Why is Van Buren Elementary moving to K-6 grade standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading measures your student’s skill with the essential standards for a class, or how well your student understands the material in class. At the beginning of every unit, the teacher will break down the standards for the unit into smaller objectives and criteria using a detailed rubric. During the unit, the student is assessed to see if they truly know the material using a variety of assessments, such as traditional pencil and paper tests, projects, discussions, or reports. The class grade will be based on all of the evidence the teacher collects demonstrating skill of the essential standards.

The goal of this approach is to provide the teacher, student, and parent as accurate a picture as possible of the student’s learning and to encourage a dialogue about how the student can become skilled at the material for the class. In particular, because learning is a process that takes place over time, each assessment will provide feedback for the student about what to focus on next, and the student will be allowed to retake assessments. If the new assessments show a higher level of skill, that new score replaces the old one.

The goal of Van Buren Elementary is to report grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning, and the change to standards-based grading is an effort to reach that goal. Here is how standards-based grading addresses each of those four criteria:

**Accurate:** By basing a student’s grade on solely academic factors, the teacher creates a clear picture of what the student has learned without the influence of other factors. These other factors, such as effort and attitude, are still essential, but are not part of the student’s academic grade and are communicated separately.

**Consistent:** For each unit, the teacher will provide a rubric that describes exactly what the student will need to become skilled at. Using these rubrics establishes clear expectations for skill acquisition up front and applies them consistently throughout the unit and semester.

**Meaningful:** A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place. In a standards-based classroom, scores are recorded by the essential standards rather than type, such as tests or homework, making it easier to identify areas of strength and to address areas of concern for each student.

**Supportive of Learning:** Standards-based grading supports learning by focusing on the material that has or has not been learned rather than on accumulating points to reach a certain total. The reassessment policy also supports student learning by allowing new levels of learning to replace old when a student shows improvement on an assessment.