

# STANDARDS BASED GRADING

FOR USE IN MR. RING'S  
US GOVERNMENT/SOCIOLOGY  
COURSES



# Make sure you read this packet all the way to the end!!!

## Grading System Explained

### *What is Westerville North's Mission Statement?*

*To ensure learning by effectively engaging every student every day.*

### *What is a SBG-classroom?*

Beginning with the 2008-2009 school year, the grading system used in my classes was revamped in a shift to align them with a **Standards-Based Grading (SBG)** scale, specifically utilizing **Content Statements** to assess student progress and achievement. The content statements fall under the larger umbrella of standards seen in every state (with the exception of Iowa). These standards form the backbone of the material taught in any given core subject.

### *What are academic content statements?*

Set up much like a hierarchy, the system in place in the state of Ohio is comprised of **Themes, Topics, and Content Statements**. Information is taken from these items and used in forming the questions found on the end of course assessments.

Academic content **themes** contain information that all students, grades K-12, should know and be able to do. Essentially, they are the overarching themes that individual units will cover. For the US Government courses, these **themes** include:

(1) **American Government:** How the American people govern themselves at national, state and local levels of government is the basis for this course. Students can impact issues addressed by local governments through service learning and senior projects.

(2) **Economic and Financial Literacy:** This course explores the fundamentals that guide individuals and nations as they make choices about how to use limited resources to satisfy their wants. More specifically, it examines the ability of individuals to use knowledge and skills to manage limited financial resources effectively for a lifetime of financial security.

(3) **Contemporary World Issues:** The dynamics of global interactions among nations and regions present issues that affect all humanity. These dynamics include: competing beliefs and goals; methods of engagement; and conflict and cooperation. Contemporary issues have political, economic, social, historic and geographic components. Approaches to addressing global and regional issues reflect historical influences and multiple perspectives. Students can impact global issues through service learning and senior projects.

(4) **World Geography:** This course builds on students' understanding of geography and spatial thinking. Contemporary issues are explored through the lens of geography. In addition to understanding where physical and cultural features are located and why those features are located as they are, students examine the implications of these spatial arrangements.

The academic themes are made up of one or more **topics**. These topics are key organizational pieces that group together specific items that create units of study.

In the US Government courses, these **topics** include:

**Basic Principles of the US Constitution.** Principles related to representative democracy are reflected in the articles and amendments of the U.S. Constitution and provide structure for the government of the United States.

**Role of the People.** The government of the United States protects the freedoms of its people and provides opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process.

**Civic Involvement.** Students can engage societal problems and participate in opportunities to contribute to the common good through governmental and nongovernmental channels.

**Structure and Functions of the Federal Government.** Three branches compose the basic structure of the federal government. Public policy is created through the making of laws, the execution of the laws and the adjudication of disputes under the laws.

**Federal Public Policy.** Federal, state and local governments address problems and issues by making decisions, creating laws, enforcing regulations and taking action.

**Ohio's State and Local Governments.** The State of Ohio acts within the framework of the U.S. Constitution and extends powers and functions to local governments.

**Government and the Economy.** The actions of government play a major role in the flow of economic activity. Governments consume and produce goods and services. Fiscal and monetary policies, as well as economic regulations, provide the means for government intervention in the economy.

**Government and the Economy.** The health of a nation's economy is influenced by governmental policy. Fiscal policy can be used to spur economic growth. Monetary policy can be used to moderate fluctuations in the business cycle.

**Global Economy.** Global issues and events influence economic activities.

**Economic Decision Making and Skills.** Economic decision making relies on the analysis of data. Economists use data to explain trends and decide among economic alternatives. Individuals use data to determine the condition of their finances and to make savings and investment decisions

**Fundamentals of Economics.** Productive resources are limited and allocated in a variety of different ways. An efficient way to allocate productive resources is through markets.

**Working and Earning.** Employment provides a means of creating personal income.

**Financial Responsibility and Money Management.** Responsible personal finance decisions are based upon reliable information and used to reach personal goals.

**Saving and Investing.** Saving and investing strategies help individuals achieve personal financial goals.

**Credit and Debt.** Credit and debt can be used to achieve personal financial goals

**Risk Management.** There are various strategies to help protect personal assets and wealth.

**Global Connections.** The 21st century is characterized by changing circumstances as new economies emerge and new technologies change the way people interact. Issues related to health, economics, security and the environment are universal.

**Civil and Human Rights.** There are challenges to civil rights and human rights throughout the world. Politics, economics and culture can all influence perceptions of civil and human rights.

**National Security and International Diplomacy.** The political, economic and social goals of nations, international associations and non-governmental organizations may be incompatible with each other and lead to conflicts.

**Globalization.** The modern world is said to be “shrinking” or “flattening” through the processes of globalization. The scale and speed of global interactions continue to increase in fields such as technology, markets, information sharing and telecommunication. Globalization has impacted human-environmental interactions, has affected the movement of people, products and ideas, and has implications for what constitutes a region and connections among existing regions.

**Civic Participation and Skills.** Individuals and groups have the capacity to engage with others to impact global issues.

These **Topics** are further divided into **Content Statements**, which contain the knowledge and skills that all students should know and be able to do at each grade level. They serve as checkpoints to monitor progress toward the Topics.

For example, the American Government *Theme* includes the *Topic*: Basic Principles of the US Constitution which has four *Content Statements*.

**AG 05:** As the supreme law of the land, the U.S. Constitution incorporates basic principles which help define the government of the United States as a federal republic including its structure, powers and relationship with the governed.

**AG 06:** *The Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers framed the national debate over the basic principles of government encompassed by the Constitution of the United States.*

**AG 07:** Constitutional government in the United States has changed over time as a result of amendments to the U.S. Constitution, Supreme Court decisions, legislation and informal practices.

**AG 08:** *The Bill of Rights was drafted in response to the national debate over the ratification of the Constitution of the United States.*

When put together, you get:

(1) **American Government:** How the American people govern themselves at national, state and local levels of government is the basis for this course. Students can impact issues addressed by local governments through service learning and senior projects.

**Basic Principles of the US Constitution.** Principles related to representative democracy are reflected in the articles and amendments of the U.S. Constitution and provide structure for the government of the United States.

**AG 06:** *The Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers framed the national debate over the basic principles of government encompassed by the Constitution of the United States.*

### ***What prompted this change?***

Because I am a firm believer in continuing education for teachers and administrators, I spent the better part of a year analyzing and critiquing my own classroom policies. During this time of self-reflection, I attended several conferences and caught up on the recent literature in the “great grade debate”. Educator Charlie Lindgren, interviewed by Rick Wormeli in 2006 for Wormeli’s book *Fair Isn’t Always Equal*, said it best: “*Grading is one of the most bizarre aspects of teaching. No two teachers grade alike, and everyone thinks their way is best. Does a grade truly reflect what a student has learned, or how hard they tried, or what they’re capable of doing?*” (Wormeli, p. vi)

What role do grades play in truly assessing what a student does and does not know? From age zero to two, human beings experience their fastest growth spurt. We develop more physically, emotionally, and intellectually during this time than at any other point in our lives. The speed of this development is different from person to person. Knowing this, it would be ridiculous to expect that all kids recite the alphabet in the eighth hour of the fifth day of the tenth month in the second year of their lives (Wormeli, p. 114). Thus, what’s more important, that 70% of my 150 students grasp the material on November 7<sup>th</sup>, an arbitrary date picked by me as the day in which every student must prove their mastery Constitution concepts, or that 100% of my 150 students mastered the material at some point in the school year? Can students recall information they’ve been taught? Can they apply what they’ve learned to a future set of problems? Will they remember it when they leave the classroom? Are they just memorizing it for the test and then forgetting it? Thus, *what* or *how much material* we teach our students matters little. It’s what our students *learn* or what they’ve *mastered* that speaks volumes about us as educators (Wormeli, p. 8).

According to Ken O’Connor, author of *A Repair Kit for Grading* (2007), “*Grades are often extrinsic motivators, meaning that their power to influence student behavior derives from outside the student.*” Many teachers, parents, and guardians have used grades as extrinsic motivators when they say things to the effect of, “*If you don’t get a B or better on this quiz, then you can’t go to the football game.*” Many schools have mission statements that affirm their desire to produce students who are “*independent, self-directed, lifelong learners.*” To reach this goal, students need to be *intrinsically* motivated. This means their desire to achieve and improve must come from within themselves. Intrinsic motivation is clearly in conflict with the use of grades as extrinsic motivators. Thus, as educators and administrators think about current and future grading practices, it is important to look at what does and does not motivate students (O’Connor, p. 10).

### *How do grades work in a SBG-based classroom?*

A standards-based classroom contains two types of assessment: **formative** (influential) and **summative** (cumulative). To help explain these two assessments, read the following basketball analogy:

A basketball player shoots 100 free-throws at the end of practice on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday in order to get ready for the game she has on Friday. She makes 20 free-throws on Monday, 40 on Tuesday, 60 on Wednesday, and 80 on Thursday. Not a single one of these free-throws counts toward her game statistics or adds any points to the scoreboard on Friday. What counts is her performance when she goes to the line to shoot a critical foul shot with three seconds left in the fourth quarter of the game. Because she chose to work during the week at the end of practice when she was tired, she is ready for this foul shot at the end of the game, when she is also tired and the game's final outcome is at stake. The practice free-throws shot from Monday through Thursday are **formative assessments** of how ready she is for the game. The shots she takes during the game on Friday represent the **summative assessment**, or the culmination of her practice during the week... and are the only shots that "count" in assessing her skill (or mastery) level as a basketball player.

Formative assessments are designed to help the students and teachers assess what material the student understands – and what still needs to be practiced. These help the student improve and are not used to determine grades. They are assessments *FOR* learning. Summative assessments are designed to measure student achievement and can include new evidence (that replaces old evidence) when it is clear that a student knows or can do something today that they didn't or couldn't previously. They are assessments *OF* learning (O'Connor, p. 7, 97). That being said, homework and quizzes in the class will represent the formative assessments as we journey toward the end test (or other form of summative assessment). It may seem like a fairly revolutionary idea, but the goal is that *every* student grasps the material offered at some point in the school year. This means that many students will require additional formative assessments (or more "free-throws") in order to finally succeed on the summative assessment. It is my hope that the SBG classroom will foster such a learning environment.

O'Connor gives us another example of this in his book: *"In education we have tended to think of fairness as uniformity. All students have been required to do the same assessments in the same amount of time, and their grades have been calculated in the same way from the same number of assessments. But students are different in many different ways, and so treating them the same can actually be unfair. Fairness is much more about equity of opportunity than it is about uniformity. For example, some students need to wear glasses when they need them; for fairness we do not say, 'You are doing a test today, but you cannot wear your glasses because everyone is not wearing glasses,' or 'Some students in this class need glasses, so you will all wear them (whether you need them or not).'"* (p. 9)

### *So, you're saying we won't have any homework?*

That's incorrect. You *will* have homework but it will be primarily used to ensure learning (formative assessment) not necessarily used to be a final assessment of a student's understanding (summative assessment). These assignments serve as the formative assessments of the progress you're making in your mastery of the various content statements offered in my course. They will be used to help me, the teacher, and you, the student, assess where you are during the course of the unit, and make adjustments where needed. Again, these are the "practice free-throws". There will be *suggested* due dates for these assignments, and they will be looked over to make sure your answers are correct, but this eliminates the need to deal with a messy late work policy. Simply put: you will complete the assignment at some point during the unit, just maybe not on the pre-determined date. D.B. Reeves commented in his NASSP article *Standards Are Not Enough*, *"The appropriate consequence for failing to complete an assignment is completing the assignment."* (O'Connor, p. 30)

Now, to be honest, this system in theory would not include any "grade" for formative assessments. However, it has been observed in this classroom, that high school students have a much higher completion rate of formative work when an external motivator is provided. Therefore there *will* be a grade component included in the final grade to encourage formative participation in and out of class. **Formative assessments will comprise a total of 10% of the final grade.** These grades will be largely based on completion. Meaning students will be earning part

of their final grade based on how often they complete formative work, however will not be formally penalized for doing that formative work incorrectly. (Note: this means that 90% of the grade is based on the summative assessments that measure what the student *understands*)

### ***Do you offer Extra Credit in a SBG-based classroom?***

No. Extra credit and bonus points distort a student's record of achievement – it doesn't truly show what you really know. You might have an "A" in a class simply because you did 50 points of extra credit, which made up for lost points on homework, projects, and tests. Grades are broken as a communication tool if teachers give points for bringing in an article, going to a school play, or dressing up for a certain activity when such items do not demonstrate mastery of the content statements (O'Connor, p. 31). The entire notion of extra credit stems from the belief that school is about amassing points and stresses *quantity* (i.e. the more you get, the better you do) over *quality*. In a SBG-classroom, the main issue is gaining enough *quality* evidence to accurately demonstrate a student's achievement. "*Grades are artifacts of learning; as such, they should reflect student achievement only.*" (O'Connor, p. 6) Thus, extra credit is an inappropriate extrinsic motivator.

In this system, consider extra credit as "*yes, you can do extra in order to get credit*". This "extra" comes in the form of correcting mistakes and re-taking tests, which will be discussed later in this syllabus.

### ***I'm still confused... what kind of grades do we get in a SBG-based classroom?***

We must stop this love affair with letter grades! For example, just because Freddie Freshman earned an 85% in his class doesn't necessarily mean he learned anything. Under traditional scales of grading, there are many factors that could have contributed to his "B" grade. Freddie did all of his homework, he completed his projects on time, and he did the extra credit. However, he scored poorly on tests. So, how much did Freddie *really* master? Perhaps Freddie scored well on homework assignments because he copied answers off another student. Perhaps his parents overly assisted on Freddie's research projects. When it came time for Freddie to be assessed, he was unable to perform at a proficient level. Yet, he left the course with a "B". What about Susie Sophomore? She did none of the homework, none of the projects, and none of the extra credit. However, she scored amazingly high on the tests. Her overall grade of "D-" doesn't truly reflect what she knows. Is it fair to dock Susie's grade because she didn't do homework, projects, or extra credit? And then there's Jack Junior. He participates in class, he demonstrate an understanding of the material through the questions he asks or the comments he shares; however, he fails every major test. Does this mean Jack has learned nothing? What if he can't perform well in settings as rigorous and pressure-laden as the traditional multiple-choice test? That being said, what does a grade truly reflect? Is it what a student knew at that particular moment when they took the test, or is it a representation of what they knew from a variety of activities and assessments?

Raw averages and letter grades fail to provide an accurate summary of student achievement because they are based on simply calculating the average of a series of scores. It was once said, "*Whenever I hear statistics being quoted I am reminded of the statistician who drowned while wading across a river with an average depth of three feet.*" (O'Connor, p. 81).

In this classroom, the traditional, 100-point, letter grade system (where an "A" used to be 90-100, a "B" used to be 80-89, and so forth) will be exchanged for a **5-Point Rubric/Scale** where a Level 5 grade shows mastery; a Level 4 shows accelerated understanding, a Level 3 shows proficiency; a Level 2 shows basic understanding; and a Level 1 shows little or insufficient knowledge of the Content Statement.

More specifically:

**Level 5 (Mastery Achievement):** WOW... Credit earned; Shows complete knowledge of the subject; Expresses ideas clearly and concisely; Discusses ideas in a highly logical manner; Addresses all of the questions posed; Shows complete preparation when responding; Makes highly detailed responses; Describes concepts without errors; Can take material and apply it to other concepts/topics; In the “old” scale, this would be the equivalent of earning anywhere from an 90-100%.

**Level 4 (Accelerated Achievement):** NICE... Credit earned; Shows above average knowledge of the subject; Expresses ideas with understanding; Discusses ideas in a logical manner; Addresses all of the questions posed; Shows adequate preparations when responding; Misses few details when responding; Demonstrates minor misconceptions when responding. In the “old” scale, this would be the equivalent of earning anywhere from a 80-89%.

**Level 3 (Proficient Achievement):** YES... Credit earned; Shows good knowledge of the subject; Expresses ideas adequately; Discusses ideas in a logical manner; Addresses most of the questions posed; Shows some preparations when responding; Misses few details when responding; Demonstrates some misconceptions when responding. In the “old” scale, this would be the equivalent of earning anywhere from a 70-79%.

**Level 2 (Basic Achievement):** YES, BUT... Credit earned; Shows some good knowledge of the subject; Expresses ideas with some disorganization; Shows some illogical thought in discussion; Addresses most of the questions posed; Shows some preparations when responding; Includes some details when responding; Demonstrates major misconceptions when responding. In the “old” scale, this would be the equivalent of earning anywhere from a 60-69%.

**Level 1 (Insufficient Achievement):** NO, BUT... Assignment not completed; Credit not earned; Shows very little knowledge of the subject; Expresses ideas in a very disorganized manner; Shows much illogical thought in discussion; Addresses very few of the questions posed; Shows little preparation when responding; Misses most details when responding; Demonstrates the conceptions are mostly in error. In the “old” scale, this would be the equivalent of earning anywhere from a 0-59%.

The content statements provided by the state of Ohio are used to develop the units taught. However, the content statements will be a sort of “check list” for the stuff you need to master before you earn credit for the course. I will assign grades specifically to each content statement as we proceed through the units and the year. For example, AG 06 states that by the end of their junior year, all students should be able to explain an understanding of the following concept: “*The Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers framed the national debate over the basic principles of government encompassed by the Constitution of the United States.*” Thus, Jack Junior will acquire the necessary information in various forms from my class and be assessed in a way that allows him to demonstrate what he knows. For instance, let’s say there is an in-class essay showing the affect the Federalist Papers had on society’s acceptance of the Constitution. Jack completes the in-class essay but scores a 2 on the 4-point scale. There could be a whole slew of reasons as to why he did not score a 3 or higher (with 3 being the acceptable score to show proficiency). He might not have understood certain themes, he may have missed several days of class, he could have shifted from the custody of his father to his mother the weekend before the assessment, etc. Even though we move on to the next topic in class, Jack will still have the opportunity to demonstrate that he understands the debate between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists.

Granted, I can’t teach my students all individually all the time. I could never give each student a test on a different day according to when he or she is ready. I teach the masses. In order to not lose my sanity, I have to make and hold some deadlines. That’s fine, but when it comes time to generate the letter grade that will declare mastery or lack thereof, I have to respect the student’s individual development and in a different manner and, perhaps more important, that these variances are not setbacks, negative, or punishable (Wormeli, p. 115).



Whether he does his essay again or sits down with me for an oral examination, Jack Junior will be given the opportunity to show proficiency/mastery. And should he prove to have mastered the concept – even at a later date than when the rest of his peers grasped the concept – his score will be changed from a 2 to either the passing 3 or perhaps even a 4. Granted, it will take discipline on behalf of Jack to be willing to go back and change his grade. However, in the SBG grading environment, students like Jack will hopefully take advantage of doing just that. In the old manner of assessing, Jack’s failure on the Federalist Papers test would be recorded as a 54/100 in the grade book. He would never have mastered the material, and the groundwork for future failures would begin to take shape. Jack would limp along into his 12<sup>th</sup> grade year without having grasped the necessary concepts to give him a fair chance of succeeding.

Clearly, in this standards based grading system, I will be able to specifically identify what content statements Jack understands and what he does not. Parents and guardians will be able to see exactly what their child did well and where they need improvement, which alleviates the guess-work that goes into assigning letter grades. Wormeli states: *“We move from ‘[Freddie] scored well on the first three tests, but blew it on the last one, so [his] grade is a C,’ to ‘[Freddie] understands how to identify primary sources... but is struggling to show why primary sources are reliable or credible.’ The first comment tells us nothing, but the second one provides plenty of information to which we can respond (p. 164-165).”*

You may have noticed that there is no Level 0 score. This is because using raw averages and zeros *“distorts the final grade as a true indicator of mastery”* (Wormeli, 138). The Level 1 grade, and not a zero, becomes the unscorable level for when a student gets lower than an F on an assignment. The argument can be made that students should never be given zeros when mastery is not achieved. Susan Bischoff, a teacher cited by Wormeli, commented: *“Entering zero [in a traditional grading scale] has devastating mathematical consequences on grade averages, often putting students into an irrecoverable position. Why bother to keep working when you know nothing you can do will bring that average up to passing? I want them working, not shut down. If we entered grades as 40/A-, 30/B-, 20/C-, 10/D-, zeros would be okay. But, with 90/A-, 80/B-, 70/C-, and 60/D-, 50 is an F-. Entering zero in the grade book is the equivalent of giving a kid a K-. For that reason, if a kid miserably fails a test – for example, a score of 35% – I put it as a 50/F-. Fifty/F- is low enough. **If kids consistently fail tests, they will still average an F and fail. But, if they just have a few bad days, they can raise their averages with quality work and pass (p. 138).**”*

Using a zero skews the 5-point scale as much as it impacts the 100-point scale. Thus, a score of 50, 59, or 60 should be used in place of a zero on the 100-point scale. A score of 1.0 should be used in place of a zero on the 5-point scale. In doing so, the resulting average is more in line with the goals of not penalizing a student’s average beyond repair for one content statement that is not understood. (Wormeli, p. 139). However, a score of zero will be used if an assignment is **not completed**. Once that assignment is completed, regardless of the date, that zero will be replaced with an appropriate level of assessment.

### ***So, what goes on my report card?***

Again, there is no simple translation between a SBG-classroom assessment and a formal letter grade. The fact of the matter is letter grades are not going away anytime soon. This is, and has been, the universal way of reporting performance in traditional classrooms. Therefore, I am bound to use letter grades on report cards. Here are four examples of how I will convert the 5-point scale into a letter grade. Each letter grade will represent a percentage. A = 95%, B = 85%, C = 75%, D = 65%, and F = 55%. In all four cases, the scores you see are what each student earned for the 10 content statements assessed in the classroom during this hypothetical grading period. With the use of on-line grading in my classroom, you will be able to know (at any given time), how you are currently fairing with each content statement.

| <b>STUDENT</b> | <b>AG01</b> | <b>AG02</b> | <b>AG03</b> | <b>AG04</b> | <b>AG05</b> | <b>AG06</b> | <b>Ag07</b> | <b>AG08</b> | <b>AG09</b> | <b>AG10</b> | <b>FINAL GRADE</b> |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Freddie        | D           | A           | C           | A           | C           | F           | D           | F           | C           | C           | 73.0% C            |
| Susie          | F           | A           | D           | B           | C           | C           | A           | A           | C           | D           | 78.0% C+           |
| Jack           | A           | B           | A           | B           | C           | B           | C           | B           | C           | D           | 82.0% B            |

|       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |       |    |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|
| Sally | A | A | A | A | C | A | B | A | B | A | 91.0% | A- |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|----|

In a SBG-classroom, I will, **under no circumstances**, round up your percentage, either on an individual assessment or when determining final grades. In the case of Sally from above, her 97.5% will remain a solid “A” and not be rounded to an “A+”. If she desires the “A+”, she needs to correct the content statement in which she scored a 3 and try to get her score up to a 4 or 5. (The process of fixing a content statement is discussed in the next section.) I will use the traditional grade scale to determine plusses and minuses.

**Please note...** If you are involved in an extra curricular activity (athletics, clubs, etc.), make sure you understand Westerville North’s eligibility requirements, which are: You must receive passing grades in a minimum of five one-credit courses, or the equivalent, in the preceding grading period. You also need to have a 1.75 GPA in that grading period. Your semester and yearly grades have no effect on eligibility. This means EVERY quarter counts! Also, you may NOT use Summer School grades for failing grades received or lack of courses taken in the final grading period. If you have a question or concern about your eligibility, see your guidance counselor, advisor, coach, Athletic Director, or visit the Ohio High School Athletic Association’s website at <http://www.ohsaa.org>.

***What’s the process of fixing a grade in a SBG-classroom?***

The whole point of this new type of classroom is to allow me, the teacher, to assess you, the student. It isn’t a system of accumulating points to get a grade. A semi-new aspect of this type of classroom is that the assessment can come in many different forms, and at many different times. In the traditional classroom, assessment often consists of tests, projects, and papers. If you failed a specific assessment, then your grade suffered. The problem here is that “*assessment is a snapshot of performance, not potential.*” (O’Conner, p. 39) The SBG-system allows a student to have another chance at being assessed.

Does this mean you can “fail” every assessment and then re-do it to get an “A” for the course?

In a word, **yes**.

Does this mean that I will have time to give assessments to every individual student whenever they get around to preparing for it?

In a word, **no**.

For this reason there are rules that will help this process actually work. For starters, it needs to be explained that a student has a choice if they would like to be re-assessed or not. Each content statement will be taught and assessed in traditional formats. The classroom will still include things like lecture, class discussion, movie clips, notes, homework, and assessments. Those assessments will be used to factor in a final grade for the course. If you receive a 3 on a particular content statement, you may be happy, and choose to do nothing. Or you may want to take another look at the material and attempt to receive a 4 or 5 on that content statement. That is totally up to you. (Keep in mind that you need to get at least a 2 on a content statement to pass that particular content statement. Scoring nothing but 1s will result in failure.) If you choose to be re-assessed, three things must happen.

**THING #1:** *You should discuss your desire to be re-assessed with me prior to beginning your work. This means you need to come up with a plan for how you will continue your research on the material, as well as a plan for re-assessment. That’s right... YOU have to come up with your own assessment (paper, project, presentation, or whatever else you feel would be an adequate assessment). It is recommended that you get the work you will be doing approved before you begin your work.*

**THING #2:** *You must turn in your assessment and be prepared to discuss what you turned in with me personally. If I am to assess whether or not you fully understand a concept, then a discussion about your new assessment could greatly help.*

**THING #3:** *The entire process must be completed no more than two weeks (or 10 class periods) after the original assessment occurred. While one of the main reasons for this new system is to allow students to go at different paces, it is just impossible for a teacher to keep up with 150 different assessments without time limits.*

**Please note...** If your assessment level of a content statement is changed (like from a 2 to a 3), it will be adjusted in the grade book and on-line as though the first assessment never took place. Grades are not averaged on individual content statements in this system (meaning, if you had a 2 and then got a 3, the grade wouldn't show as a 2.5). Half scores, like 2.5 or 3.5 don't exist in this scale; it's either a solid 2, a solid 3, etc. Also, you can't drop your level for a content statement. For example, let's say that despite a week of re-preparation, you manage to do *worse* on the re-assessment. While that's unfortunate and we need to examine why that happened, **I won't drop** your content statement level from a 2 to a 1. In addition, there **aren't any limits** on how many times you may attempt to master a content statement (other than time). But keep this in mind: I am running this SBG-system within the confines of a 9-week grading system. So, grades *will* be recorded at the 9-week intervals. While I know that a reported grade only shows a "snapshot" of your progress, **I cannot change a grade** once it is reported on a grade card. (This is for eligibility reasons.) This does not mean I don't want you trying to fix a content statement once it's been reported. Far from it. Let's say you score a 2 on a content statement one week before I have to turn in grades for the first 9-weeks. Because you have up to two weeks to correct this, we have to be reasonable here. If 15 students hand me the re-assessments, there is little to no chance I can get around to everyone before grades are submitted in one week. I work on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you aren't selected to be re-assessed until after grades are submitted, I still want to proceed with the re-assessment. Here's why... the entire reason I'm doing this is so you *master* the material within the various content statements. If you correct the content statement, I will change your level in my grade book and on-line, and when it comes time to calculate semester grades, that new level **WILL** count at this time. It didn't count for the first 9-weeks since that grade's been reported, but it does count for the semester.

***So, everyone could end up with an "A" in your class?***

That would be ideal, and, in the system I'm putting into place, it would be a clear sign of mastery by all students. Without a doubt, my new approach to grading will raise some important questions, such as: "*It's not fair to those who did a good job the first time around!*" The argument is realistic, but Dr. Nancy Doda, cited by Wormeli, suggests that teachers should not reprimand students for not learning at the same pace as their peers (p. 115). Educators who concentrate on students' growth and mastery will have to allow for assignments and assessments to be redone. Wormeli argues: "*If I get a hint that the student has 'blown off' a four-week project until the last three days, or boasted to classmates that he or she will just take the test the first time as an advance preview and then really study for it next week because, 'Mr. Wormeli always let's me redo tests,' I will often rescind the offer and discuss the situation with the student.*"(p. 132)

***How do Final Exams work in a SBG-classroom?***

Traditionally, a Final Exam is given to assess how well a student understands the material being taught. Luckily each particular assessment level has been recorded for you. The exam is a traditional exam and will be 20% of the final grade. However you have an advantage in a SBG classroom. You have a specific list of items that will be assessed on the final, and your corresponding level of understanding from the semester. I would highly suggest using that to shape how and what you study!

***What are you hoping to accomplish by going to a SBG-classroom?***

By switching to the SBG-classroom, I will develop a culture of learning in my classroom. I am confident that the grades students get in my classroom are consistent, accurate, and meaningful, and that they support learning. I am confident that the grades I assign students accurately reflect the school, district, and state content standards and designed learning outcomes (O'Connor, p. 3).

***From where did the research stated in this syllabus come?***

O'Connor, K. (2007). *A repair kit for grading*. Portland, Oregon: Education Testing Service.

Ohio Department of Education. (2008). *Academic content standards source book: K-12 social studies*. Columbus, Ohio: Center for Curriculum and Assessment Publishers.

Wormeli, R. (2006). *Fair isn't always equal: Assessing & grading in the differentiated classroom*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.