

# VDLHS FAQ - Standards-Based Learning and Grading

Dear Vista del Lago Families,

The following courses:

- AP Human Geography
- Ethnic Studies
- US History
- World History
- CSU ERWC (English 12)
- Drama 1
- Drama 2-4
- Weights
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- AP CS Principles

will be using Standards-Based Learning and Grading this term. We would like to provide you with some information about Standards-Based Learning and Grading, which may be new to you and/or your student.

Standards-Based grading focuses on showing mastery of a learning target that is aligned with curriculum standards. **Students do not "collect points" for correct answers, nor do they "lose" a set number of points for incorrect answers. Rather, your student's score is determined by their demonstration of content mastery based on a proficiency scale.** Proficiency scales are built at the unit level and will be available and reviewed by your student's teacher at the start of each unit. All learning targets have leveled learning expectations. Level 2 expectations demonstrate basic understanding of a learning target. Level 3 expectations are the targeted learning standards - in other words, the expectations for **all** at this grade level. Level 3 expectations represent the expectations of the grade-level standard. These are the skills students must demonstrate, ***in their entirety***, to show mastery of a learning goal. Students earn a score of 3 (which translates to an A in PowerSchool) when they demonstrate mastery of **all** parts of the Level 3 learning target expectations. Students who show understanding above a basic level but have not demonstrated mastery of all aspects of a learning target may earn a score of 2.5, which translates to a B in PowerSchool.

It is critical to understand that the proficiency scale will focus on skills rather than just memorizing facts. Skills will be practiced during class, however, students will be expected to apply both the skills and content that they have learned on assessments. This may be different from other classes students have taken in the past. Students will apply their understanding and skills to unfamiliar or novel situations. This type of assessment may be new to your student and might take some practice to build confidence in. These assessments will best prepare students for future courses.

Included below is a Frequently-Asked-Question list that may answer any questions or concerns you may have.

If you still have questions please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher.

## ***Q: What is a "Proficiency Scale"?***

A: Proficiency scales are PLC curriculum documents that identify clear learning progressions for each of the priority standards and assessments of those standards. The most important consumer of the information in the scale is the student. Typically, a proficiency scale is developed for one unit or segment of learning, which may be one or more than one standard. A Proficiency Scale clearly indicates **both** the progression of learning **and** the specific knowledge and skills necessary to demonstrate mastery of the standard. A proficiency scale describes a student's level of progress towards meeting the standard at multiple levels from attempting the standard to exceeding the standard.

***Q: How are teacher teams determining the knowledge and skills at each proficiency level?***

A: Proficiency scales indicate student achievement as it relates to a given standard and use a four-point system where a score of 3.0 indicates meeting the standard. Teacher Teams use the adopted state standards to build proficiency scales. The language of the standard (the expectation for ALL learners at a given grade level) is set as the Score 3.0. Then, Teacher Teams identify the foundational knowledge needed (such as vocabulary and foundational procedures) that are necessary for success at Level 3.0 - this becomes Level 2.0. Lastly, teacher teams determine how students can demonstrate mastery beyond the expectations of the standard and add that to Level 4.0. The state standards used can be found at the following links:

- [Common Core English & Language Arts](#)
- [California Arts Standards for Theatre](#)
- [Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum](#)
- [Common Core Math](#)
- [FCUSD Guaranteed & Viable Curriculum Standards - US History](#)
- [Physical Education Standards](#)
- [Next Generation Science Standards](#)
- [FCUSD Guaranteed & Viable Curriculum Standards - World History](#)

***Q: Why have you converted from “traditional” grading practices?***

A: The “Traditional” 100-point grading system has weaknesses in a few critical areas. The 100-point grading system does not accurately measure a student’s mastery of content and skills in a course or clearly describe which content and skills a student has mastered. Additionally, although familiar to many, the “traditional” grading system is completely arbitrary and has no basis in educational research. Standards-Based Learning and Grading is supported by educational research and more clearly reflects the learning expectations for students and the student’s current progress towards meeting the standards. It is also a more equitable grading system.

For more information, see: [Why the 100-point grading system is a stacked deck](#)

***Q: How will grades be entered into PowerSchool?***

A: Each assessment that measures a student’s progress towards mastery of a standard will be entered into PowerSchool with a score of 0, 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, or 4. These are **NOT** percentages earned on an assignment. Instead, these Scores correspond to a proficiency level based on the student’s progress towards mastery of a standard. PowerSchool automatically calculates a percentage, however, these percentages do **NOT** correspond to a traditional grading scale. It is important to pay attention to the meaning of the Proficiency Score, rather than the calculated percent.

[Please see the Proficiency Scales Explanation for more information and a grading conversion chart.](#)

Assignments that are completed for practice and do not authentically measure a student’s progress towards mastery of a standard will not be given a score, and instead, a teacher may use a “check/no check” or “collected” indicator in PowerSchool.

Please also be aware that many teachers use weighted grading systems that might impact how final grades are calculated. Please refer to the syllabus for each course to learn more.

***Q: How will I know what my child needs to know/be able to do in order to progress to the next level on the proficiency scale?***

A: Please see the Proficiency Scale(s) or Learning Targets distributed by your child’s teacher. Typically, these scales are provided at the beginning of the unit and may be handed out on paper or available in your child’s Google Classroom. The scale describes the knowledge and skills at each proficiency level, and will be unique to the current course content and selected standards. Please note that as one goes up the proficiency levels (from level 2-4), the complexity of content understanding will increase.

Additionally, your child's teacher will guide your student through examples and offer opportunities for students to practice problem solving at each proficiency level.

***Q: What are the benefits of Standards-Based Learning and Grading?***

A: Standards-Based Learning and Grading provides clarity for students and parents on the exact skills and knowledge pieces needed to progress towards and beyond mastery of grade level standards. Standards-Based Grading and Learning is also more equitable and promotes higher levels of learning for all students. Since teachers and students have clarity on a student's progress at any given time, teachers can implement more targeted interventions and adjust instruction for the exact skills and knowledge that a student will need to continue progressing towards or beyond mastery of the standard.

***Q: Will Standards-Based Learning and Grading affect my child's ability to get accepted into college or university?***

A: No. Grades are still reported to colleges and universities in the same manner as traditional grades. Each high school engages in its own process to report grades and each college engages in its own process to interpret those grades. Transcripts from Vista are sent with a school profile that describes the school context to aid in a university's understanding of grades. In fact, many selective colleges have issued explicit statements of support for proficiency based practices.

***Q: How can I learn more about standards-based Learning and Grading?***

A: Here are some helpful resources :

[PowerSchool: Everything you need to know about standards-based Grading](#)

[Marzano: Grades that Show what Students Know](#)

[standards-based Grading in High School where grades matter most](#)

[What is standards-based Grading?](#)

[Standards-Based Grading in the Vista del Lago Science Department](#)