



Norfolk Public Schools Mission Statement:
To prepare all students to pursue their goals for the future.

Target Based Learning

Strategic Goal: By the Fall of 2021, NPS teachers (Pk-12) will implement and use target-based instruction and grading as an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

Objective 1: Update curriculum and instructional practices to reflect the principles of target based instruction.

Objective 2: Build and implement methods of evidence collection and assessment aligned to priority standards and targets.

Objective 3: Create a districtwide reporting system that supports Standards Based Grading

Definitions:

- **Standards:** Standards are set by the Nebraska Dept of Education. Multiple standards make up the requirements for a grade level. The school district educators (teachers and administrators) prioritize the standards for implementation in the classroom. They write learning targets for each standard.
 - 1st Grade Example:
 - State Standard = Concepts of Print: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the concepts of print.
 - Learning Target: Student will be able to identify different text (e.g. font, size, bold, italic, upper/lower case).
 - Learning Target: Student will be able to identify punctuation (e.g. period, exclamation point, question mark, quotation marks).
 - Learning Target: Student will be able to identify parts of a book (e.g. title page, author, illustrator, table of contents).
 - **Target Based Grading (TBG):** Grading is based on the student's proficiency of each learning target. The learning target may include multiple activities and learning experiences that occur inside and outside of the classroom. These classroom activities and homework (formative assessments or activities- used to formulate a judgement) are not calculated into the grade. This is a time where learners are not punished for lack of knowledge but rather allowed to practice. Once an assessment is given, if a student does not meet proficiency, they will have an opportunity to practice more or receive intervention and reassess to show proficiency.
 - **Standards Based Grade Reporting:** The scores of the learning targets are combined to calculate a standard grade. The final grade of a course is an average of all of the standards within that course. This would be a summative grade based on the student's proficiency and target based grading results.
 - **Guaranteed Curriculum:** Where priority standards are selected, taught, and reported against.
 - **Viable Curriculum:** Assurance that the selected priority standards can be taught within the given timeframe.
 - **Formative Assessments:** Formative assessments is when the skill is being developed. The action of learning and practicing. Examples include homework, quizzes, classroom work.
 - **Summative Assessments:** Summative assessment is the final check of proficiency. Examples include tests and evidence that the student can perform an understanding of the skill.
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Proposed Grading Scale:

- Proficient = Student has fully demonstrated content proficiency and skill application of the outcomes for the particular target at this point in the school year.
- Approaching = Student has demonstrated partial proficiency of the expected content/skills in the assessment. Partial development indicates progress with gaps in understanding or perhaps certain misconceptions
- Needs Support = Student has demonstrated little evidence on identified outcomes. The student has large gaps in understanding and/or application and is able to show success only with significant adult assistance.

Target Based Learning Frequently Asked Questions:

Why change everything, it's been this way for 100+ years and it worked okay when I was in school?

The past system of giving a grade to every assignment is not the best learning approach for our students. This process gives grades for every assignment in the classroom and does not guarantee a focus on the end result of proficiency of the learning standards.

Consider this example: If your end goal (the standard) is to bake a blue ribbon cake at the country fair, would you want the judge to see the very first cake you ever baked from a new recipe? Would you want that first cake to be given a grade based on that initial performance? Or, would you prefer to have an opportunity to practice, and perfect, your application of the new recipe (homework and classroom teaching) before presenting your final product to the judge (the test)? (Your learning targets along the way might be to master your ingredient measurements, perfect your baking time, and master the art of cake decorating.)

Or this example: If the end goal (the standard) is to win a basketball game, would you ask your coach and team to compete without time to practice and perfect their skills? Instead, we give them time to practice and develop their abilities (comparable to homework and classroom teaching), before we enter a competition where a score is being kept and an outcome is on the line (the test). (Learning targets along the way might be to develop a good jump shot, become effective at the free throw line, and learn a zone defense.)

This philosophy of “keep working until you are proficient,” is very applicable in the real world. We want to equip students with lifelong learning skills and employability skills for their future. We believe that Standards Based Grading will promote student success in these areas. Students must take responsibility for their proficiency and become partners in their education with teachers, with both parties developing a mindset of working toward a successful goal of mastering the standards for every student at Norfolk Public Schools. The old system of a 100% grading scale does not reflect this mindset and it is statistically inaccurate. The old system measures what the student completed and turned in versus accurately measuring what the student knows and evidence of what the student can do at the end of the learning period.

Are other schools doing this? Does the NPS Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education know you are doing this?

Yes, other school districts in the state of Nebraska, and across the country, are adopting target based instruction and standards based grading. The Norfolk Public Schools Board of Education approved this strategic planning goal (March 2018) and they are excited for this enhancement to promote student success. The Nebraska Department of Education supports target based instruction and standards based grading as an option for school districts and works closely with our school district to support implementation.

Are you saying that students will earn the equivalent of an A, C, or F in each class? I'm worried about my B (or D) level students and how this might negatively impact them?

The intention is to move away from the traditional grade system of the past and instead focus on proficiency of the skills. We know that this will take some time to adjust. The goal is for the student to become proficient in the learning target and multiple options will be made available to students to become proficient. If needed, assessments will be able to be retaken and opportunities will be given for the student to receive more instruction and additional practice in order to improve the assessment proficiency. The ultimate goal is to ensure that all students are proficient in the learning target.

When will this start?

Gradual implementation through 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, with an end goal for full implementation by 08/2021. There are many variables in this implementation timetable that may alter the final implementation date, with Infinite Campus integration being an important piece. A few classrooms throughout the district are currently piloting implementation. We are monitoring these classrooms to fine-tune the process before full implementation district-wide.

What about scholarship applications and college applications that ask for a GPA? How will this impact those?

Although we are not aware of every application in the United States, a very large majority use ACT and SAT courses for their measurement of grades. We believe that a move to TBG will only help students in their quest for a high ACT/SAT score because they will be proficient in the skills evaluated on those tests. As we continue to spend the next two years fine-tuning the TBG process, before district-wide rollout, we will continue to look at this question. The mission of Norfolk Public Schools is to prepare all students to pursue their goals for the future. This includes successful college and scholarship applications.

What will my student's transcript look like?

This is a question that a lot of people are asking. And to be honest, we are still perfecting it and cannot answer you with 100% certainty at this point (2019). We are actively working on this, talking to other school districts that have converted to TBG, and looking for the best application in regard to transcripts.

I've heard you are eliminating the Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) program as a result of the implementation of TBG. Is that true?

This is not true. There will always be an opportunity for gifted students to pursue higher level coursework at NPS. As we continue to develop the definition of "proficient", we will continue to explore the role of Honors and AP courses.

I've heard that TBG will eliminate the Valedictorian and Salutatorian honor at graduation. Is that true? What about class rank and graduation with honors, are those being eliminated too?

This is not true. We have two years to perfect the reporting details (transcript) of TBG and we know that it will make some changes to the format of the transcript, but we have no intention of eliminating any of these opportunities that honor our graduates with exceptional academic performance at graduation.

What implications could this have for students that have language barriers, special education needs, or students that join our school district mid-term?

As with all students at Norfolk Public Schools, the goal of target based instruction is to ensure all students are proficient in the district learning targets, students identified as either a student with special needs through a 504 or IEP and/or ELL are provided the necessary modifications and accommodations on an individual basis. Students may work toward modified targets but still reach proficiency based on those modifications. NPS will follow the same transition plan with students entering in the middle of the year by reviewing school/student information data.

If I have more questions, who can I contact?

If you have concerns about target based instruction and standards based grading, we would love to hear from you. We encourage you to visit with your school principal or email Beth Nelson at bethnelson@npsne.org.

Sincerely,

Beth Nelson, Director of Teaching and Learning, and the Target Based Learning Strategic Action Plan Committee