

Breaking down standards

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My face felt like it was being engulfed by fire as I sat quietly leaning back in my chair.

The teacher methodically paced up and down the seemingly endless rows of desks like a predator stalking her prey. I could not hear the usual screeches of joy or despair as the feather like paper floated down to the desk. As my paper tumbled to my desk I was waiting for an A. Hoping for an A. I flipped the paper over and I realized what the obvious elephant was sitting in the center of the classroom.

My paper had a number. Ya thats right I said number. Not letter, number. In thick, bold black letter print said 1. This new grading system is called standards based grading which uses a 1-4 scale.

This is an ineffective system that only shows what you know, not the endless hours of studying. This system does not properly display your effort. In an Interview with students from Maple Grove Junior High, they shared that they feel their hard work is not factoring into the grade that they are receiving. ““ I just felt that the grades that we got didn’t represent our work fairly,” one girl said said. “... The way it was graded didn’t show what we knew. ... We don’t have a problem with the rigor of the work, It’s just the way that they grade it is not fair.

“” says another student from Maple Grove (Press&News). When a student says that they think that their effort is not being shown fairly this is what they mean. Lets just say that someone is working on an assignment. They are making a project about a topic that they are confused on or are struggling with the topic. So every night before the deadline they work for an

hour and a half trying to comprehend the topic and then make work on the project. The night before the deadline this person is still unsure about about the project.

The person hands in the project, lets just say it is a Spanish project, and the following monday he or she gets a 1. A 1 means you have not learned this standard at all. Lets also just say that this kid is a good student who gets threes and fours. This student's grade will now easily drop below a three because of how standards are averaged. Unlike letter grading where presentation and effort can affect your grade. You might get a 85 even though you are not totally sure about this standard of learning.

But your effort and rigor of work is shown in the grade. This confusion is not necessary and shows the inability of standards based grading. The gist of this is that standards based grading is obviously not showing students effort. So why should it still be implemented into schools across the country? Standards based grading is dysfunctional because kids can now hand in there homework late but still access the highest grade possible for the assignment. When you look around a classroom and you can always pick out those couple kids who are just fooling around and being a pain in the butt for the rest of the class.

They are the kids who never hear the teacher repeat the due date over and over and over again. They are the kids who hand in their paper late. They are the kids who are always staying after class begging their teacher for an extension. But those kids are now nowhere to be found. These kids now know that their grade is not really affected by the date you hand in your

paper. Hard working students who 95% of the time turn in their homework on time are getting the short end of the stick.

Students who like to slack off during class are getting a pass for turning in their homework late. The standard base grading system does not let teachers put a zero into the grade book. So theoretical a teacher must wait until you hand in your paper before they can assess your learning.(Essex Middle School Teacher). Although some teachers have a separate standards for turning in work on time they usually are not weighted very much. This means they do not affect the overall grade.

The kid who fools around all class gets a sort of “ break”. These particular student and can still get a four on his learning which weighs into the grade book much more than the standard deadlines. Deadlines should matter. They are a part of school that is going to be carried on into the regular world. If we leave the system how it is kids will be growing up thinking that deadlines do not matter.

Wrong. There is almost no job in the entire world where there are no deadlines or timelines for certain things. The standards based grading system is obviously unfair and should be revised or terminated.

Inconsistencies from teacher to teacher is making the work environment for students impossible. The point of standards-based grading was to begin assigning grades based on mastery of the material, not other factors. By doing that, the schools also hoped to have consistency to the grading process, so grades would mean the same thing across the system and wouldn't vary much from teacher to teacher or school to school.

(Press) “ Both of my kids, as well as several other families, are starting to see both inconsistencies in the grading scale and lack of fairness in the grading scale,” said Julie Scheidler, parents of two students in Maple Grove High. But there are now two different kinds of teachers. Teachers that go straight to standards and teachers who convert number grades. For example, in a Music class a teacher may give you a letter grade and then try to convert it back to a 1-4 standards grade. Crazy huh? That is what many kids might say. Usually a 100-90 would be a four in the class but that is not the case.

Like I explained earlier a student can still get a really high number grade by having a great presentation and turning in the their work on time but not understand a thing. What is the point of having standards based grading if we are going to try and convert between the new and the old system? But then other teachers will go straight to the standard and give you a 1-4 grade which is supposed to happen. So now in Music class the 4. But that 4 you get is not the same 4 I get in Math class because in Math class the teacher does not try to convert. As you can see Standards Based Grading is causing inconsistencies which will cause you overall grade to be inaccurate and incorrect. Standards based grading is “ a system of reporting student proficiency in a number of specific learning goals.

” (activegrade. com) Ok. Thats a great idea and on paper doesn't look like that bad of an idea. But why is there such a need for change. Why do we need to change from Letter Grading in the first place.

The saying does say that when something is not broke, don't fix it. If the object is to try and "report a student's proficiency" then why does it matter that we do it with a number scale from 0-100. If I want to see how I was doing in a specific aspect of school like in Math. The ability to multiply numbers for example. If I look back at the grade, lets just say someone got an 84 I see that they are 84 percent proficient. So that 84 out of 100 times he or she am going to get that problem correct.

So is this person 100 out of 100 no but they still get it. With Standards Based Grading I might have a three which will tell me a similar thing. I am understanding this subject. What needs to be proposed is different report card. All report cards should be like the ones that everyone got in elementary school.

With every single standard laid out. But instead of 1, 2, 3, or 4 it should be 0-100. Why change the whole system and have everyone go crazy when you can just change how the grade is being reported out. My hand shot straight in the air like a torpedo. I could feel my face getting hot because of anxiety, still pondering over the idea that I had just gotten a 1 on my paper. What does a three mean? I can see the confused faces of my peers probably thinking the same thing.

I think back to the hour I spent every night this week studying for this test. The teacher calls on me and I ask her what is happening and she says that the school is now using a new system. A one means you don't understand the subject, a two means... The teacher droned on about the other numbers but I was too distracted by the fact that I just got a one on my paper. Days

later I think back to that first dreadful day of standards based grading. I think back to this while as I read my petition paper with hundreds of names to my superintendent: If standards won't show our effort we won't show any effort towards standards.