

Dear Westhoff Families,

I'm very excited to share some news with you. Our school has been chosen to pilot Standards Based Grading for the Fort Zumwalt School District. "Pilot" means we will be the first school to transition from traditional grading scales, to a standards based grading system using rubrics. Next school year, 2017/2018, all elementary buildings will have Standards Based Grading for grades K-5. We are lucky enough to get a jump start and begin the transition this school year.

At our school faculty meetings last school year, we spent time learning about Standards Based Grading. After spending time watching clips of Rick Wormeli (Stenhouse Publishers, 2010), our teachers came up with a list on how Standards Based Grading differs from traditional grading.

Standards Based Grading:

- more easily pinpoints students strengths and weaknesses.
- is easier for students to track and know their learning goals.
- helps focus on curricular goals rather than scores.
- drives instruction.
- helps make instruction more intentional.
- reflects mastery toward a specific learning goal.
- allows teachers to assess skills, not assignments.

We, as educators, grade for many reasons. We grade to determine the student's strengths and weaknesses. We grade to see progress, to check for understanding, and to get feedback to guide/drive our instruction. Standards Based Grading gives our teachers the tools to be more effective in the classroom.

According to Rick Wormeli, Standards Based Grading establishes clear learning goals, ensures that assessments are tied to learning goals, and provides specific actionable feedback to students (Guskey & Bailey, 2000; Wormelli, 2006). This type of grading is very similar to what the primary grades (K,1,2) already had in place. This will be more of an adjustment for the intermediate grades (3,4,5), as they are used to receiving letter grades. Their report cards will now show skills, just like the lower grades have always done.

We will be hosting a Parent Information Night on September 7 at 6:30 PM. At that time, we will go through the grade card and help answer questions. I want to thank you ahead of time for your support as we transition to Standards Based Grading. As with any

“pilot,” we will work through the bumps, but please feel confident that your teacher is providing your child with specific, quality instruction to help them grow as learners.

I look forward to seeing you in September at the Parent Information Night.

Thank you,

Alicia Hooton
Principal