

FAQs ABOUT STANDARDS- BASED LEARNING

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What is a standard?

Standards are specific and clearly stated learning goals of what a learner should know and be able to do to demonstrate mastery of a skill or concept at each grade level or for a particular course.

What is standards-based learning?

A standards-based approach means that teachers begin curriculum planning with the educational standards for a particular course or grade level. They sequence the development of the knowledge and skills required by these standards and design instruction and assessment along specific lines that foster that development. The standards serve to integrate curriculum, instruction, assessment, and grading/reporting practices.

What role does content play in standards-based learning?

Standards-based learning shifts the driver for teaching and learning from content to the knowledge and skills reflected in the North American Division (NAD) standards. Curriculum and instruction will be designed to promote student learning of the standards through the content; assessments will be designed to show student growth on the standards through use of the content learned.

What are proficiency scales?

Proficiency scales serve as a starting point for unit planning, creating assessments, delivering instruction, and grading/reporting progress, as well as making learning visible to students and guiding their growth on the standards. A proficiency scale is a continuum or learning progression that articulates distinct levels of knowledge and skills relative to specific standards. It shows teachers and students what proficiency looks like, what knowledge and skills students need to achieve proficiency, and how students might go beyond proficiency on standards for their grade or a particular course. Showing student achievement as it relates to a given standard, the scale becomes the centerpiece of communication and understanding in the classroom, as well as the common language for discussing learning between teacher and student. A four-point system is utilized where a score of 3.0 indicates grade level proficiency within a given standard. The levels of a proficiency scale are as follows:

Score 3.0—Heart of the p-scale; it defines the target content that teachers expect all students to know and be able to do.

Score 2.0—Simpler content; it describes the foundational knowledge and skills that students will need to master before progressing to proficiency.

Score 4.0—Challenging content; it provides students the opportunity to go above and beyond expectations by applying their knowledge in new situations or demonstrating understanding beyond what the teacher presents in class.

Scores 1.0 and 0.0—No specific content; 1.0 indicates that a student can demonstrate some knowledge or skill with help from the teacher, but not independently; 0.0 means that, even with help, a student cannot show any understanding.

Half-point Scores—More precise measurement of knowledge and skills that is between two levels.

Proficiency scales will help students understand how to focus his or her efforts and set goals for being able to succeed with each standard, by breaking down the standard into its foundational parts. This means that ALL students will be better equipped to “own” his or her learning.

How will grading change in a standards-based system?

Grades in a standards-based system are part of a comprehensive and balanced approach to learning, so that students see the connection between what they are to learn (standards), how they are learning it (classroom activities and assignments), and how they are being assessed (proficiency scales). To better understand what students' know and can do, grading practices focus on students' demonstration of their mastery of academic standards. Scores on assignments and assessments are based on how closely their performance matches the levels and descriptors on the proficiency scales. The practice of using established sets of evaluative criteria ensures greater consistency among teacher judgments of student performance. When reporting an overall grade, consideration is given to assignments and assessments over time, with more weight given to recent evidence. Nonacademic factors are not included when determining a student's academic performance grade because the purpose of the grade is to communicate how much he or she knows.

How will reporting change in a standards-based system?

Standards-based learning allows for more clarity when reporting what a student knows and is able to do. A standards-based report card is a representation of a student's progress in learning the standards, reporting grades in terms of proficiency levels as well as letter grades. Three criteria are included on report cards:

- Product—achievement or levels of performance
- Progress—growth from past grading period
- Process—nonacademic factors

Where can I go to learn more?

There is more information about standards-based learning on the Southwestern Union Education [Website](#).