

Why Standards Based Assessment?

Standards based assessment methods will be used for all Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division students by all SRPSD teachers from Pre-Kindergarten until Grade 12 beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

Why?

Ultimately the aim is for mastery learning and teaching. Mastery learning is defined within SRPSD as indicating an insightful understanding of the grade level outcomes. Students demonstrating mastery learning can apply and transfer knowledge to novel situations. Teachers promoting mastery learning have high expectations for students. They understand that their role is to provide quality instruction, authentic assessment and many opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate what they have learned. Rubric scores will be applied to evidence of student learning and opportunities for re-learning and reassessment will be provided. This growth mindset approach will increase student achievement to mastery levels.

The advantages of using standards based assessment methods are outlined in the table below.

Standards based assessment	Traditional assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• individualizes learning• shows the steps for improvement• clarifies the learning outcomes• promotes student growth• marks become more transparent• students take ownership for learning• ends the reliance on the average	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• does not provide enough information• does not always show the learning• focus is on assignments not outcomes• can limit student learning• is not fully transparent• is inconsistent

Todd Rose, a faculty member of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, perhaps is best able to summarize the reasons for this approach when he advocates for what he calls the “End of the Average”. Rose states that breakthroughs in the field of cancer research occurred only after attention changed from the average to the individual. Treatments for cancer have become more effective as they have become individualized. The same holds true he declares for student learning. Standards based assessment identifies for each individual student the specific feedback they require for mastery learning to occur.

Todd Rose’s ‘8 in 8’ talk: [The End of Average](#) or article [Myth of the Average](#) eloquently expand on this idea.

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education has been developing new curricula for almost the last decade. All Pre-Kindergarten until grade 9 subjects have new curricula. The Ministry has written new curricula for the high school ELA, Math, Science, Wellness 10 and some of the Fine Arts courses but the process is not complete. All new curricula use the standards based approach. Grade 10 to 12 students and teachers have been learning and teaching in both the new and the old curricula with the new and traditional assessment practices.

Students must have a minimum of 24 credits to graduate. The Ministry still requires school divisions to submit student marks in the form of a percentage. SRPSD students will have their percentages marks assigned at the end of a course. The rubric scores for high school courses have been expanded to include high, mid and low ranges for each of the levels. The intention is to allow students and parents to make relatively accurate percentage conversions if they feel it is necessary. The conversion table for [high school courses](#) is the following:

Rubric Descriptor	Grade 10-12 Rubric Level	Percentage Points Range
Mastery	4+	96 – 100
	4	91 - 95
	4-	86-90
Proficiency	3+	81-85
	3	76-80
	3-	71-75
Approaching	2+	66-70
	2	61-65
	2-	56-60
Beginning	1+	50-55
	1	43-49
	1-	36-42

Standards based assessment involves but is not exclusive to the use of rubrics which have been used in SRPSD for almost a decade. The advantages of their use can be considered at the following link: [Rubrics versus Percentages](#)

The universal use of standards based assessment will require some change and change can be uncomfortable. If you have any questions please contact your school administration or send an email to [Randy Emmerson - Superintendent of Schools](#) by clicking on his name or by using his email address – remmerson@srsd119.ca.

Greater understanding will occur through the dialogue.