
- Completing assignments

While practice and formative assessment are closely linked, they serve distinct purposes:

Practice:

- Practice activities are designed to help students develop their understanding and proficiency in a specific content area or skill.
- The emphasis of practice is on students actively engaging with the material and working towards mastery.
- Effective practice involves using a variety of activities to cater to different learning styles and keep students engaged.
- Practice activities are not graded for points, allowing students to experiment, make mistakes, and learn from them without penalty.

Formative Assessment:

- Formative assessments are used to gather information about student learning throughout the learning process.
- The data (student performance) from formative assessments helps teachers identify areas where students are struggling and adjust their instruction accordingly.
- Many practice activities can be designed to include formative assessment elements, such as quick checks for understanding or exit tickets.
- Formative assessments are used to provide students with feedback on their progress and help them identify areas for improvement.

In essence, practice provides initial learning experience, while formative assessment helps monitor and improve that experience by providing valuable feedback for both students and teachers along the way.

Reassessment

Adding an assessment to the body of evidence to demonstrate further learning. This does NOT remove an assessment score.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is the culmination of measuring student learning at the end of a specific instructional period. Summative Assessment is a piece of evidence of a student's demonstration of the whole power standard at the conclusion of instruction/learning of a power standard and contributes to a student's grade for the course. like a final exam for a particular unit, course, semester, or even a whole program.

Summative Assessments are designed around the best method to measure the power standard(s), typical examples include:

- Unit Exams
- Mid-term & Final Exams
- Extended writing assignments (papers)
- Projects
- Presentations

Summative assessments aim to judge a student's overall understanding and achievement of the standard(s) covered during the instructional period. Measurement is of a student's level of understanding against the standards, not as a comparison to other students.

Summative assessments are used to determine a student's mid-point(s) and final grades for a course.

Teachers use proficiency scales to evaluate student performance and determine their level of mastery at the whole standard level in summative assessment.

For Educators:

- Goal: To measure a student's learning after a unit or course is completed.
- Focus: Evaluates how well a student has mastered the standard(s).
- Examples: Unit tests, final exams, standardized tests, projects with final presentations.

For Students and Families:

- Think of it as a final exam or a big test. It measures how much a student learned in relation to the entire standard at the end of a learning period.
- Imagine it as a report card. It gives an overall picture of a student's achievement in a subject or course but specific to a standard or standards.
- Examples: The big math test at the end of the semester. A research paper with a final grade