

**Parent Guide  
to  
Standards-Based Grading**

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**Willard**PublicSchools

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**Grades Kindergarten ~ Fourth**

**2013 - 2014**

# Parent Guide to Standards-Based Grading

*At Willard Schools, we believe student achievement occurs through clearly defined standards and authentic learning opportunities. The district strives to provide accurate, meaningful, and timely feedback to both students and parents throughout the learning process.*

*Reporting of student achievement should reflect student progress toward mastery of key academic concepts and identify multiple pathways to deeper learning.*

**GRADES ARE NOT ABOUT WHAT STUDENTS EARN;  
GRADES ARE ABOUT WHAT STUDENTS LEARN.**

## **What is standards-based grading?**

Standards-based grading communicates how students perform on a set of clearly defined learning targets called standards. The purpose of standards-based grading is to identify what a student knows, or is able to do, in relation to those learning targets - as opposed to simply averaging grades/scores over the course of the grading period, which can mask what a student has learned or not learned.

## **Why standards-based grading?**

Standards-based grading reports what students should know and be able to do within each content area at each grade level. The real-time monitoring of student performance reflects a more accurate picture of student achievement. Other reasons for standards-based grading include:

- ◆ Current methods of grading do not accurately indicate what a student knows and is able to do.
  - ◆ Students will be able to explain what they learned or did not learn rather than recite a percentage.
  - ◆ It can benefit all learners - students who struggle and accelerated learners.
  - ◆ Parents are provided information on specific standards while receiving meaningful feedback.
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### **How does standards-based differ from traditional grading?**

A standards-based grading system measures a student's mastery of grade-level standards by prioritizing the most recent, consistent level of performance. A student who may have struggled at the beginning of a content or course when first learning new material, may still be able to demonstrate mastery of key content/concepts by the end of a grading period.

In traditional grading systems, a student's performance for an entire quarter is averaged together. Early quiz scores that were low would be averaged together with more proficient performance later in the course, resulting in a lower overall grade than current performance indicates.

Standards-based report cards also separate academic performance from work habits/behavior in order to provide parents a more accurate view of a student's progress in both areas. Effort, participation, cooperation, and attendance are reported separately, not as a part of academic performance.

### **How are my student's "grades" determined?**

A student's performance on a series of assessments will be used to determine overall mastery, much as it has in the past. The difference will be reporting of mastery levels instead of numbers of letters ("Nearing Mastery" instead of "B"). Levels of achievement will be clearly defined. Practice assignments and homework will serve primarily as a source of feedback and instructional support for both students and teachers.

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### **What will the report card look like?**

The report card will seek to provide meaningful feedback so both students and parents can track progress toward mastery of key academic concepts, as well as reflect upon strengths and weaknesses. The district will be using an assessment and feedback platform called **MasteryConnect** to communicate standards-based grading and student progress towards mastery.

### **What are the levels of mastery and what do they represent?**

There are three levels of achievement in **MasteryConnect**:

“**Mastery**” would indicate that a student has independently achieved the standard.

“**Nearing Mastery**” would indicate that student is developing an understanding of the standard, but may still need additional instruction and/or support.

“**Remediation**” would indicate minimal understanding of the standard and require specific instructional intervention/support.

### **Will my student still receive teacher comments on his/her report card?**

Yes. Individualized feedback is an essential component of standards-based grading. Effective feedback is a more useful source of information than simply assigning a numeric value or letter grade to student work. A goal of using standards-based grading is to improve communication between students, parents, and teachers regarding student achievement.

### **How will I access my student’s report card?**

The classroom teachers will communicate with each student and his/her parents regarding accessing **MasteryConnect**. Parents will receive a link to access student reports via computer. The ongoing status of a student’s mastery level and end-of-term (quarter/semester) grade reports will be available. Paper copies of reports will also be available if needed.

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## Where can I find more information regarding the learning targets for my student?

We encourage all parents to be informed regarding the academic content and concepts students will learn each year in school. Information on grade-level learning targets can be found on the Willard Schools website at the following link:

<https://sites.google.com/a/willardschools.net/curriculum-instruction-and-assessment/missouri-learning-standards/parent-information>

## What if I have additional questions?

Please visit with your child's classroom teacher about learning targets and standards-based grading, as well as with the building principal. You may also contact the District Office:

*Danielle Sellenriek*

*Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment*

*417-742-2584*

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**Willard Schools**  
**500 E. Kime Street**  
**Willard, Missouri 65781**  
**417-742-2584**