

Guam Department of Education

Standards-Based Grading Initiative (SBGI) INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Updated: March 11, 2019

Hafa Adai Parents! The following items outlined in these next four pages are meant to give you an idea of some of the major policy implications of moving towards a Standards-Based Grading (SBG) system. As you will see, SBG is not one complete system that can be adopted all at once, but rather a set of grading principles that have to be addressed separately and eventually adopted by the Guam Education Board. Some of the policy items can be addressed together in one or two policies, while others concern specific practices that will need to be considered separately. In all cases, however, they will require a number of discussions with you as stakeholders before we bring our proposals to the Board. Over the next school year, the division of Curriculum and Instruction, working with our schools, intends to answer any questions you may have about SBG and obtain your input into these policies before we present them to the Board for their ultimate consideration.

Policy Implications and Recommendations for Standards-Based Grading

IMPORTANT Point: Technically, all Standards-Based Grading Principles and Practices are allowable within current policy. This is because the current policies on grading allow all teachers full authority over how to determine and calculate a student's grade. The only parameters provided are that a grade cannot be based on emotion or student behavior. In other words, a teacher cannot give a student an "A" simply because they felt like it just like they cannot take off points because a student was being disruptive in class.

As noted in previous SBG documents provided to parents and the community, this means that each teacher has to come up with his/her own format and procedures to determine student grades, a practice that has resulted in huge inconsistencies in the meaning of the grades students currently earn.

What we are attempting to do here with this initiative is to adopt these principles of SBG into Board Policy so that they will be implemented in ALL of our classrooms and not just a select few. This will help us ensure that we are consistent throughout the district in our grading practices and essentially strengthening the integrity and meaning of the grades our students earn.

Policy committees & working groups

The different policy implications and recommendations for Standards-Based Grading that were provided previously by schools have been divided into four (4) committees and working groups. They are summarized in the information that follows. Over the next few months, each school will be holding parent presentations and input sessions to provide more detailed information to you about the grading system and provide you with an opportunity to ask questions and provide input the proposed policy changes. We highly encourage you to attend and provide feedback.

1) PowerSchool Transition, Report Card Formatting and support (Current committee, welcoming new members)

- ✓ **Design of Student Report Card and PowerSchool Pages:** What will all of this look like in PS and in the Report Card. How much and what kind of information will be included in the report card and transcript for all grades levels from pre-k to 12th grade.

- ✓ **How will the parent and student pages look on PowerSchool?**

2) Standards, Scales and Assessments Development and Processes (New Committee, needs admin and teacher volunteers)

- ✓ This committee is responsible for determining the internal GDOE process for teachers to use when they collaborate across schools to determine their priority standards, skills and topics for each content area. This process is especially important as it will be the primary mechanism to ensure teacher participation and engagement when it comes to curriculum development and design as well as any future curriculum initiatives for the GDOE.

3) Work-Readiness Skills, Behavior, and Citizenship Grading (Current committee, welcoming new members)

- ✓ **Having a separate grade for behavior:** This is an important piece as many of the previous and forthcoming examples note **the need to record character and behavior in a separate grade.**
 - Along with this discussion is possibly having this behavior/character grade count towards a student's total grade (Total Grade= Academic Grade + Character/Behavior Grade).
 - Or, have a totally separate grade for Character/Behavior and work readiness skills. Some have suggested that this also count towards graduation. **If we believe it's important, shouldn't it count?** This includes the possibility of attendance being included in this category, or being entirely separate.
- ✓ This is the committee that addresses work not submitted, work submitted late, or matters related to attendance, tardies or student conduct. A major principle of Standards-Based Grading is that a student's academic grade should be a reflection of his or her achievement of specific standards and not be based on other factors like when the assignment was submitted or if they have attendance issues. **Non-academic issues like effort, timeliness and behavior will be addressed in a separate grade.** This is the committee that will be developing this separate grade.
- ✓ Some of the recommended grading categories that have been discussed and summarized include:
 - a) Attendance and Punctuality
 - b) Organizational skills and planning or "Responsible and organized"
 - c) Respects and works well with others
 - d) Complies with rules, policies and laws
 - e) Effort and Engagement
 - f) Takes initiative and problem solves

4) Curriculum and Grading Policies (New Committee, needs admin and teacher volunteers)

- ✓ **Moving from percentage grades to a 4-point proficiency scale:** The proposal here is to move from the current percentage system to a 4-point proficiency scale. This 4-point scale will be then translated to an easily recognizable letter grade of A, B, C, etc...
 - Unlike the current percentage grades, the 4-point proficiency scale will show a student's level of proficiency of a particular standard, skill or topic.
- ✓ **Due to the need for recording and tracking class rank,** high schools will not shift to this scale for current high school students. They will begin with the incoming 9th graders for either Spring,2019 or

Spring, 2020. The determination of which year to begin will be made during this Summer, 2019 and be dependent on input from stakeholders.

- Additionally, we must note that there are those who feel we need to do away with letter grades all together and just stick with the 4.0 scale to that both students and parents move away from the idea of grades and focus mainly on their proficiency level.

- ✓ **The appropriate use of zeroes:** zeros will not be given simply for missing assignments. Teachers will work with students on a **variety of ways for them to be assessed** for a specific Priority Standard, Skill or Topic.

If, for whatever reason, a student is missing an assignment(s), an NA= for Not Assessed or NG= for No Grade will be given if a student did not complete enough assignments to be properly assessed for that particular Standard, Skill or Topic.

- Both NA or NG will be calculated as either a zero on the 4-point scale, or the lowest percentage allowed for GPA purposes (if we keep percentages) and the calculation for the student's final grade.
 - For the final course grade, a NA or NG will be given if a student could not be properly assessed for a prescribed number of standards. **This distinction here is important so that we can tell the difference between students who essentially "failed" a class because they didn't know the material versus students who "failed" because they didn't turn in enough assignments to determine what they actually knew.** Each circumstance will require a different set of interventions. Unfortunately, with our current system, we can't tell the difference.
 - Included in this matter is a discussion of the **types of interventions and possibly the number of attempts** before a student is given an NA or NG. A key question here is it an academic or behavioral issue with the student (can't do vs. won't do)?
- ✓ **Acceptance of late work and the ability to retake assessments or redo assignments:** A major principle of SBG is that a student must be assessed so that his/her achievement of a standard could be determined. **Not turning in an assignment or turning in an assignment late is essentially a behavioral matter and not related to the student's achievement of the standard.**
 - Missing a deadline or not turning in an assignment at all **will need to be addressed and recorded appropriately as a behavioral issue**, but the student will **still need to be assessed on that standard.** This will include a common set of parameters and timelines for this to guide schools, teachers and students as they determine how many opportunities they need to provide a student to complete an assessment. **At what point can we determined to issue a Not Assessed or NA to the student?**

- ✓ **Not averaging assignments, assessments and other artifacts:** Traditional grading practice has teachers averaging all or most of the grades students received throughout a grading period to come up with a final grade. This goes against the principles of formative assessment and standards-based grades in that it does not recognize progress or a student's most recent or final performance.
 - The **intent of formative assessment and standards-based grading** is to **monitor and support students' progress** throughout the learning period and to determine students' most recent and then final achievement of the standard(s) being taught. This means that the grades and scores students receive during the latter part of the grading period should have more weight than those that were earned in the beginning, when material was first taught or new. Teachers will now be

moving towards **reviewing a body of evidence or patterns of performance rather than just the traditional averaging of grades; latter, more recent performance will have more weight.**

- ✓ **Rethinking what is “passing” grade and how we address prerequisites.** Is a “1” or a “D” good enough to move on to the next course? Some have asked if we need to raise the cut-off score for passing.
- ✓ **Do we need to rethink how we determine our Top 10 students for high school?** Should there be additional criteria beside just student grades? For **elementary and middle schools, this discussion involves the criteria for student awards.**
- ✓ **Special Education, Gifted and Talented, and English Learners:** There is much agreement that SBGs further support the needs of all students, including the special populations here, however, we do need to spend some time to clearly articulate this in policy so that we have a consistent understanding of how this is so. Separate workshops for SPED, GATE and ESL personnel will be conducted during spring and summer, 2019.
- ✓ **CHamoru Teachers:** A cadre of teachers has been working with the CHamoru studies division on the unpacking of the standards and mapping for each grade level. A next step to these processes is the clarification of the priority standards, skills and topics for every grade level and the development of their accompanying proficiency scales. During their professional development workshops, teachers will be given an opportunity to share their current work with SBGs. This work and support is coordinated through the division in collaboration with C&I.
- ✓ **Homework Policy:** what is an appropriate use of homework? To what extent should homework count in a student’s overall grade?
- ✓ **Questions and recommendations around elementary schools focusing on the 5 core subject areas (Reading, Writing, Math, Science, Social Studies) with electives and other areas being limited in terms of focus and grading.** They will still be taught, but they will be incorporated into the other subjects and may not need a separate grade.
 - If we would like to keep all subjects and grades for these courses, then we would need to be clearer about the curricular expectation for these content areas and develop a fair way of assessing and grading them.
- ✓ Some elementary and middle schools have inquired about their **ability to be more fluid in their scheduling of students to reflect performance levels**, possibly trying a **full SBG approach** where students move on based on their achievement. Multi-level grading?

Parent information and input sessions at each school: each school will be providing at least two parent information and input sessions this school year. Some may have already conducted them earlier. Please be on the lookout for these opportunities to obtain more information from your school and provide input into these policies.

To provide additional input or if you have a specific question(s) about Standards-Based Grading, you can also email the Standards-Based Grading Initiative directly at sbgi@gdoe.net or call the division of Curriculum and Instruction at 300-1247or1635.

Update provided by: JSanchez, Deputy Superintendent- Curriculum and Instructional Improvement