

August 12th, 2014

Dear Parent/Guardian:

In the Independence School District, teachers and administrators continually look to educational research and best practices of other school districts to help us improve in providing the best possible service to our students. One example of our improvement efforts in the middle schools is a transition to “standards-based grading.” Standards-based grading has contributed to positive student achievement in school districts all over the country. As our district seeks to develop a standards-based grading model that fits the needs of Independence students and families, your child’s science teacher volunteered to begin using standards-based grading methods as of the 2013-14 school year and will continue to use this method this school year.

The philosophy behind standards-based grading focuses on the collection of multiple pieces of “evidence” of student learning in relation to a specific learning goal. With multiple pieces of evidence, teachers can get a clearer picture of a student’s progress and intervene before a big test or project is completed. Rather than “averaging” individual scores together, students’ scores are analyzed to determine growth and improvement towards mastery of a specific skill or content.

The focus is upon growth in the learning process through multiple attempts and practice before a final grade is recorded. Learning goals are clearly defined, as is the level of mastery to achieve a specific grade. One of the many benefits of standards-based grading is that grades are not necessarily set in stone. If a student would like to improve upon a grade, he or she has the option to do so at any time during the grading period per the teacher’s discretion.

In Power School, you will still see grades, however, they will be associated with the level of knowledge of the Learning Goal worked on in class. The proficiency scale includes Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. In general, the grade communicates your child’s proficiency for a given concept as follows:

- Advanced / 100% — Student is able to make **in-depth inferences** and **applications** that go beyond what was taught.
- Proficient / 90-99% — Student makes no major errors or omissions regarding explicitly taught **simple AND complex** information or processes.
- Basic / 70%-89% — Student makes no major errors or omissions regarding explicitly taught **simple** information or processes.
- Below Basic / 50%-69% — **With help**, student shows partial understanding of information or processes.

You will only notice a change in marks the student receives on assignments and entries in Power School for this teacher. However, for the 2014-2015 school year, your student will still receive a letter grade ranging from an A to an F on their progress report.

We look forward to your child’s continued success.

Sincerely,

Michael Estes, Principal

David Nowak, Teacher