

Parent Guide to Standards-Based Grading

Standards-Based Grading at Phoenix Christian Preparatory School

What is Standards-Based Grading?

Phoenix Christian Preparatory School will begin using **Standards-Based Grading (SBG)** in grades K–5 rather than traditional letter grades during the 2026-2027 school year. Standards-based grading measures a student's progress toward specific academic standards and learning goals rather than assigning a single letter grade based on points earned.

Instead of asking, *"What percentage did my child earn?"* standards-based grading asks, *"What does my child know and what can they do?"*

This approach provides a clearer picture of student learning by measuring mastery of specific skills and concepts taught at each grade level.

How Does Standards-Based Grading Benefit Your Child?

- **Clearer Communication About Learning**

Traditional grades often combine academic achievement, effort, homework completion, and behavior into a single score. Standards-based grading separates these areas so parents can clearly understand:

- What their child has learned
- Which skills have been mastered
- Areas that need additional support
- Work habits and behavior as separate indicators

This creates a more accurate picture of student achievement.

- **Focuses on Learning Rather Than Points**

In a traditional grading system, students often focus on accumulating points. Standards-based grading focuses on whether students have mastered the learning goal.

Students learn to ask:

- "Do I understand this skill?"
- "What do I need to improve?"
- "How can I grow?"

rather than simply asking, "What grade did I get?"

- **Encourages Growth Over Time**

Children learn at different rates. Standards-based grading recognizes that learning is a process.

If a student struggles at first but later demonstrates mastery, the most recent evidence of learning is valued. This promotes resilience, perseverance, and a growth mindset.

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- Provides Actionable Feedback

Instead of receiving a single letter grade, families can see exactly which skills a child has mastered and where additional support may be needed. This allows teachers and parents to work together to help students succeed.

- Supports Intervention and Enrichment

Standards-based grading helps teachers identify students who need:

- Additional support and intervention
- Additional challenge and enrichment

Instruction can then be tailored to meet each student's needs.

How Will My Child Be Graded?

Students are assessed in two ways:

Academic Performance

Students are evaluated on specific grade-level academic standards using a **four-point proficiency scale**. This scale measures a student's level of mastery of the knowledge and skills taught at each grade level.

- **4 – Exceeds Grade Level Standard**
- **3 – Meets Grade Level Standard**
- **2 – Approaching Grade Level Standard**
- **1 – Beginning Grade Level Standard**

Behavioral Performance

Students are also evaluated on behaviors and work habits that contribute to a positive learning environment using a **three-point behavioral scale**.

- **3 – Outstanding**
- **2 – Satisfactory**
- **1 – Needs Improvement**

By reporting academic achievement and behavior separately, standards-based grading provides families with a clearer understanding of both what their child is learning and how they are demonstrating responsibility, citizenship, and character in the classroom.

Frequently Asked Questions

What academic grade should I expect my student to receive?

One of the biggest adjustments for families transitioning to Standards-Based Grading is understanding that a **3 or meets standard is the goal**. In a traditional grading system, many parents view an "A" as the expected outcome. In a standards-based system, however, a **3**

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represents successful mastery of grade-level standards and is considered excellent performance.

Is a "3" a Good Score for academic performance?

Absolutely! A score of **3** indicates that a student has met the grade-level standard and is performing exactly where we expect them to be academically.

Should I Expect My Child to Get Mostly 4s On Their Report Card?

No. In a Standards-Based Grading system, **a score of 3 is the expected and desired outcome for most students on most standards.**

A **3** indicates that a student has demonstrated consistent mastery of the grade-level standard. This means they are performing exactly where they should be academically and are well-prepared to move on to the next level of learning.

A **4** is not the equivalent of an "A+" or simply doing all assigned work. Instead, a 4 is reserved for students who consistently demonstrate learning that goes beyond grade-level expectations. Students earning a 4 may:

- Apply their learning in new and unfamiliar situations.
- Make deeper connections between concepts.
- Demonstrate advanced problem-solving and critical thinking.
- Independently extend their learning beyond what was taught in class.

Because a 4 represents performance beyond grade-level expectations, it is not expected that students will earn 4s on every standard or receive a report card filled with 4s.

Why Doesn't Every Student Receive a "4"?

A score of **4** is reserved for students who consistently demonstrate learning beyond grade-level expectations through advanced application, transfer, and independent use of skills.

What If My Child Receives a "2" academically?

A score of **2** means your child is still developing proficiency with the standard. It identifies an opportunity for growth and allows teachers and parents to provide targeted support.

How Are Behavior and Work Habits Reported?

At PCPS, academic achievement is reported separately from behavior and work habits. This allows parents to clearly see both **what their child is learning** and **how their child is demonstrating responsibility, citizenship, and character in the classroom.**

Behavior and work habits are evaluated using a **three-point behavioral scale:**

- **3 – Outstanding:** Consistently demonstrates exemplary behavior, responsibility, and citizenship.

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- **2 – Satisfactory:** Consistently meets behavioral expectations with occasional reminders.
- **1 – Needs Improvement:** Requires frequent reminders or support to meet behavioral expectations.

By separating academic performance from behavior, families receive a more accurate picture of their child's strengths, growth areas, and overall development.

As A Parent, What Should I Look For?

Rather than focusing on how many 4s your child earns, consider these questions:

- Is my child consistently earning 3s, demonstrating mastery of grade-level standards?
- Is my child making progress over time?
- Are there specific standards where my child may need additional support?
- Are there areas where my child demonstrates exceptional strengths?

How Will Honor Roll Be Calculated?

Honor Roll will be based on a student's **academic performance levels** rather than behavioral scores.

Because Standards-Based Grading measures mastery of individual standards, Honor Roll recognizes students who consistently demonstrate strong academic achievement across subject areas.

Principal's Honor Roll

Students must earn:

- Predominantly **4s and 3s** in all academic standards
- No academic scores below a **3**

Honor Roll

Students must earn:

- Predominantly **3s** in all academic standards
- No more than a limited number of **2s**
- No academic scores of **1**

Behavioral scores are reported separately and are not included in the academic Honor Roll calculation; however, students are expected to maintain satisfactory behavior and citizenship.

Our Goal in Standards-Based Grading

Our goal is to help every student develop a deep understanding of grade-level standards, take ownership of their learning, and build confidence as they grow. Standards-based grading provides meaningful feedback that supports student success and promotes lifelong learning.