

Standards Based Grading at DCS

Students who are currently in eighth grade around the state will be the first Maine students to graduate high school with the new “Proficiency Based Diploma”. If you are interested in learning more about this, you can read about it at the Maine Department of Education website here: <https://maine.gov/doe/proficiency/about/proficiency-based.html> .

As part of our efforts to get students ready to meet proficiency standards in high school, we are going to use a proficiency, or “standards-based”, grade reporting system in grades 6, 7, and 8. We are still teaching using the same standards, but the way that we report grades to students and parents will look different.

One of the key changes is that standards-based grading separates grades out into two parts; academic grades, and habits of work grades. The Academic Standards Grade lets us know what skills and knowledge a student currently has, and the Habits of Work Grade assesses whether or not students are demonstrating the habits of determination, preparedness, engagement and respect that we think leads to success in school. Separating out the two grades, and reporting on student progress relative to the standards, allows us to communicate with students and parents more clearly, to have better information to base our own decisions on, and to enable students to be more engaged in their own learning.

Academic Standards Grades

Standards-based grading is different than grading using letter grades (A,B,C,D,F), or grading on a 0-100 point scale. These ways of scoring don’t give us a clear enough sense of what students actually know and can do, because they mix together how much a student has learned with the effort that the student shows. In the old way of grading, a student who tries really hard but is struggling to understand the work might get a B+. Another student who is really good at the work, but barely tries, might also get a B+. Standards based assessment is different, because it sets clear targets for learning, measures progress towards these targets, and then assesses a student’s habits of work **separately** from the academic learning. Students will get one set of grades that show progress towards meeting **Academic Standards**, and a second set of grades for the **Habits of Work** (HoW) that the student is using.

Using standards based assessments helps us do a better job of teaching, because it focuses more specifically on what the targets are that we are working towards. Standards based grading measures what a student knows and can do. For example, we want all students to be able to produce grade-level appropriate, high-quality writing. Using standards based grading, teachers and students use a clear set of set of learning targets derived from the writing standards that define what that writing should look like. Teachers and students then work to get each student to the point where their writing meets those targets. Students get feedback on assignments from their teachers, and are graded on a four point rubric. This grade tells us specifically whether or not a student has achieved that target yet. Traditional grades mixed in other measurements, such as how much effort the teacher thought the student was demonstrating, and sometimes how many times a student had to do an assignment to show that they could get a passing grade on it. With standards based grading, we are take those other measures out of the mix, and ask “Does the student know this information yet, or not?”, or, “Can the student do this skill yet, or not?”

When we give standards-based grades, the scores are:

<p>1. Beginning to learn a skill or new knowledge.</p>	<p>2. Developing a skill or new knowledge.</p>	<p>3. Meeting the learning target. You are mastering the skill or knowledge.</p>	<p>4. Extending your learning. You have mastered the skill or knowledge, and now are demonstrating a deeper understanding of the learning.</p>
---	---	---	---

Habits of Work Grades (HoW)

At Durham Community School we strongly believe that a student’s success and achievement is closely related to a strong work ethic, persistence and other positive classroom behaviors.

We have selected four key habits that we are going to teach, give feedback on, and assess.

The Habits of Work grades reflect the belief that if these behaviors are evident, then students will be successful academically and socially at school. These grades are based on the belief that students can develop behaviors which support their own academic and interpersonal growth.

Habits of Work Criteria:

Respect: respect for the ideas, feelings, and property of others

Preparedness: timeliness, organization, homework completion

Engagement: participation, interpersonal involvement, group-work

Determination: ability to self-assess; persistence, effective use of feedback

Like any other skill, teachers will provide instruction about what these habits look like in the context of each class, and then assess whether or not students are demonstrating that habit. For example, a class might be getting ready to do a science lab assignment. The teacher would instruct the students about what “engagement” looks like in a science lab, and then give students specific feedback about whether or not student were demonstrating engagement while they were working on the assignment, leading to an “engagement” score in a student’s Habits of Work grades.

How do I Exceed the Standard? What Does it Mean to Extend My Learning?

One of the questions that students sometimes have is, “how do I exceed the standard?”. Exceeding the standard is different from earning an “A”. It isn’t about doing extra work, it is about demonstrating deeper learning. We call it “extending one’s learning”.

When you have attained “deep knowledge” of a skill, concept or content knowledge, you are able to:

- Independently apply this knowledge to solve complex problems.
- Independently make abstract connections and deeper inferences.
- Communicate your learning in sophisticated ways to a variety of audiences.
- Support your positions or solutions with a coherent, detailed body of evidence.

We have rigorous academic standards. If you are meeting the standards, you are right on track with your learning. We provide opportunities to extend your learning, however, because there is value in challenging yourself to make deeper connections, and to apply your learning in a self-directed way.

Will you be able to extend your learning on every assignment? No! When you are practicing a skill, we will usually only expect students to meet the relevant standards. When you are taking a test, or doing an important project, you will always be able to extend your learning, though.

Formative and Summative Assessment

Teachers use assessments in two different ways. Sometimes teachers are checking what you know, and what you can do, so that they can adjust their teaching to how you are doing. They want to understand your thinking and make sure that you are on the right track. We call this “formative assessment”. Most assessments are formative.

The other kind of assessment is called “summative assessment”. Summative assessment is about applying what you have learned to an important project, task, or test. When you do a summative assessment, we can measure your performance relative to a learning target.

Think about it this way: if you were going to learn to play a musical instrument, every time you went to a lesson, the music teacher would have you play what you had learned. The teacher is checking to see what progress you are making, and helping you learn. That is a formative assessment. At some point, when you are ready, you might play a piece of music at a recital. You would have to draw upon many of your skills to grapple with a significant challenge. That is a summative assessment. If you play a piece of music well at the recital, you would meet your music performance standards. If you wrote your own piece of music in the style that you were learning, showing a deeper understanding of the standard, you would be exceeding the standard, however.

The DCS Habits of Work Rubric

	Beginning	Developing	Meeting	Extending
<p>Respect Demonstrates respect for the ideas, feelings, and property of others.</p>	<p>I sometimes act or speak in ways that are hurtful to others. At times I behave disrespectfully to classmates or staff .</p> <p>I rarely show respect for school property or the belongings of classmates.</p>	<p>I usually treat classmates and staff with respect. I accept feedback on my disrespectful behaviours. I try to understand the views and behaviours of others.</p> <p>I usually show respect for school property and my classmates belongings.</p>	<p>I acknowledge other people's feelings and ideas without judging them.</p> <p>I consistently show respect for school property and my classmates belongings.</p>	<p>I treat everybody, without exception, with absolute fairness, equity and respect.</p> <p>I consistently show respect for school property and the belongings of classmates, and encourage others to do so as well.</p>
<p>Preparedness - timeliness - organization - homework completion</p>	<p>I rarely meet deadlines and established criteria with my work. I am rarely prepared for class.</p>	<p>I sometimes meet deadlines and established criteria with my work. I am sometimes prepared for class.</p>	<p>I regularly meet deadlines and established criteria with my work. I am usually prepared for class.</p>	<p>I always meet deadlines and established criteria with my work. I am always prepared for class.</p>
<p>Engagement - participation -interpersonal involvement -group-work</p>	<p>I choose not to participate in class activities and do not contribute positively.</p> <p>I do not complete assignments without continual reminders from peers or teachers.</p>	<p>I hesitate to participate in class or work cooperatively and respectfully with others.</p> <p>I have to be prompted more than once to begin work and let others take the lead during group work.</p>	<p>I participate positively in class. I regularly work cooperatively and respectfully with other and follow directions. I take ownership of the work I am doing and demonstrate authenticity and thoroughness in my work.</p>	<p>I am a supportive peer leader and invigorate others with my energy and enthusiasm.</p> <p>I challenge myself with work that goes above and beyond.</p>
<p>Determination - ability to self-assess -persistence - effective use of feedback</p>	<p>I do not reflect on academic strengths and weaknesses and do not try new strategies to practice or improve.</p> <p>I am unwilling to accept support to deal with my academic challenges.</p>	<p>With someone's help, I can reflect on my academic weaknesses and strengths and how to practice and improve, but do not do this on my own.</p> <p>I accept when others offer me resources and support when attempting to get through classes and academic endeavors. I do not use teacher/peer feedback.</p>	<p>I reflect on and understand my own academic strengths and weaknesses and actively attempt to find ways to practice and improve on them.</p> <p>I actively look for resources and support to improve. I effectively use teacher/peer feedback to improve.</p>	<p>I reflect on and understand my own academic strengths and weaknesses and actively attempt to find ways to practice and improve on them.</p> <p>I apply my knowledge of resources and support to help others.</p>