



January, 2021--Updated

Middle School Families,

The district began to implement standards-based learning (SBL) at the middle school level during the 2019-2020 school year in 6th grade core content areas. In 2020-2021, SBL will expand to 6th and 7th grade core content areas as well as some of the exploratory classes. For 2021-2022, SBL will finish the expansion to all 6th-8th grade core content and exploratory classes.

This letter outlines our learning and assessment system to help you better understand it. As part of the system, your student (in time) will receive BOTH a standards-based score (3,2,1) on various standards by quarter that align with the Missouri Learning Standards. Additionally, at the end of each semester, a letter grade will be part of the overall grade report card. In a standards-based system, the emphasis should be on the student's performance specific to standards that they are assessed. Even though traditional letter grades (A-F) may appear at the end of a semester, your student's teachers will focus on how your student performs on specific standards. This information should help families better understand exactly what is being taught by quarter during your student's middle school experience.

We have three core principles around which we will base all our assessment and grading practices:

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Learning Cycle</b>	<b>Behavior</b>
<p>The purpose of grades is to accurately communicate with parents and students mastery of academic learning standards and provide descriptive feedback that guides students in their learning.</p> <p><b><i>Grades are not tools to punish, judge, compare, or rank students.</i></b></p>	<p>We value practice and time spent learning; therefore, students are allowed to redo work and persevere until they get it right, recognizing that it takes some students longer to learn than others.</p> <p><b><i>We will do what is necessary to support all students in their learning.</i></b></p>	<p>Appropriate behavior and the development of soft skills is important to the education of our students. As such, we will not allow a student's immaturity or poor decision making skills to define their academic potential</p> <p><b><i>Work habits and behaviors are reported separately from assessment of learning.</i></b></p>

### **What is standards-based learning and assessment?**

- Standards-based learning and assessment is a system designed to inform parents about their child's progress towards achieving specific learning standards. The Mehlville Course Objectives establish high expectations for all students and describe what students should know and be able to do. These objectives serve as the basis for the Mehlville School District curriculum and assessment.

### **Where can I find the curriculum?**

- The entire curriculum can be found on our district website by clicking on the "About Us" tab on the top row, scrolling down to "Departments", selecting "Curriculum", and then clicking the green chalkboard that says "Click here to view all classes offered by the Mehlville School District". You can click on any course to see more specific information about what is taught in each one.

### **Which standards will be on the report card?**

- The curriculum teams selected specific standards for reporting purposes. These standards will be on the report card. The standards can be found on the district website as well. Use the same procedure listed above to get to the "Curriculum" page on the district website and then click on "Standards-Based Learning." Each standard will receive a mark based on what the student knows and can do.

### **What criteria are teachers looking for when scoring the standards?**

- To ensure consistency with scoring, each power standard has a rubric that breaks down the standard into specific criteria. All rubrics can be found on the district website on the "Curriculum" page under "Standards-Based Learning."

### **What scale will teachers use when marking standards?**

- Teachers will use a 3 level scale when marking standards. Student mastery of a given standard will be indicated by a "3". This indicates that a student can independently and consistently demonstrate mastery of the standard. When a student is approaching mastery, their score is indicated with a "2". They still need additional instruction and/or support or show inconsistency with meeting the standard. When a student is beginning to learn a standard, it is indicated with a "1". They show limited evidence of understanding the standard and/or are not yet able to do the standard. If the standard does not have a score, this means the standard was not assessed during that reporting term. In special circumstances, a mark of IE is used to indicate insufficient evidence if a student has not completed sufficient assessment to determine mastery level.

### **How often will progress be shared with parents?**

- Formal report cards will be shared with parents four times a year. Teachers will keep a gradebook in the SIS Portal, updated at least every 3 weeks. At any time you can contact your child's teacher to discuss your child's progress on the standards.

### How will students be assessed?

- Teachers will use a variety of assessments to gather evidence on students' progress towards the standards. They will prioritize the most recent, consistent level of performance when marking a level on the report card. This allows teachers to report students' current levels of mastery, instead of penalizing them for not knowing something at the beginning of the learning process.

### Will students continue to receive a letter grade in classes that are standards-based?

- Yes. Once a class implements and assesses standards (all classes will be standards-based by 2021-2022), a letter grade for the 1st and 2nd semester will appear on the report card. The letter grade will represent an average of the # of standards assessed by semester. *Example: if 5 standards are assessed in a semester, each of the 5 standards would be worth 20% of the grade. Each standard is weighted equally.*

### How do I calculate a letter grade from the standards-based system?

- Using the example from above, here is how traditional letter grades would be determined from the standards-based scores received on a report card:

Standard 1 Score	Standard 2 Score	Standard 3 Score	Standard 4 Score	Standard 5 Score
3	2	2	3	1

$$3+2+2+3+1 = 11 \quad \text{---} \rightarrow \quad 11 \text{ (points)} / 5 \text{ (standards)} = 2.2$$

Conversion scale from standards-based calculation to letter grade:

- 3.00 - 2.7 = A
- 2.69 - 2.40 = B
- 2.39 - 2.00 = C
- 1.99 - 1.01 = D
- 1.00 or less = F

We are excited about implementing standards based learning in the middle school and feel that the system allows for families to better understand what their student learns over the course of a quarter or a semester. If you would like more information or clarification, you may contact your child's teacher, your principal, and/or the curriculum office.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning