

Standards-Based Grading Readiness Check

Five conditions to confirm before a school or department adopts standards-based grading — plus a one-hour moderation test and a reassessment rule builder.

How to use this: Work through it as a department before anyone changes a gradebook or a report card. Every "No" is a thing to fix first — not an argument against the idea, just an argument about timing.

Part 1 · The five "not yet" conditions

Condition	Ready?	Evidence / what we still need to do
1. Our standards are written down — six to ten per course, in language a student could read.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
2. Staff actually want this — it is not a district mandate nobody has bought into.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
3. We agree what "proficient" means — and the bar is not trivially low.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
4. We can keep it consistent — staff turnover will not reset the system every August.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
5. We can answer the transcript question — how levels convert for GPA, college and scholarships.	☐ Yes ☐ No	

Part 2 · The one-hour moderation test

Students' loudest objection is inconsistency — a different rule in every room. Test for it before they find it.

1. Pick one real piece of student work (name removed) and one standard.
2. Four teachers score it independently, without talking.
3. Reveal the scores together and record them below.
4. If the scores differ, discuss until you can write one sentence describing "proficient" that all four accept.

Teacher	Level given	Why (one line)
A		
B		
C		
D		

Agreed description of proficient:

Part 3 • Reassessment rule builder

"Unlimited retakes" is the absence of a policy. Fill in every line so students — and every teacher in the department — get the same answer.

To earn a reassessment, a student must... e.g. complete the corrections, attend one practice session	
Reassessment is available until...	
How many attempts per standard?	
When and where it happens Plan it so nobody is singled out — during work everyone is doing, arranged quietly.	
Which score counts? most recent / highest / other	

Part 4 • The transcript answer, written before families ask

Families will ask about college on day one. Write the answer your whole department will give.

Part 5 • Plan for the dip

Work completion often falls early in year one. Decide now how you will track work habits separately and what you will do in month three — before anyone reads the dip as failure.

Decision

☐ **Ready** — all five conditions met ☐ **Not yet** — we will fix these first:

Based on the article *Why Standards-Based Grading Doesn't Work: The Objections, Taken Seriously* by Clay Shumate at ElevateTheNorm.com, which cites Peters, Kruse, Buckmiller & Townsley (2017) and the Fordham Institute/RAND teacher survey. Free to print and share for non-commercial school use.