

# Frequently Asked Questions

## School Level Questions

### School Level Questions - Elementary

- **What guidelines or support will be available to accommodate multi-grade classrooms?**

We are discussing these needs, specifically in science and social studies, and reviewing opportunities, "agreements," and possible resource allocation.

- **How are elementary teachers going to teach and assess all standards meaningfully?**

How are elementary teachers going to teach and assess all of the power standards and learning targets meaningfully, given our schedule and time constraints? What resources will be provided to assist with this?

It's important to remember that learning targets are parts of the power standard. If you think of it as a mathematical term,  $LT + LT + LT =$  power standard, the learning targets are not additional content or skills. Presently, elementary teachers are charged with teaching ALL standards. With the implementation of our new policy, next year, elementary teachers will be able to focus on the power standards and provide the depth that students need rather than trying to "cover" all the standards with the same level of emphasis.

This question prompts us to ask, "How are elementary teachers teaching science and social studies now?" While we understand time must be allotted for science and social studies instruction in a separate block, in addition to the literacy block, schools will have to examine their master schedules as well as what else teachers are teaching to carve out the time to teach the power standards. Some schools' schedule accommodates this on days the student does not have rotation (PE/music).

Elementary teachers have new social studies resources as well as science kits. We realize there are some gaps in resources for science, and we are working to address this. Teams will begin to identify various resources and units that teachers can use to teach the content where a science kit doesn't exist. Teachers also have a vast amount of resources at their fingertips via the Internet.

While the text is a resource that teachers can use as part of highly effective instruction, it should not be the sole resource. Some schools have dedicated some of their building budget to purchase leveled texts that align with the science and social studies content for students to use during guided and shared reading.

- **How will we honor the whole child through SBE?**

SBE will support the whole child with clear standards and clear expectations. Learning objectives will be more transparent, which will help to challenge each student. In addition, intervention programs will be aligned to engage all students.

- **What is the expectation regarding STEM instruction?**

The expectation hasn't changed, but the conversion to SBE will help to make it much more manageable. For example, of the more than 40 science standards, your science SBE team has identified the most essential and narrowed the focus to approximately 12 power standards. Elementary teachers are masters at integration, and SBE maximizes the opportunities for this approach. Try integrating science and social studies into the literacy block through the use of leveled text as a part of guided and shared reading. Or build vocabulary and background knowledge through the Five-Component Reading model, which will provide students with extended opportunities to meet the power standards. And many teachers use their non-rotation days for teaching science and social studies lessons.

- **Are we considering the developmental appropriateness of power standards and learning targets?**

The power standards come from Washington State learning standards. The state determines the appropriateness of standards, not the districts. We do not have the luxury of rewriting state standards. As teachers who hold Washington State Teaching Certificates, we are ethically bound to teach these standards. When the teams identified the power standards, they used the criteria of endurance, leverage and readiness. Each year, we will audit the power standards we selected to ensure they continue to be the most essential and an adequate safety net for all students.

- **How will the new grade book for elementary will have an impact on the office staff?**

The new grade book for elementary will have an impact on the office staff who must enroll/withdraw students multiple times into one classroom. What assistance will be provided for this?

This is not a grade book issue but a student information system (SIS-student plus) issue. We will follow up with ITS on this.

### School Level Questions - Multi-Age

- **Who is on the multi-age review team?**

There will be an application process.

- **Who is the resource to multi-age principals?**

Josh Garcia and Marie Verhaar.

- **Do multi-age schools need to restructure their master schedules?**

Not necessarily. However, each multi-age program is different, so some minor adjustments may be necessary.

### School Level Questions - High School

- **At high school level, any student who earned a “D” was marked “incomplete.” What is the policy?**

The district has mandated that all teachers prepare a contract in these cases. Can the contracts be left to the professional discretion of the teacher?

This is not the district policy. The policy does not start until the 2011-2012 school year. Please refer to the policy for further guidance on when students should receive an incomplete.

- **Why are we not requiring students to complete their contracts outside of class time?**

The district will work to establish criteria for incompletes for the 2011-2012 school year.

## General Questions

- **What do grades communicate in a standards-based approach?**

In Standards-Based Education (SBE), a grade is a tool to communicate student's progress. It is not a form of compensation between the teacher and the student.

Beginning in the 2011-2012 school year, district assessment scores will no longer reflect points or percentages. Instead, they will reflect a student's performance based on specific learning criteria. Grades will reflect the student's level of knowledge through the percentage of power standards that he or she meets.

In the current system, a grade represents different criteria, depending on the teacher or the course. The grade may reflect extra credit, class participation, attendance, effort and work habits. Each teacher grades according to what he or she believes is most important, and grading often measures a student's standing relative to his or her classmates. Sometimes, grades are used punitively, which can cause more damage than motivation.

- **In a standards-based approach, will families see consistent grading standards at each school?**

In a standards-based approach, parents and students will see consistent grading standards throughout each school—and throughout the district. Teachers will grade based on what each student has learned and how that student meets standards.

In our Standards-Based Education System, students have multiple opportunities to achieve a standard by retaking a test or portions of a test. What does this teach them about the real world where it's necessary to do one's best?

In the real world, only people who master certain information or skills are able to receive certain privileges. Our new system puts more focus on student learning, and yes, it allows for multiple attempts for success. It's actually a more accurate reflection of real-world experience, where a person must meet a certain standard before receiving certain privileges.

Some "real life" parallels are the ACT, SAT, professional exams—even the driver's test. There are no penalties for the number of attempts on these tests, but failing them gets expensive and wastes time. A person who truly wants the privilege becomes intrinsically motivated to succeed because he or she wants the benefit that goes with passing the test, i.e., getting accepted into a good college, getting licensure in a certain profession—or driving a car.

The standards-based system still features deadlines, also a real-world concept. The teacher has discretion over accepting late work, such as the end of a unit. Policy 2420 reads, "The teacher may limit the number of re-take attempts."

- **And what about cheating and plagiarism?**

**If a student cheats or plagiarizes on a test or assignment, can he or she retake the test or re-do the assignment?**

In this case, the school and/or teacher must separate the behavior from the student's achievement. Cheating and plagiarism is an unethical behavior that the district will not condone. Currently, no consistent consequence exists when a student cheats or plagiarizes. The penalty ranges from a lowered grade, a zero, and even suspension. These consequences, however, do not often include completing the assignment appropriately.

When a student does not have to make up the test or assignment, we send the message that the test or assignment wasn't important, and we let him or her off the hook regarding demonstrating proficiency on that standard. In SBE, students will be expected to retake a test or complete the assignment. In addition, they also will receive the appropriate discipline in accordance with building and district policy.

- **If homework and practice do not count for the grade, how will we promote the importance of homework?**

**If homework and practice do not count as part of the student's grade, how will we promote the importance of homework? How will we motivate them to complete it and turn it in?**

When teachers return homework to students with a grade, most students shove it in their backpack or binder and never look at it again. Imagine the enhanced learning opportunity for the student if instead, the teacher returned the homework with two or three meaningful comments rather than a grade?

As teachers, we realize that homework and practice tied directly to learning targets is an important component of student achievement. So when teachers use homework as a mechanism for extensive and timely feedback to the student, it conveys the message that homework is important and necessary.

Providing students with nonjudgmental written or verbal feedback enables teachers to formatively assess student understanding and provides the student safe opportunities to practice—without judgment.

- **Why are we allowing students to turn in late work or re-do work without penalty of a zero?**

**How does this teach responsibility and accountability?**

In a standards-based system, the emphasis is on learning. When a student doesn't do the work, the inherent consequence is that he or she doesn't learn the content or practicing the skill.

When we do not allow a student to turn in late work or re-do work, we deny that student the opportunity to grow character traits that are vital to student achievement, such as perseverance and persistence.

If a teacher doesn't accept late work, the teacher sends the message that the assignment had little educational value. It's as if teacher is saying, "Hey, it's okay if you don't do the work, and it's okay if you don't learn the content or skill." As professional educators working to prepare students to successfully navigate the 21st century world, we can no longer accept these messages.

Granting a reduced grade or zero doesn't teach responsibility to students who are not intrinsically motivated. It actually allows the student to avoid the accountability of demonstrating what he or she has learned, and it teaches them to shrug off important responsibilities.

# What is the Difference Between a Teacher and a Professor?

Reviewed by [Jon Konen, District Superintendent](#)



At any level, at its core teaching is about sharing and imparting knowledge. But beyond that, teaching looks quite different according to where you teach, and maybe more to the point, whom you teach. Ask any career educator who walks into the classroom or launches a Zoom session every day and brings that same level of zeal when doing finals reviews at the end of the semester as they did when presenting all new material on day one and chances are they'll tell you there's no better job in the world. Fulfilling, rewarding, gratifying, fun...yep, they'll tell you it's all that – and a whole lot more.

**Duties of all the staff members are mentioned in Charter of Duties**