Standards-Based Grading

How to Get Started

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Standards-Based Grading: How to Get Started

Many districts have moved towards -- or have been considering moving towards -- a standards-based approach to learning and grading. Deciding to move from traditional grading to a standards-based model takes planning and teacher preparation, but in the end, it can greatly impact the education you are providing to your students. Schoology's new Standards-based Gradebook is a feature that will help districts track student progress toward mastery of standards, which is the basis of standards-based or standards-referenced grading.

If you are considering using Schoology's new Standards-based Gradebook, there are a few things that you need to keep in mind:

- The Standards-based Gradebook has been developed around a centralized approach toward tracking standards. That means that all standards being tracked are centrally organized at the district level.
- When using Schoology's Standards-based Gradebook, all sets of standards must have the same number of levels within the standards hierarchy.
- To use Schoology's Standards-based Gradebook, teachers and administrators must receive initial training on how to use the basic functionality within Schoology before learning how to use the standards within the system.
- The initial version of the Standards-based Gradebook will not include assessments delivered through our Assessment Management Platform (AMP).

Before getting started with Schoology's Standards-based Gradebook, your district needs to determine which standards should be loaded for teachers, how many levels will be in the hierarchy, what proficiency scale will be used, and which calculation method will be used to track mastery at a course level. Because Schoology's Standards-based Gradebook relies upon a centralized approach, decisions made will impact how the Standards-based Gradebook will function across all courses in the system.

Standards

There are many options when it comes to selecting which standards will be tracked at a systems level. The following set of questions will guide your decisions around standards for your district. Even though different content areas and/or grade levels might have different standard configurations, to use Schoology's Standards-based Gradebook, there must be consistency in levels of standards, the proficiency scale and the calculation method.

The overarching question is: Does your district currently track student performance based on standards or are you moving towards that practice? Regardless, the following questions will need thoughtful consideration:

- Which standards are you using? Common Core State Standards (CCSS)? State Standards? Content-specific Standards, like NGSS? District priority or power standards?

- You do not have to choose only one set of standards. For example, some districts use Common Core for ELA and Math and develop their own or use state standards for other subjects.
- On how many levels of standards will your hierarchy be structured?
  - Within Common Core Math, for example, there are 3 levels of standards: a domain at the top level, a topic in the middle level, and the standard which is the lower, more detailed level.
  - If you have (or will create) your own, you can decide how many levels make sense.

Whether you are already tracking standards or just starting down this path, the first step toward using Schoology's Standards-based Gradebook is determining which standards will be tracked and how many levels will be represented in your hierarchy.

Standards Hierarchy

In Schoology's current Mastery view, all aligned standards appear at the same level as there is no hierarchy. Whether tracked standards come from CCSS, State Standards, NGSS, or custom learning objectives, they all appear in a flat structure. Schoology's new Standards-based Gradebook, however, recognizes that standards are organized through a hierarchy, and seeing information at the higher levels can provide insights into student progress on topics and domains. For districts or schools using a standards-based report card or reporting system, the larger domains or topics are usually what is reported, not the standards that fall underneath.

In the new Standards-Based Gradebook, each standard now needs to be part of a standards hierarchy. With a hierarchy, teachers will be able to drill down through the levels to the standard being tracked. Scores that are earned by students will "roll up" into domains and topics, showing progress at broader levels and allowing districts to do more with longitudinal data. That means that districts will need to decide how many "levels" will be part of their hierarchical structure -- and that structure will apply to all grade levels and content areas. Once you have determined the standards being tracked and levels of hierarchy, you will need to establish an ID scheme.

External IDs

In the same way that every student has a unique student ID, each standard needs to have a unique External ID. If you are using Common Core, State Standards, or are already tracking standards in another system, one or more levels may already have an ID that can be used. In some cases, however, you may have to develop your own scheme. If you are creating your own district standards, we recommend that you create an External ID scheme that serves two purposes: having unique IDs and providing information about the standard as well.

As an example, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have unique IDs for their standards but not at the higher levels in their hierarchy. If you are using more than the "standard level" of CCSS, you will need to create IDs for the higher levels.

Here is how an ID for CCSS breaks down:
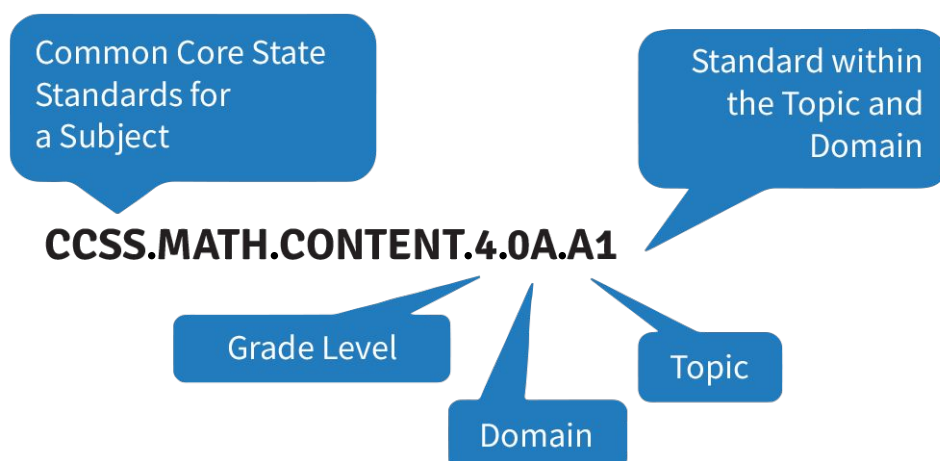
The ID above shows this is a math standard for 4th grade, it belongs to the Operations & Algebraic thinking domain, and it is the first standard within the first topic of that domain. However, there is no ID just the domain or topic.

The hierarchy and external ID for this standard could look like this if you were using 3 levels in the hierarchy:
- Hierarchy Level 1: Operations & Algebraic Thinking (External ID = CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.OA)
  - Hierarchy Level 2: Use the four operations with whole numbers to solve problems. (External ID = CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.OA.A)
    - Hierarchy Level 3: Interpret a multiplication equation as a comparison, e.g., interpret 35 = 5 × 7 as a statement that 35 is 5 times as many as 7 and 7 times as many as 5. Represent verbal statements of multiplicative comparisons as multiplication equations (External ID = CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.4.OA.A.1)

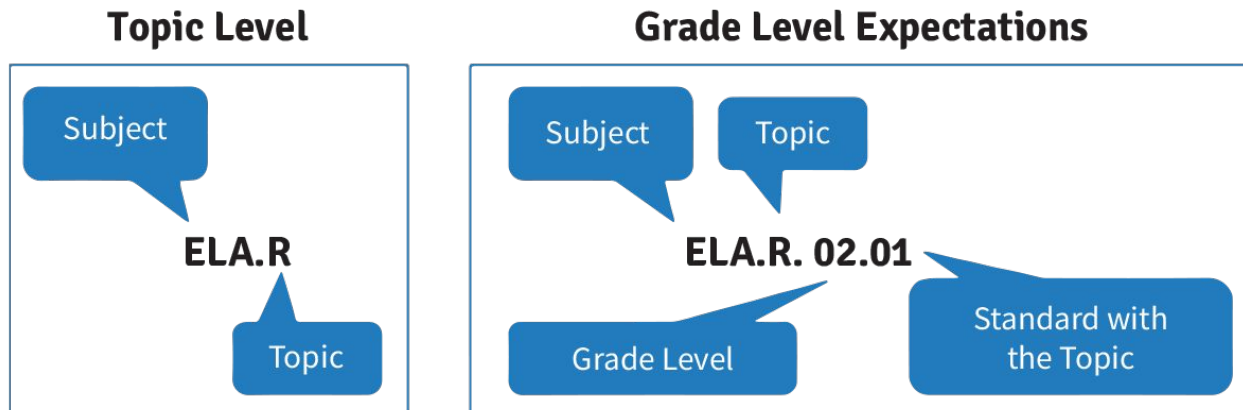Or, you could choose to have two levels in your hierarchy :
- Hierarchy Level 1: Operations & Algebraic Thinking (External ID = CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.OA)
  - Hierarchy Level 2: Interpret a multiplication equation as a comparison, e.g., interpret 35 = 5 × 7 as a statement that 35 is 5 times as many as 7 and 7 times as many as 5. Represent verbal statements of multiplicative comparisons as multiplication equations (External ID = CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.4.OA.A.1)

In the examples above, the grade level (4) has been removed because the domain applies to multiple grade levels, not just grade 4.

The External ID field can also be used to tie standards in Schoology back to any other system you use. If you are currently storing standards in your SIS or another system, they may already have an ID associated with each standard. Or, if you are looking to leverage the IMS CASE repository for tracking standards, this would be the place to store the CASE GUID in Schoology.

If you are considering creating your own district standards, you will need to develop an ID system for those standards.

For example, maybe as a district you decide you want to track progress for English Language Arts in the areas of Reading, Writing, Grammar, and Speaking & Listening. From there, develop grade level standards within which your students will demonstrate mastery. With this situation, you would have two levels of standards; a top level that is general and could be used for district level data analysis on various topics and a lower level that would set the expectations for what should be delivered in each grade level. The IDs for the standards could look like this:

Topic Level

Subject

ELA.R

Topic

Grade Level Expectations

Subject   Topic

ELA.R. 02.01

Grade Level

Standard with the Topic

For this example, you would have the following:
- Hierarchy Level 1: ELA.R - Represents English Language Arts - Reading
  - Hierarchy Level 2: ELA.R.02.01 - Represents the first standard for Reading for 2nd Grade
  - Hierarchy Level 2: ELA.R.02.02 - Represents the second standard for Reading for 2nd Grade
  - Hierarchy Level 2: ELA.R.02.03 - Represents the third standard for Reading for 2nd Grade
  - Etc.
- Hierarchy Level 1: ELA.W - Represents English Language Arts - Writing
  - Hierarchy Level 2: ELA.W.02.01 - Represents the first standard for Writing for 2nd Grade
  - Hierarchy Level 2: ELA.W.02.02 - Represents the second standard for Writing for 2nd Grade
  - Hierarchy Level 2: ELA.W.02.03 - Represents the third standard for Writing for 2nd Grade
  - Etc.

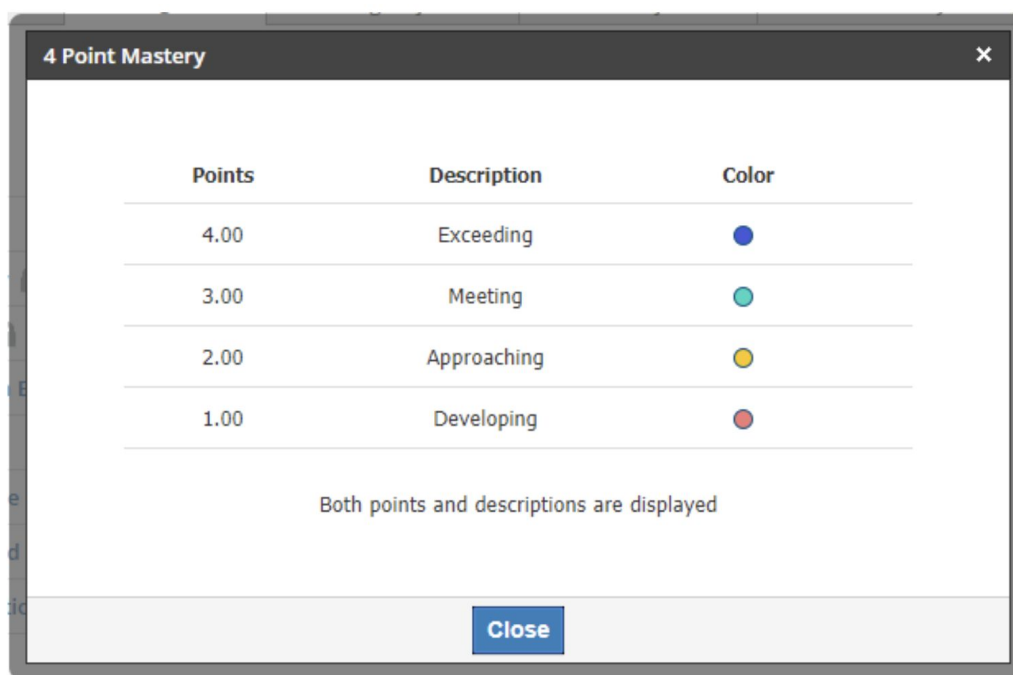If the hierarchy will contain multiple levels of standards, a parent/child relationship is formed. In the example above, each hierarchy level has a unique ID. To make the connection between the Grade Level Expectation and the Top Level standard, each Grade Level Expectation will also have a Parent ID. In this case, each of the Reading Grade Level Expectations would have a Parent ID of ELA.R linking it to the Reading topic.

Remember that IDs need to be unique identifiers, every standard needs to have an ID, and every child standard will need to have an ID for a parent standard to which it is linked.

Proficiency Scales

When using a standards-based approach, a proficiency scale determines how student progress is measured. In addition to specifying a grading scale that will be used for proficiency, the district must also determine how a proficiency scale score will be calculated when combined with other scores. Schoology's Standards-based Gradebook only supports a Points scale when determining a proficiency scale. The most common scales used are 4 Point Scales (with or without a 0) and a ½ Point Scale that goes from 0 to 4.

Schoology has a default 4 Point Mastery scale already built in that can be used (seen below). Districts can also create their own to match their policies and proficiency language.

4 Point Mastery   ✕

Points	Description	Color
4.00	Exceeding	●
3.00	Meeting	●
2.00	Approaching	●
1.00	Developing	●

Both points and descriptions are displayed

Close

If choosing to use a custom, district-created scale, the grading scale must first be set up under the **Tools>School Management>Grade Settings>Grading Scales tab**. This is where you can add a points-based scale or use one you've already created. When creating a scale, be mindful of the following:

● The point value gives a breakdown for the description for the score.
● Teachers have the option of entering decimals. If a student is between a 2 and a 3 for a learning objective, a teacher can enter a 2.5.
● A district has the option to a) display both Points and the Description, b) only Points or c) only the Description.

- Each level can be assigned its own color.
- The calculation for standards will always display two decimal places.

Add Grading Scale   ✕

Based on: Percentage · Points

Scale Name: *   [   ]

Levels must be ordered highest to lowest

Pts   Description   Color
[   ]   [   ]   🔵 Blue   ▼

⊕ Add Level

Display:
◉ Both Points and Descriptions
○ Points Only
○ Descriptions Only

                                    Save Changes   Cancel

The table below shows a sample 4 point scale. A teacher can still enter in ½ points for students, but a student will not receive the next level description until that point value is reached.

4 Point Scale		Example of Descriptions
Points	Range	
4	4.00 or higher	Exceeding, Exceeds Expectations, Advanced
3	3.00 to 3.99	Meeting, Meets Expectations, Proficient
2	2.00 to 2.99	Approaching, Developing, Below Proficient
1	1.00 to 1.99	Developing, Beginning, Does Not Meet
0	0 to .99	No Evidence, Not Yet, Incomplete

In some districts, if the student gets above a certain threshold, the student would receive the next level up (similar to rounding up). This could be accomplished by setting up a point scale containing multiple point values with the same description or using ½ point values in the Points column.

Once there is a points-based scale in the Grading Scales area, it will be available to select in the "District Mastery Settings" tab. Because these settings are global, the district must choose which scale will be used when scoring student work, which calculation method will be used when looking at multiple scores, and how many observations are required before a mastery score will be visible.

Grading Periods | Grading Scales | Learning Objectives | District Objectives | District Mastery Settings

District Mastery Settings

These settings affect how mastery scores are displayed and calculated for sections using district learning objectives

Mastery Grading Scale

○ 4 Point Mastery
   Schoology Default Scale

○ Fluency Scale

○ Grade 5 Written Expression Scale

● Proficiency Scale

Mastery Grade Settings

Calculate Scores with

● Decaying Average

   Weight the most recent observation: 75 %

○ Average

○ Highest

Show calculated mastery scores after 1 observations

In Summary

When using or moving to standards-based grading, many decisions need to be made around the processes and policies to support the transition. Focusing on the following can help your district thoughtfully approach this practice:

- Determine the standards that you want to use for tracking student mastery.

- Determine the number of levels for the standards hierarchy that best supports your instructional goals or existing practices.

- Create an External ID scheme to give each tracked standard a unique ID.

- Determine which proficiency scale will be used when scoring student work.

Appendix - District Mastery Learning Objective Import Specifications

To create a file that will contain the information for your standards your file must be created in a spreadsheet and contain the following fields:

Field	Description	Required	Unique	Character Limit	Supported Characters/ Validation	Possible Values (if limited)
external_id	An identifying string or number that is unique across your entire organization. This field can be used for the CASE GUID if you are pulling from a CASE repository, an internal identification system or from the standards organization itself. It can be the same at the title, but does not have to be. This field is required.	yes	yes	40	a-z, 0-9, hyphen and periods (case insensitive)	
title	This is the title of your learning objective or parent objective. It can be a short set of words (ex. Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity) or can come from outside of your organization and used track the standard back to the originating source, such as Common Core or NextGen. (ex. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.10). Learning objective titles need to be unique across the organization. Parent objective does not need to be unique.	yes	no	255	any	
display_title	The display name for the learning objective that will appear in teachers' gradebooks and student facing reports. If left blank, the 'title' above will display by default.	no	no	255	any	
description	Addition details about the learning objective that will appear in teachers' gradebooks and student facing reports	no	no	3000	any	
type	The value of "objective" indicates that this item is a learning objective that can be aligned to materials. The value of "parent" indicated that this item is an organization and reporting level that will contain learning objectives or other parents in your learning objective hierarchy. Note: case sensitive, all letters should be lowercase	yes	no	9	specified values	objective or parent

type	contain learning objectives or other parents in your learning objective hierarchy. Note: case sensitive, all letters should be lowercase	yes	no	9	specified values	objective or parent
parent_id	This field is used to identify the learning objective group for a given learning objective or parent objective. All learning objective must have the same number of parents. All parent_id inputs must reference a parent objective in this sheet or already present in your organization. If no value is given, this item will become a new root at the top of your learning objective hierarchy.	no	no	40	a-z, 0-9, hyphen and periods (case insensitive)	must be an external id of a parent objective within the same library