



NEOCITY ACADEMY
STANDARDS-BASED
GRADING HANDBOOK

**A Grading Practices Guide for
Parents, Students & Teachers**

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STANDARDS-BASED GRADING - COMMON LANGUAGE

Standards-based grading (SBG) provides students, families, and teachers with more detailed information about a student's learning than a traditional grading system.

Scores in an SBG system directly reflect student growth and proficiency according to academic outcomes (content and skills).

Assessment	Assessment is the assessment of learning after instruction aligned to specific content outcomes. Essentially, this grade represents what a student knows (knowledge) and what a student can do (skills).
Learning	Learning is the focus. In SBG, learning replaces time as the constant, limiting variable and allows for extra time or opportunities to prove content proficiency based on individual student needs. Students may need more time and more than one opportunity to show what they know; our teachers are prepared to allow multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency within established guidelines.
Outcomes (Standards)	Florida Standards, CTE, and AP Standards are established to clearly define grade-appropriate knowledge and skills, aligning school curriculum and teacher instruction to guide students' proficiency toward a standard set of learning expectations.
Proficiency	The proficiency of specific content outcomes measures student achievement. These outcomes are shared with students at the outset of the content, along with a 0-4 proficiency scale that explains the levels of the outcome. A student's progress toward proficiency is tracked by performance on learning activities that align with the outcome. This encourages student ownership of the learning and allows the teacher to provide accurate feedback to the student.
Disengagement	Failing to submit assignments, complete work, take assessments, and participate in the learning process will result in rapid and consistent parental communication and impact students' eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities.
Proficiency Scales	Student growth will be reported and assessed using a common proficiency scale from 1-4 – rather than the traditional grading scale. Gradebook will report scores for each content standard, rather than a traditional assignment grade – which incorporates many un-relatable factors.
Grade Reporting	Students will receive feedback from their teachers. Assessment and feedback are the most critical tasks a classroom teacher performs. Appropriate feedback is essential for communicating growth to students and parents, providing an accurate assessment of where students began, how they have grown, and what they have learned after instruction and practice.

Feedback	The goal of SBG is a more precise form of communication of student strengths and focus on guiding instruction and influencing growth and learning. We must create an environment where students are aware of their thinking and take responsibility for their learning; descriptive feedback – based on formative assessments is essential to the process.
Intervention	Assessment and teacher feedback allows for more precise identification of student strengths and growth areas. Interventions may be implemented for students who need to focus on growth in specific content areas. Students need support when they receive a scale score of 1.
Extra Credit	Extra credit no longer exists in an SBG system. Instead, extra credit is replaced with re-assessment. Students may have an opportunity to replace poor scores by demonstrating higher proficiency levels after participating in additional practice and re-assessment.

WHAT IS STANDARDS-BASED GRADING?

Learning is a process.

Learning takes place over time and requires active participation by all those associated with this process – teacher (providing feedback), students (opportunities to practice and present their knowledge and skills), and families (supporting the process).

Standards-based grading creates a scenario where all parties can engage in pointed and meaningful conversations about the learning process. As learning progresses, instruction adapts to support continued growth.

PROCESS

- SBG focuses a student's learning on essential outcomes for a course or how well a student understands and can apply key content in class.
- At the beginning of each topic, unit, or chapter – a teacher will break down the outcomes for that period of instruction into smaller components and criteria.
- During the period of instruction, the student receives feedback on assessment to gauge their understanding and application of content.
- Assessments may take on a variety of formats: traditional pencil-paper assessments, online assessments, projects, discussions, reports, or any other form by which learning may be demonstrated.
- The feedback students receive should identify any needs for intervention or re-assessment.

HOW IS SBG DIFFERENT FROM TRADITIONAL GRADING?

SBG focuses solely on progress toward proficiency of the essential outcomes.

TRADITIONAL GRADING

Is based on assessment methods (homework, projects, quizzes, test, etc....). One grade is given per assessment.

Uses assessments that are based on a percentage system. Criteria for success may be unclear.

Uses an uncertain mix of assessment, achievement, effort, and behavior to determine the final grade. May use late penalties and extra credit.

Uses every assignment in the grade book – regardless of the purpose.

Includes every score, regardless of when it was collected. Assessments record the average – not the student's best work.

STANDARDS-BASED GRADING

Is based on learning activities aligned to content outcomes. One grade is given per essential content outcome.

Uses outcomes that are proficiency-based. Outcome criteria are made available to students ahead of time.

Measures achievement only or separates achievement from effort and behavior. No penalties or extra credit are given.

Uses selected assessments for grading purposes.

Emphasizes the most recent evidence of learning when grading.

WHAT ARE PROFICIENCY LEVEL DESCRIPTORS?

Proficiency Level Descriptors communicate the learning goals in scale format. Proficiency scales are clearly communicated to students and provide clear descriptions of levels of learning at each level.

Each proficiency scale is built around essential outcomes. The essential outcomes align with the standards, skills, and processes in the Florida College Board AP or CTE standards.

The scores on the scale represent a learning continuum and do not equate to a grade point average. It is understood that students demonstrate low levels as they are introduced to new skills and content. Each level builds on the other and describes the learning that students must demonstrate in order to achieve a higher proficiency rating.

For example, a student may begin at “1” or “2” but may still earn a “4” once they demonstrate proficiency, which is the goal for all students. Teachers will refer to the Proficiency Level Descriptors when providing feedback on and grading assignments and assessments.

4-POINT PROFICIENCY SCALE

SCALE SCORE	PROFICIENCY RATING	PERCENTAGE BAND
4	Proficient	81-100
3	Nearing Proficient	61-80
2	Below Proficient	41-60
1	Needs Support	21-40
0	Not Enough Evidence Provided or Incomplete	0-20

FEEDBACK

Providing students with meaningful feedback is an integral part of the educational process. SBG offers feedback to students that will guide student learning and teacher instruction.

HOW TEACHERS USE PROFICIENCY LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

IDENTIFYING LEVEL 4 – PROFICIENT

For Proficiency Level 4, teachers are identifying the targeted, complex knowledge – which identifies the expected level of proficiency for all students in that outcome.

Examples of this type of learning may include developing a logical argument, using concepts to solve non-routine problems, formulating, investigating, and drawing conclusions, applications of real-world use, solving problems in a different context, and synthesizing information to create something new.

IDENTIFYING LEVEL 3 – NEARING PROFICIENT

For Proficiency Level 3, teachers identify the foundational skills for their content. This level determines many basic learning foundational to higher levels of knowledge and skills in level 4.

Examples of this type of learning may include recall questions and fact-based skills and often answers the questions of why, how, and what.

IDENTIFYING LEVEL 2 – BELOW PROFICIENT

For Proficiency Level 2, teachers identify the skills leading to the foundational skills. These skills are essential to moving to higher levels of learning found in levels 3 and 4.

Examples of this type of learning may include recall, and fact-based skills, partial mastery of the skill.

PROFICIENCY LEVEL DESCRIPTOR FOUNDATIONAL POINTS

- Level 4 work is not intended to be an overly exhaustive or impossible process; it is an opportunity for a student to demonstrate mastery of content.
- The items in each level of proficiency should build upon one another rather than overlap one another.
- Levels 1-4 should be common in their definition across all content areas in the school and should not be modified.
- The scale should always focus on the quality of work, not quantity measurements. Statements of quantity for an outcome such as “with 80% accuracy” or “identify 3 out of 4” are inappropriate.
- The scale is designed as a tool for students, parents, and teachers to provide clear language for academic discussion of student learning.

GUIDING PRACTICES FOR ASSESSMENT AT NEOCITY ACADEMY

ASSESSMENT

Assessment of student growth and proficiency is a dynamic process. While this process exceeds absolute definition, the following are agreed to be certain:

- Assessment must align to grade level and course outcomes.
- An assessment can cover more than one outcome, but it should be clear what parts of the assessment are tied to which outcomes.
- Assessment must measure individual proficiency. While group work and collaboration are essential parts of 21st C. learning, only work that can clearly be attributed to an individual student should be used to determine proficiency.
- Assessment must accurately reflect student mastery of outcomes fairly and consistently.

FREQUENCY OF ASSESSMENT

Teachers will assess and practice multiple times for each outcome.

Assessment is a tool that teachers use to give feedback to students and guide their instruction.

Examples of assessment may be classwork, homework, and learning activities aligned to provide practice and support for students as they learn new content.

HOW WE HANDLE HOMEWORK

Homework should not be given to students so they can learn material for the first time. Learning should be achieved before homework is ever assigned. Homework is provided for students to practice, reinforce, and extend what they already know.

Guiding practices for homework are:

- There must be feedback on homework assignments; this is central to our belief that it makes assigning anything without feedback close to a complete misuse of time.
- If students receive feedback from self-reflection, their peers, teachers, or others, they learn more from the homework experience.
- When we design and plan for homework assignments, we will ask ourselves: “How will students receive descriptive feedback on this?”
- Homework is what we do to reinforce content, practice the skills, and meet the outcomes; it is not the final decree of proficiency for any assessment. We do not grade homework because grades should reflect a declaration of what we know and can do regarding the outcome.

RE-ASSESSMENT

Students have opportunities to display their mastery of content knowledge and skills – even if that learning does not happen during the initial assessment. It will be the right of all students to retake assessments, provided the student has adequately prepared for re-assessment, per confirmation from their teacher.

Guiding practices for re-assessment are:

- Teacher coordinates either formal or informal re-assessment with students individually to determine changes in proficiency level

OR

1. Student makes a formal request to a teacher for re-assessment
(Please Note: electronic re-assessment request is available to all teachers at <http://bit.ly/neocredo>)
2. Teacher approves request if the evidence supports student has made an effort to prepare for re-assessment
(for example, peer or adult tutoring, revising their work, or scheduled teacher support, etc.....)

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLANS AND 504

When a student has an IEP and/or 504 plan in place, this will be the guiding document to support students. Students are still expected to demonstrate proficiency in the outcomes. However, consideration of accommodations for the student will always be considered.