

What is “standards-based” grading?

The “old way”

Traditionally, grading in a math classroom (or any classroom for that matter) is typically centered on products (homework, projects, quizzes and tests). A screen shot of a grade book might look something like this:

Chapter 3 Test 02/20/2009 pts: 44	Computation W. 02/20/2009 pts: 24	Computation Q. 02/23/2009 pts: 24	Chapter 4 HW 03/05/2009 pts: 27	Chapter 4 Test 03/05/2009 pts: 40	Chapter 5 HW 03/11/2009 pts: 12	Chapter 5 Test 03/11/2009 pts: 24	Portfolio Check: 03/12/2009 pts: 10	Quiz 6.1-5 03/26/2009 pts: 16	
43	24	20	31	40	12	22	10	13.5	
42.5	24	18	29	40	12	24	10	15	
33	9	17	16	30	11	18	8	10	
35	24	15	26	30	12	18	10	12.5	
35	4	7	14	33	3	24	5	11	
44	22	19	31	36	12	21	10	12.5	
35	17	19	28	38	12	23	9	15	
44	24	23	32	41	12	22	10	15.5	
84%	43	24	23	31	35	12	22	8	14.5
33	15	16	31	38	12	23	10	15	
43	18	24	31	36	12	23	10	14	
43	23	21	32	40	12	24	6	14.5	
36.5	15	13	28	40	12	22	8	13	

In *Developing Grading and Reporting Systems for Student Learning* by Guskey and Bailey (2001, p. 49), the authors state:

"Teachers must decide, therefore what purpose each source of evidence is to serve and then tailor their assessment practices to fit that purpose. In particular, they must be careful in their efforts to increase quantity of evidence available for grading and reporting that they don't use formative assessment information for summative purposes...**It would be inappropriate, for example, to use the results from formative quizzes constructed to check students' learning progress and prescribe corrective activities, or from homework assignments designed to offer additional practice on difficult concepts or skills in determining students' summative grades in a subject area or course.**" (Emphasis mine)

In other words, "practice" assignments/activities shouldn't really be a part of calculating a final (summative) grade. Consider the following example. Assume that homework is graded on completion and quizzes/tests on content mastery.

Student A: Homework: 50% Quiz: 60% Test: 100%
Student B: Homework: 100% Quiz 100% Test: 100%

Student A did not understand the concepts and therefore did not complete the homework. Somewhere between the "quiz" and the "test" Student A came in for extra help and finally "understood" the concept which explains his/her sudden improvement on the "test."

In the traditional grading system, which student earns a better grade? Student B, of course. A traditional points system penalizes "later learners." On the "test," both students demonstrated the same level of understanding, but Student A is penalized for initially struggling.

What is the solution to fixing this problem?

Standards-based reporting

Here is a screen shot of what a standards-based grade book looks like:

			Chs. 6&7 LT1 04/02/2009 pts: 4	Chs. 6&7 LT2 04/02/2009 pts: 4	Chs. 6&7 LT3 04/02/2009 pts: 4	Chs. 6&7 LT4 04/02/2009 pts: 4	Chs. 6&7 LT5 04/02/2009 pts: 4	Chs. 6&7 LT6 04/02/2009 pts: 4	Chs. 6&7 LT7 04/02/2009 pts: 4	Chs. 6&7 LT8 04/02/2009 pts: 4
(Q4) Final Grade										
A	98%	n/a	4	4	4	4	3.5	4	4	4
	--	n/a								
C	73%	n/a	3.5	3	3.5	3	3	3.5	2	2
B+	88%	n/a	3.5	4	4	4	3	3.5	3	3
A	100%	n/a	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
C+	77%	n/a	2	3.5	2	4	4	3	2	4
C+	77%	n/a	2	4	4	2	3.5	3	2	4
C	75%	C+ 77%	3.5	2	3	4	3	3.5	3	2
A-	94%	n/a	3.5	4	4	4	4	3.5	4	3
B+	89%	n/a	3.5	4	3	4	3	4	3	4
	--	n/a								
B-	80%	n/a	4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3	3	3	2
C	73%	n/a	4	3	3	4	3	3.5	1	2
B	84%	n/a	2	3.5	4	3.5	3.5	3.5	3	4
B	83%	n/a	3.5	4	3	4	3	3	2	4
A-	92%	n/a	4	4	3	3.5	4	3.5	3.5	4
A	97%	n/a	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
B	84%	n/a	4	4	4	2	4	3	2	4
F	55%	n/a	2	2	3	3	1	3.5	2	1

Learning (specifically “learning target”) is the primary area of focus. Learning targets are the “big ideas” students should learn throughout the semester. Each learning target is assessed on a sliding four-point scale.

- 4 – demonstrates thorough understanding
- 3.5 – high level of understanding, but with small errors
- 3 – demonstrates understanding, but with significant gaps
- 2 – shows some understanding, but insufficient for a passing grade
- 1 – Attempts the problem

The learning target scores will be entered at the end of each chapter/unit assessment. Students will also be given detailed feedback throughout the chapter/unit via ongoing formative assessment opportunities (i.e. quizzes and practice problems).

What about students who do not do well on the tests? Is there any extra credit available?

Students will have the opportunity to re-take any assessment (test) before the end of the quarter to demonstrate their knowledge of the learning targets. An improved score replaces the old score in the grade book so that they are not penalized for “getting it” later than someone else. Re-takes are only available to students who make arrangements one day ahead of time, and may only be attempted once it is evident that new learning has taken place through extra help sessions and/or additional practice problems.

How does standards-based grading better communicate learning to students?

Consider the “old” system:

Teacher: You earned 10/16 points. Which ideas did you understand and which ones do you still need work on?

Student: Well, I missed one point on question #1 and five points on question #5. I think I need to better understand how to do #5. Can you tell me how to do it?

Now consider the same assessment in a standards-based reporting context:

Teacher: How do you think you did on your quiz?

Student: I got 4/4 on learning targets 1-3, but 2/4 on learning targets 4 and 5. I really don't understand the ideas behind [insert learning target here]. Can you help me?

Notice how the student is better focused on learning rather than a single problem.

Standards-based reporting gives students increased chances to learn and better communicates this learning with stakeholders. This style of reporting was piloted during the second semester of the 2008-2009 school year and will be used in your student's math classroom this semester.

If you have any questions or concerns about standards-based grading, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Townsley.