



**WESTON**  
MASSACHUSETTS  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# Standards-Based Grading Practices

**A presentation to the School Committee, September 20, 2022**  
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# Background: The Standards-Based Movement

## A brief history:

- ▶ Beginnings in the 1980s
- ▶ Frameworks and standardized testing in the 1990s
- ▶ 2001 No Child Left Behind Act
- ▶ 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act

## Core beliefs:

- ▶ A standardized instructional core forms the basis of schooling
- ▶ Each and every student can learn at a high level
- ▶ All students need to reach high proficiency levels in order to be productive in the modern economy and to be active as informed citizens
- ▶ Schools are accountable for ensuring that all students are proficient in core standards and practices

# With the standards-based movement, teacher practice has changed

## Curriculum Planning

- ▶ Scope and sequence
- ▶ Academic and social emotional competencies
- ▶ Teacher teams plan together
- ▶ Backward design

## Instructional Practice

- ▶ Standards and practices
- ▶ Differentiation
- ▶ Multi-modal instructional methods
- ▶ Checking for understanding

***Grading in secondary schools, on the other hand has remained relatively unchanged. Although brain science and educational policy and practices have changed dramatically over the past 50 years, most middle and high school educators have graded in the same manner for over a century.***

# WMS and WHS are piloting two standards-based grading practices

1. Using calibrated grading scales that have the same point range for every letter grade
2. Allowing students who are not yet proficient in an essential skill or understanding to retake all or part of a summative assessment without penalty

The image illustrates the difference between traditional and standards-based grading using a car mechanic scenario. On the left, under 'Traditional Grading', a car mechanic is shown next to a car with a large 'B+' circled next to it, representing a single overall grade. On the right, under 'Standards-Based Grading', the same mechanic is shown next to a car, but instead of a single grade, there is a table showing specific performance levels for different car components.

Component	Performance Level
Engine	Great!
Battery	Great!
Transmission	Great!
Breaks	Needs Attention
Tires	Okay

otus

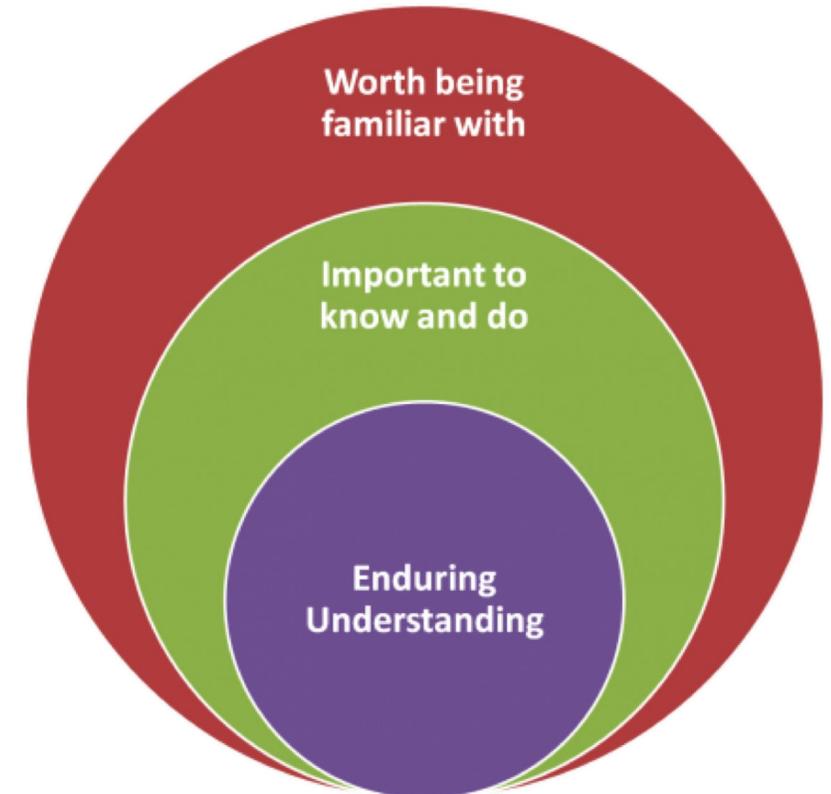
# More about standards

The graphic to the right represents an important idea in standards-based curriculum design, instruction, assessment, and grading:

## ***Not all standards carry the same importance***

What makes an essential standard?

- ▶ **Endurance:** Value beyond a single test date; readily applicable beyond school walls.
- ▶ **Leverage:** Value in multiple disciplines; transferable to other fields
- ▶ **Readiness:** Necessary for success in the next instructional level; a building block



# Calibrated Grading Scales

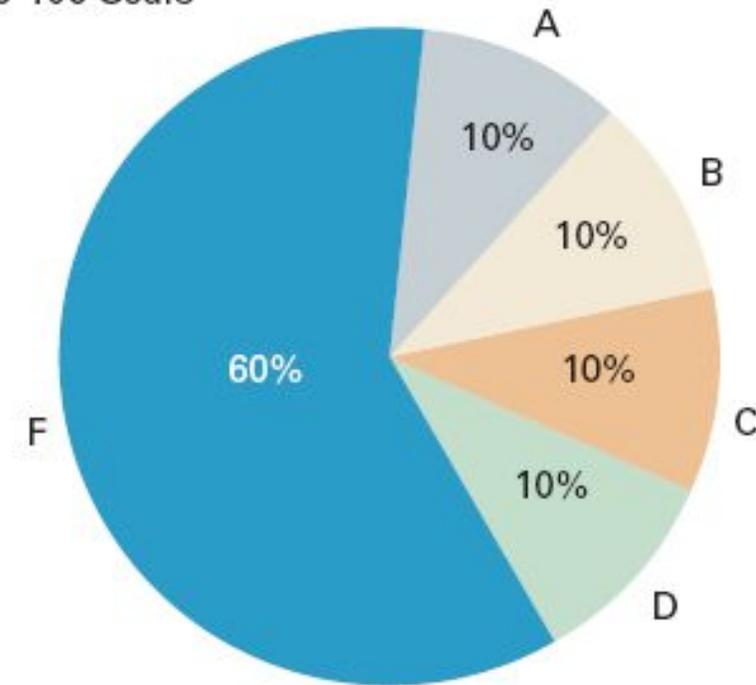
Proficiency Level	Letter Grade	0-4 Integer Grading Scale	50-100 Point Scale
Mastery of Essential Standards and Practices Proficiency, at least, in All Standards and Practices	A-, A, A+	4	90-100
Proficiency in Essential Standards and Practices Approaching Proficiency, at least, in All Standards and Practices	B-, B, B+	3	80-89
Approaching Proficiency in Essential Standards and Practices Some Proficiency, at least, in All Standards and Practices	C-, C, C+	2	70-79
Some Proficiency in Essential Standards and Practices Not yet proficient in All Standards and Practices	D-, D, D+	1	60-69
Little to no evidence of Proficiency in Essential Standards and Practices and All Standards and Practices	F	0	50-59

***We are moving away from the traditional 0-100 point grading scale***

# What's wrong with the 0-100 point scale?

- ▶ With 40 different levels of success and 60 different levels of failure, the scale is designed to sort students from one another. While this was the goal of schooling in a bygone era, it is not the goal in a standards-based educational environment.
- ▶ Percentage grades are often directly derived from the percentage of items a student answers correctly on an assessment. Assessments vary in difficulty. There is often no mechanism (like a rubric or criteria chart) to accurately assign a percentage to a specific level of proficiency.
- ▶ A single zero can have a devastating effect on a student's percentage grade and the student's overall course grade. (When calculating the mean, outliers like a zero have a highly distorting effect on the average.) With such a large F grade band in the 0-100 scale, failed and missing assignments carry much more weight than successful assignments. A much fairer grading system is one where every level of proficiency has an equal grade band.

0-100 Scale



# Retakes

## **Allowing students who are not yet proficient in an essential skill or understanding to retake all or part of a summative assessment without penalty**

- ▶ Retakes are for summative assessments, not formative assessments
- ▶ Retakes are for essential skills and understandings – standards and practices we need to guarantee all students learn – not necessarily for important or good-to-know standards
- ▶ Retakes are for proficiency, not necessarily mastery
- ▶ One retake opportunity is sufficient
- ▶ Retakes are to be graded without penalty