

Standards-Based Grading

In our standards-based grading system, teachers report how students are performing in relation to the standards set forth by the CBSD and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Both *Achievement* and *Learning Behaviors* are communicated separately. This gives parents, teachers, and children accurate and precise information about what students have and have not learned.

My child got everything correct. Why didn't he get an *E*?

An *E* indicates that a student has demonstrated understanding *beyond* the goal on a given standard. For instance, if the learning goal is knowing *Basic Multiplication Facts*, once a student can accurately multiply basic facts he receives an *M*. *M* means he has met that standard or mastered the information. Some students may be able to perform multiplication functions beyond the targeted goals by multiplying numbers larger than those taught, using multiplication to solve multi-step problems, or demonstrating an understanding of the inverse relationship between multiplication and division. These students would be Exceeding the standard and earn an *E*.

As we learn and grow with this system, it is our expectation that the students will increasingly be given opportunities to develop and demonstrate higher levels of thinking and learning.

Q: How does standards-based grading enhance student motivation?

A: By increasing Intrinsic Motivation!

Teachers place a very high premium on student motivation, effort, and the willingness to try. They seek to cultivate students' "love of learning" by helping them become internally driven do their best work. This internal drive is called *Intrinsic Motivation* and it speaks to a desire for knowledge and the confidence to take risks and learn from mistakes. *Intrinsic Motivation* guides learners toward greater self-awareness, control, curiosity, satisfaction, and growth. Standards-based grading encourages *Intrinsic Motivation* by offering credible and specific feedback about what students have and have not learned. By giving accurate and precise guidance for growth, standards-based grading helps students effectively capitalize on their strengths and readily identify their areas for continued learning.

Converse to *Intrinsic Motivation*, letter grades are often viewed as *Extrinsic Motivators*. Extrinsic rewards can include passing a test, getting a prize, avoiding punishment, praise, or scoring better than someone else. One down-side to extrinsic rewards is that they produce only short-term satisfaction. Long-term gratification and self-confidence are fostered when students are *Intrinsically Motivated* to do their best work. In this regard, Rick Wormeli notes, the most effective student feedback serves as communication, not compensation.

Intrinsic Motivation does not mean, however, that a student will not seek external compensation such as high marks, prizes, praise, and other rewards. It only means that these rewards are viewed as secondary to the pleasure and pride experienced from being internally driven to succeed!