WHAT IS STANDARDS-BASED GRADING?

Standards-based grading is an assessment tool that breaks student learning into small measurable standards focused on student growth and mastery. The core components being “students’ performance is graded on specific standards, grades are based only on academic factors, the system allows or requires students’ multiple attempts to master or meet the standard” (Knight M. Cooper R 2019) the focus is on student academic performance and allows students and educators many opportunities for growth than success. Standards-based grading also requires a system that reports this information clearly. grade books and report cards that reflect standard progress instead of based purely on assignments. “An effective standards-based grading and reporting system should eliminate the overall or “ominous” grade. In its place, teachers should score specific measurement topics.” (Marzano, Heflebower 2011)

IS IT DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE?

Emotional Development
Clear expectations
Retakes and second chances

Moral Development
Growth mindset
Academic success for all

Cognitive Development
Goal setting
Healthy risk taking

WHY RESEARCH STANDARDS BASED ASSESSMENT FOR MIDDLE LEVEL LEARNERS?

When I consider my goals as an educator the first thing that comes to mind is safety. My students need to feel safe in my space, and we will develop a consistency that allows and provides physical safety. In addition, students especially at the middle school level are dealing with more than just physical insecurity and are developing and changing which can be dark and scary for many. They need spaces where they are safe to be themselves and feel validated in their identities. Spaces that teach them how to talk and engage with people who think differently than they do. History classrooms that tell them the truth and the stories of people they can identify with and teach them to think critically about the world around them while still inspiring hope. I am a straight-middle-class woman, and I am not blind to the fact that my life has been different than many of my future students because of those identities. However, I hope and am working to create a classroom that is safe and fair and inclusive. One part of this is me in the way I assess my students. I want to make sure they know what they are being assessed on, that they are not going to be marked down for thinking differently than I might and they are being measured on academic progress in the gradebook, and personal growth is celebrated elsewhere.

HOW DOES SBA COMPARE TO TRADITIONAL GRADING?

Compared to other grading systems, standards-based assessment allows clear reporting and understanding of what educators are assessing for both students and their adults.

- Feedback is directed to student learning
- SBA allows students clear guides for what is expected
- SBA is growth processed
- SBA is an academic measure

The teacher fosters an environment with evidential knowledge of content and pedagogy and enhances student learning by creating clear accessible instructional outcomes that reflect different learning and growth.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

In my future classroom this will mean that I provide many formative opportunities for student learning to be measured. Students will have a clear understanding of the standards and goals they are being assessed on. At the beginning of each unit we will spend class time going over our learning standards for the unit and I will provide an opportunity for student voice in how they want to model their learning in a summative assessment.

I will implement a developmentally appropriate system of assessment by using standards-based assessment. It is proven that this age group needs strong positive feedback and clear expectations. If my goal is to provide a safe and stable classroom, understanding my students’ development will make me a better teacher and help create a space that works to make the students more successful. My Implications of a grading system that has clear goals will allow students to be able to focus their efforts and see more academic success and experiencing this success will allow for their student identity to be stronger. Thus, setting them up to be more successful throughout their education. Standards-based education also supports the middle level student’s through its use of feedback, this age group needs to see the expectations and how they were assessed. By using rubrics with the standard and written feedback on their mastery of the standard I will be modeling best practice in motivating my students. This will also allow me to clearly communicate my expectations and keep a record of student progress that is data driven rather than based on subjective criteria.

TOOLS AND THEORIES TO SUPPORT SBA

Standards-based grading itself is a tool. However it is critical that tools such as set class, school, district, state or national standards are present.

- Rubrics
- Clear communication
- Gradebook

THEORIES TO SUPPORT SBA

Student centered learning is a term coined by Piaget and is directly related to a Constructivist teaching theory. The main goal of this mentality is to keep the learning and success of our students as our main objective. Two of the key values of a Constructivist educator are also embed learning in realistic contexts (authentic tasks), To encourage ownership and a voice in the learning process (student centered learning), (Olson, 2015). This is the implementation of standards-based assessment. Students are given the tools to take ownership for their education, they know what is important for them to learn and are held responsible for their learning. This system also allows them to experience assessment in a more real live setting. Very infrequently in the workplace will be evaluated without opportunity to grow or have clear expectations of their performance. They will instead be expected to know their strengths and weaknesses and develop plans to improve which is a cycle that is cyclically recreated in standards-based grading.