



Overview of the Four-Point Scale and Standards-Based Grading

GMS Purpose of Grading: We grade at GMS to communicate to students, families and teachers a student's subject specific understanding and Process of Learning skills. We grade so that we can all monitor progress and support each student's growth as a learner.

What is standards-based grading? Why the shift from traditional grades?

Gateway believes that grades should communicate—as clearly as possible—what students know and can do. We also seek to create a growth mindset environment that encourages students to take risks and to embrace mistakes as learning opportunities. Standards-based grading and the corresponding four-point scale are set up to support these two values by clarifying learning goals and assessing students on their progress towards meeting those goals—rather than prioritizing completion of tasks and assignments over learning. This allows for more meaningful student learning and teacher feedback, and moves away from an approach in which students are seeking to earn points rather than practicing to meet the learning goal.

What is the four-point scale?

Educational researchers developed the four-point scale to more clearly assess what a student knows and can do:

4	Exceeding Standards	Consistently exceeds expectations for skills and understanding
3	Meeting Standards	Consistently meets expectations for skills and understanding
2	Approaching Standards	Meets some expectations for skills and understanding
1	Below Standards	Meets few expectations for skills and understanding

What does this look like in practice?

- **Students will receive assignment and final grades on the 1-4 scale.** Students will receive 1-4 grades on assignments and for their quarter or semester grades; students will not receive letter grades (A, B, C, I) on assignments or for semester grades. Student GPAs and transcripts will also be based on the four-point scale (e.g. a "4" is equivalent to an A or 4.0 points in the GPA scale, a "3" is equivalent to an B or 3.0 points in the GPA scale, etc.).
- **Grades are clearer to students:** Teachers and students engage in conversation about what 4/3/2/1 work looks like, so students understand what is expected and what they are learning. For example, students would receive a rubric for a task showing them the expectations to exceed, meet and approach standards on the assignment.
- **Grades are more useful and meaningful:** When students get clear grades and feedback on a four point scale, they can monitor their progress and set goals for their learning. Teachers can also provide more specific feedback on how to improve from a "3" to a "4", using the rubric.
- **Grades are more consistent for students:** The four-point scale is consistent with how students are assessed in other ways. For example, SFUSD uses four-point, standards-based grading in elementary schools, state testing assesses students on a four-point scale, and our GMS grade reports include four-point scale grading of content and POL standards. In addition, the four-point scale helps teachers to use a consistent approach to grading, so that students experience similar expectations across classes.