



مدرسة أكاديمية جيمس الأمريكية أبو ظبي الخاصة
GEMS American Academy
ABU DHABI

STANDARDS BASED LEARNING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL

◆ IMPORTANT VOCABULARY

Assessment: Any measure of student learning.

Formative Assessment: Any measure of learning that occurs during the learning process used to inform instruction. These do not count towards a “grade”.

Summative Assessment: A measure of learning that occurs after the learning process. These are reported using a proficiency scale.

Curriculum Standards: Well researched, developmentally appropriate learning targets. GAA uses AERO/Common Core + and IBDP.

◆ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will this change affect GPAs?

No. Summative assessments count towards a letter grade in High School. This letter grade is converted to a GPA on transcripts.

Will this change affect transcripts?

No. Letter grades and GPA will still appear on High School transcripts.

Will this affect report cards?

Yes. We will now have a standard - specific report card. These reports will be issued quarterly.

What’s the biggest change?

How achievement is communicated looks different. Instead of a grade, assessments will have descriptive feedback and indicators of proficiency for each curriculum standard targeted.

What are ATLs?

The five Approaches to Learning (thinking skills, social skills, communication skills, self-management skills and research skills) encompass the key values and principles at GEMS American Academy. Through these Approaches to Learning, or ATLs, students develop skills that have relevance across the curriculum that help them “learn how to learn”. ATL skills can be learned and taught, improved with practice and developed incrementally. They provide a solid foundation for learning independently and with others.

Why is GEMS American Academy - Abu Dhabi using standards-based assessment and grading?

In order to best prepare students for post-secondary education and a career, GEMS American Academy - Abu Dhabi is using a standards-based assessment, grading and reporting system to more accurately monitor, measure and communicate a student’s learning, growth and academic achievement.

This system will also positively affect the classroom - allowing teachers to provide clearer and more meaningful feedback for each student, based on their specific needs and goals.



What is the evidence that says, “This is effective”?

At first, adults may be most comfortable with traditional grading practices as that is what we have generally experienced ourselves. While most classrooms have historically used an infinite number of traditional grading practices, noted education experts such as Robert Marzano, Thomas Guskey, and Ken O’Connor, tell us that in the one-hundred years of existence, there is no meaningful research that provides evidence that traditional grading practices help students learn, grow and build confidence. It is difficult to justify unproven practices simply based on tradition. Renowned educational researcher, John Hattie, notes that clear student-friendly standards, opportunities for all students to improve, and ongoing teacher feedback to students are all well researched and established as some of the most highly effective strategies in helping students learn and grow.

What is standards-based assessment and grading?

A “grade” has one purpose: to communicate a student’s learning. Standards-based grading is designed to do just that – clearly communicate a student’s academic progress toward proficiency of clearly defined curriculum standards. Curriculum standards are defined for each course and specifically indicate what the student is expected to know and be able to do.

Throughout the course, a student completes assessments that help the teacher track progress toward proficiency of a curriculum standard and where students may require additional assistance.

Each assessment may target multiple curriculum standards. A proficiency level is determined for each curriculum standard targeted.

Approaches to Learning are reported separately. These “ATLs” are noted on the report card for parents to see, but will not factor into the letter grade.

What are re-assessments?

Standards-based grades reflect the evidence of a student’s learning at a certain point in time, placing value on opportunities for student growth and improvement. When a student has not demonstrated that they have learned what was expected, opportunities for improvement will be provided through future learning and re-assessment. The re-assessment may be a different test, a portion of a test, opportunity to improve a project, or in some cases a conference with the student. GAA has procedures in place for reassessments; these are outlined in the handbook and on Class Pages.

WHO ELSE IS USING STANDARDS-BASED LEARNING?

State of Kentucky Public Schools

ICS Brazil

American School Chennai

AISG China

American International School Johannesburg

International School of Bangkok

Singapore American School

International School of Kuala Lumpur

Carlucci American International School Lisbon

Hong Kong International School

International School of Manila

Taipei American School

How is standards-based grading different?

Traditionally, student performance for a semester was based on averaging scores from the entire semester. Early assessment scores that could have been low would be averaged together with more proficient performance later in the course, which could result in a lower overall grade than current performance indicates. Typically, student work habits (ATLs) counted towards the overall grade such as incomplete or missing homework or participation points being averaged into the overall grade.

A standards-based grading system measures a student's proficiency of grade-level curriculum standards by prioritizing the most recent, level of performance. Thus, a student who may have struggled at the beginning of the year will still be able to demonstrate proficiency of key standards by the end of the school year.

Standards-based report cards separate academic performance (proficiency of curriculum standards) from work habits and behavior (ATLs) in order to provide parents a more accurate view of a student's progress in both academic and behavioral areas. Variables such as effort, participation, timeliness, cooperation, attitude and attendance are reported separately as ATLs, not as an indicator of a student's academic performance.

TRADITIONAL GRADING

STANDARDS - BASED LEARNING

Achievement, effort, attitude, and behavior are all factors.

Achievement is the only factor, ATLs are scored separately.

Every grade recorded with minimal support for re-assessment.

Most recent assessment information used.

Averaging all grades.

Various forms of data collected.

Does homework matter?

Absolutely! Students need to understand that homework is practice, and without practice, future success is limited. While homework does not affect a student's grade, homework is aligned with learning objectives and designed to help students develop the knowledge and skills needed to master the defined standards. Teachers will provide feedback on homework assignments, as needed, to provide students with direction. A student's homework behaviors (completion, timeliness, etc.) will be reflected in his or her ATLs. Homework should be a risk-free chance to experiment with new skills students have learned in class and then return to ask questions about what was not understood, (Carr and Farr 2000, 200).

Do colleges and universities care?

The grading process at GEMS American Academy will not change how we report achievement to post-secondary schools. Achievement will continue to be reported out using letter grades and GPA. It is worth noting that post-secondary schools have significantly reduced their reliance on grades, as entrance criteria and have shifted to looking at the rigor of a student's transcript along with other factors such as recommendations, contributions outside of school, and course selections. The New England Board of Higher Education States, "By capturing habits of work on the report card, the proficiency-based model (standards-based grading) provides increasingly relevant information regarding a student's ability to succeed in today's world."

How can I find out how my child is doing?

Your child's real-time progress can be viewed at any time in the PowerSchool Unified Classroom.

How is my child's grade measured or determined?

In grades 9-12, letter grades are determined based on most recent proficiency of the standards. End-of-course exam results are factored into this year-end grade, but are not the sole determinant.

What if I have additional questions or concerns?

After taking the time to read this if you have more questions please contact your child's teacher, principal or curriculum coordinator for more information.