

## Standards-Based Grading, Your Student, and You

During this course, students will be tasked with reaching proficiency and/or mastery of the South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards for ELA Grades 9-12. These standards are printed in student-friendly language in the attached syllabus. Because the ultimate goal of scholarship in this course is to increase the depth and breadth of knowledge and skill, assessment should be paired with feedback, revision, resubmission, and further feedback. Students should expect frequent written and verbal feedback from me as the instructor of the course. In this course, a non-traditional criterion-based assessment system is used.

Grades will be assigned based on descriptors of achievement only. Grades will not be affected by issues such as lateness of work, effort, attitude, participation, and attendance. Even though there will be many opportunities for cooperative learning, scholars will never be assigned group grades.

Further, scholars will be asked to evaluate their own work using the same rubrics developed for assignments. Scholars may be asked to make changes, do more digging, develop deeper ideas, etc., and resubmit their work. Scholars may re-attempt assessments provided that they have documented an effort to engage in additional learning (e.g., coming to tutorial(s), making substantial edits/revisions, etc.). Scholars are expected to manage project calendars to the best of their ability. There is no deadline for reassessments or resubmissions, except for the end of the course.

These changes are reflected in PowerSchool. In this class, we will be using one-point rubrics for minor assessments (an example is attached). The purpose of changing the way we assess is based on the idea that scholars should be working toward understanding and mastering the content—increasing knowledge and experience instead of focusing on a numerical grade that is not necessarily indicative of proficiency or mastery of the standards. In PowerSchool, you will see the following notations for minor assessments:

- Green Check – Assignment has been submitted, no further revisions necessary
- Blue Half-Circle – Assignment has been submitted, needs revisions
- Red Clock – Assignment has been submitted past the original deadline
- Orange Exclamation Point – Assignment has not been submitted
- Purple Slash – Exempt

For major assessments such as projects and major writing tasks, scholars will complete self-evaluations as well as receive teacher evaluations on their work. Major assessments will use a 4-Point rubric and will receive a numerical grade that correlates to their proficiency or mastery—see the 4-Point Scale below.

Students and I will meet bi-weekly to review their teacher and self-evaluations, documentation from our previous one-on-one meetings, feedback on their assessments and major written works. The scholar and I will meet to discuss their progress and improvement in proficiency for that unit's particular focus standards and objectives.

Grades entered into PowerSchool should not be considered final until the end of the semester because scholars may be submitting reassessments after the quarter ends. Please note that numerical scores for a student's proficiency are manually entered based on the level of a student's demonstrated proficiency on minor and major assessments and are detailed in the 4-Point scale below.

The following FAQ is adapted from multiple sources.

### **What is standards-based grading?**

Standards-based grading measures your student's mastery of the essential standards for a class, or how well your student understands the material in class. At the beginning of every unit, the teacher

will break down the standards for the unit into smaller objectives and criteria using a detailed four point scale rubric. During the unit, the student is assessed to see if they understand the material using a variety of assessments, such as projects, discussions, and/or minor and major writing tasks. The class grade will be based on all of the evidence the teacher collects demonstrating mastery of the essential standards. The goal of this approach is to provide the teacher, student, and parent as accurate a picture as possible of the student's learning and to encourage a dialogue about how the student can master the material for the class. In particular, because learning is a process that takes place over time, each assessment will provide feedback for the student about what to focus on next, and the student will be allowed to retake assessments. If the new assessments shows a higher level of mastery, that new score replaces the old one.

### **How is standards-based grading different from traditional grading?**

In the traditional 100-point grading system, a student's grades are typically based on all of the work assigned in class, including classwork, homework, projects, quizzes, and major writing tasks. These scores are often arranged in the grade book based on the type of assignment rather than on the essential standards for the class. The grade may also include points for non-academic factors, such as participation, effort, or attitude. Standards-based grading does not separate out major writing tasks, homework, or projects. All of the work a student does is used to assess the student's mastery of the essential standards. A student's scores from from their work are tracked by the essential standards. The teacher, student, and parent will have a very detailed picture of which standards a student has mastered. Non-academic factors like behavior, attitude, and attendance are not included in this grade.

### **What do the scores on the 4-Point Scale mean?**

The scores on the 4.0 scale each have a very specific meaning. They are:

<b>4.0</b>	The student demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the material by completing advanced applications of the material. <b>**mastery</b>
<b>3.5</b>	In addition to a 3.0 score, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications with partial success.
<b>3.0</b>	The student demonstrates proficiency of the complex, targeted knowledge and skills for the class
<b>2.5</b>	In addition to a 2.0 score, the student demonstrates partial knowledge of 3.0 elements.
<b>2.0</b>	The student understands the foundational material that supports the targeted learning, but is still working to master the complex material for the class.
<b>1.5</b>	The student demonstrates understanding of all 2.0 elements with help and independent understanding of some 2.0 elements.
<b>1.0</b>	The student is able to demonstrate an understanding of the foundational material for the class with help from the teacher, but still struggles when working independently.
<b>0.5</b>	With help, the student demonstrates limited understanding of only some 2.0 elements.
<b>0.0</b>	Even with assistance from the teacher, the student shows no understanding of the material. A zero will not be given for missing work until the end of the semester.

**Can I see an example of what my student will see at the beginning of a unit?**

Students will be working on proficiency of multiple South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards for each unit. Here is an example of a 4-Point Scale for Reading Literary Text standard 9.1:

Score	Learning Goal
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p>The student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone in a grade-appropriate text and be able to identify further implications of syntax and diction in a broader context.</li> </ul> <p>No major errors regarding the score 4.0 content</p>
<p><b>3.5</b></p>	<p><i>In addition to score 3.0 performance, partial success at score 4.0 content</i></p>
<p><b>3.0</b></p>	<p>The student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (for example, alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a grade-appropriate text</li> <li>➤ Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone in a grade-appropriate text</li> </ul> <p>No major errors regarding the score 3.0 content</p>
<p><b>2.5</b></p>	<p><i>No major errors or omissions regarding score 2.0 content, and partial success at score 3.0 content</i></p>
<p><b>2.0</b></p>	<p>The student will recognize or recall specific vocabulary, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Alliteration, allusion, analyze, association, drama, figurative, figure of speech, impact, interpret, literary, meaning, poem, repetition, rhyme, similar, sound, stanza, story, text, tone, verse</li> </ul> <p>The student will perform basic processes, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Identify examples of rhymes and other repetitions of sound in a grade-appropriate poem, story, or drama</li> <li>➤ Identify specific words that impact the meaning and tone of a grade-appropriate text</li> <li>➤ Identify figures of speech in a grade-appropriate text</li> <li>➤ Describe the background of teacher-provided figures of speech</li> <li>➤ Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a grade-appropriate text, including figurative and connotative meanings</li> </ul> <p>No major errors regarding the score 2.0 content</p>
<p><b>1.5</b></p>	<p><i>Partial success at score 2.0 content, and major errors or omissions regarding score 3.0 content</i></p>
<p><b>1.0</b></p>	<p>With some assistance, only partial success at score 2.0 content</p>
<p><b>0.5</b></p>	<p>With much assistance, only partial success at score 2.0 content</p>
<p><b>0.0</b></p>	<p>Even with assistance, no success at score 2.0 content</p>

## What is the grade scale for standards-based grading?

The 4.0 scale will be converted to a letter grade using the grading scale shown below:

A:	3.75 – 4.00	B-:	2.75 – 2.99	D+:	1.50 – 1.74
A-:	3.50 – 3.74	C+:	2.50 – 2.74	D:	1.25 – 1.49
B+:	3.25 – 3.49	C:	2.00 – 2.49	D-:	1.00 – 1.24
B:	3.00 – 3.24	C-:	1.75 – 1.99	F:	0.00 – 0.99

This conversion scale sets clear expectations for student learning. In order to receive credit for a class, a student must, with help, show an understanding all of the foundational skills taught in a class. The C range shows that the student understands all of the foundational skills without help, and the B range requires a student to demonstrate proficiency of complex, targeted knowledge in the class. Finally, to receive an A- or A, the student must show an in-depth, advanced understanding of the material.

## What will I see in PowerSchool?

PowerSchool has certain limitations, and teachers have to work within those limitations. When you check your student's grades in PowerSchool, you will see your student's letter grade and a percent for each class. The numerical and letter grades are the same for both the traditional and standards-based scale, but due to PowerSchool's limitations, the percentages might be different mathematically.

The chart below that shows the alignment between the different scales.

If you see this percentage in PowerSchool...	This is the letter grade	This is the traditional grade range	This is the standards-based grade range
93.8 – 100	A	95 – 100	3.75 – 4.00
87.5 – 93.7	A-	90 – 94	3.50 – 3.74
81.3 – 87.4	B+	87 – 89	3.25 – 3.49
75.0 – 81.2	B	83 – 86	3.00 – 3.24
68.8 – 74.9	B-	80 – 82	2.75 – 2.99
62.5 – 68.7	C+	77 – 79	2.50 – 2.74
50.0 – 62.4	C	73 – 76	2.00 – 2.49
43.8 – 49.9	C-	70 – 72	1.75 – 1.99
37.5 – 43.7	D+	67 – 69	1.50 – 1.74
31.3 – 37.4	D	63 – 66	1.25 – 1.49
25.0 – 31.2	D-	60 – 62	1.00 – 1.24
0 – 24.9	F	0 – 59	0.00 – 0.99

All assessments will be entered based on the 4-point scale using the rubrics passed out in class. Using this scale is the best way to address the technical limitations of PowerSchool.

## Why should my student do the homework or the minor assessments assigned in class if it isn't included in the grade?

Many students feel that in a standards-based class they don't have to worry about anything except a major assessment or major writing task. This is incorrect. It is important for students to understand that they are being assessed every day by their teachers and that everything they do in class lets their teacher assess their knowledge and helps prepare the students for the assessments. Just as an NBA team would never expect to win the Championship without hours upon hours of practicing, students need the practice classwork, homework, and minor assessments provides to prepare them for success. Student work is also analyzed by teachers to determine growth and improvement towards mastery of a specific skill or content. If a student

chooses to not do an assignment, not only are they missing an opportunity to practice a skill, they also miss an opportunity to display mastery of a standard to their teacher.

**Can my student redo a major assessment if they did not demonstrate proficiency?**

One of the greater benefits of standards-based grading is that students have opportunities to truly display their proficiency and/or mastery of content knowledge and skills, even if that does not happen during the initial assessment. It is the right of every student to resubmit assessments, provided students have adequately prepared for resubmission per confirmation of teacher:

- Teacher coordinates either formal or informal resubmission with students individually to determine changes in proficiency level, *or*
- Student makes formal request to teacher for resubmission of assessment

**Why doesn't my student have a grade yet?**

Because standards-based grading focuses on assessments, your student's overall class grade may not be updated as frequently as it was when every assignment impacted the grade. PowerSchool is still updated weekly for minor assessments and minor writing assignments. You can see which assignments have received a check, check minus, minus, or missing designation—even if they do not appear as a numerical score/percentage. This shift is especially noticeable at the beginning of the semester when it may take a few weeks for the class to complete the first major assessment or major writing task and for your student to earn a grade. Please contact me at any time if you have questions about your student's progress toward proficiency and/or mastery of the standards of English.

**How will standards-based grading affect my student's GPA and transcript?**

Standards-based grading reports an overall letter grade at the end of each course, so it does not have any impact on your student's final grade point average or transcript.