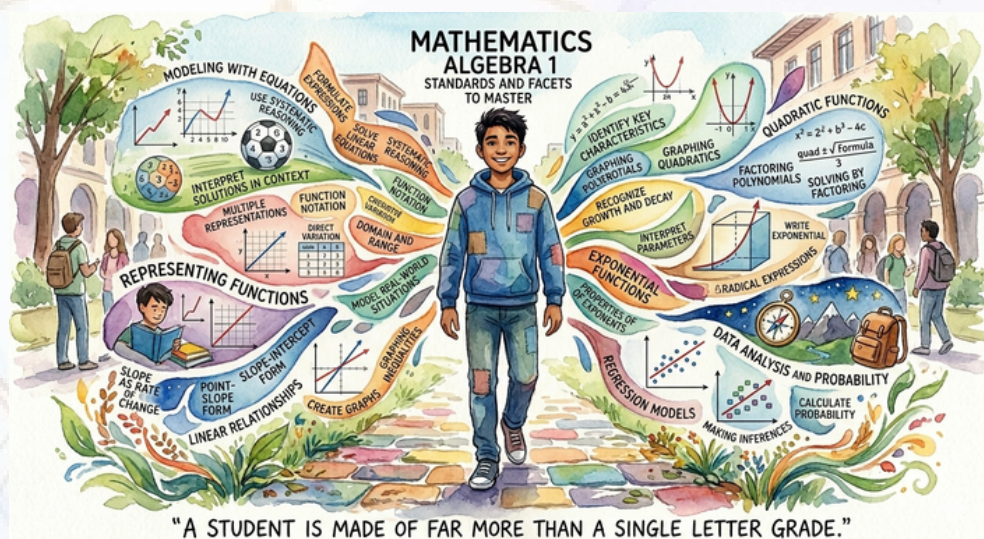


The Learning Compass - Vol 1 - Issue 10

**Let's
Explore
This
Together**



We're obsessed with measuring student learning, yet our grading systems often obscure what students actually know.

A student gets a 'B' in maths. What does that actually tell you?

Did they master algebra but struggle with geometry? Ace problem-solving but forget homework (do our assessments ever reflect the student's consistency and learning throughout the term?) Did the student start weak but finish strong, or coast after early success? Traditional grades lump everything together, like understanding, behaviour, effort, punctuality, etc., into a single letter that tells us almost nothing about actual learning or the student's journey.

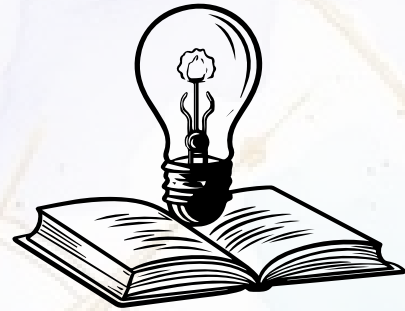
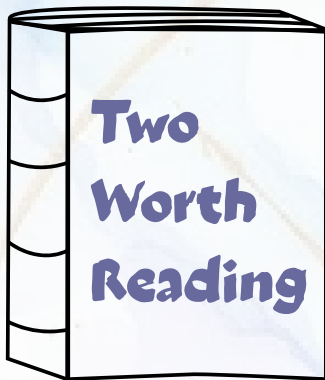
Standards-based grading (SBG) asks one radical question: "What can the student do?" Instead of averaging everything, it assesses each skill separately. Instead of mixing compliance with competence, SBG focuses purely on learning and recognising growth.

The pushback is predictable: "It's too complicated." "Parents won't understand it." "Universities need letter grades" (but why treat each grade as the last one before university?). Fair concerns. But here's the harder question: if our current system doesn't show what students actually know, why are we using it?

The truth? Implementing standards-based grading exposes how unclear we've been about what we're teaching. When you define exact learning standards and assess them individually, you can't hide behind vague curriculum guides. SBG demands clarity about learning outcomes, and that clarity reveals that we haven't been intentional towards it.

That clarity is disconcerting. It's also transformative. Here's where schools stumble: they treat SBG as a grading system when it's actually a cultural shift. It requires teachers to collaboratively define what proficiency looks like, students to understand their progress, and leaders to build systems that support consistency.

The path isn't adopting new software; it's asking harder questions: What do we actually value? This isn't about perfection from day one. It's about acknowledging that the traditional system serves institutional convenience more than students' learning, and that we have better options available if we're willing to do the hard work of implementation.



1. Research Spotlight: Robert Marzano on Standards-Based Grading

Marzano's research shows that when schools separate academic achievement from behaviour and work habits, assessment accuracy increases significantly. Students in SBG systems demonstrate clearer understanding of their own learning gaps and show increased motivation because progress becomes visible. For leaders, the key finding is that consistency in grading practices across classrooms matters more than the specific scale used.



2. A Didactic Explanation of Standards-based Grading

This document on Standards-Based Grading (SBG) emphasises how grades should reflect students' mastery of specific learning standards. It explains the core components of SBG, including aligned standards, assessments, and proficiency-based reporting. The author, Bo Zhang, also addresses common challenges and misconceptions that arise during implementation.



Three to Try

The Standards Clarity Test



Pick one subject at one year level. Ask every teacher to list the five most important skills students should master. Compare the lists. If they vary wildly, you've found why consistent grading is impossible. Address this first.

The Retake Policy Audit



Review the current retake and reassessment policies across departments. Are they consistent? Do they reflect a growth mindset? Schools serious about standards-based grading allow students to demonstrate mastery whenever they achieve it not just on the first attempt. If your policies don't support this, that's the conversation to have first.

Tool/Resource: Collaborative Rubric Development



Before adopting any platform or policy, invest in building shared understanding. Use protocols where teachers bring student work samples, discuss proficiency, and calibrate assessments together. Start with conversations, not software. Rushed implementation fails. Always.

On My Radar



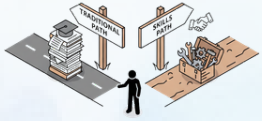
1. AI tools are making student writing indistinguishable from authentic work how do we assess writing when we can't verify authorship? This might force us to rethink what we value in student work entirely.



2. Screen time debates ignore the real question: not how much time students spend on devices, but whether that time involves passive consumption or active creation and critical engagement.



3. Teacher wellbeing programmes proliferate whilst workload remains unchanged yoga sessions don't fix systemic overload. Are we addressing symptoms whilst ignoring root causes?



4. The gap between how universities assess (essays, exams, projects) and how workplaces evaluate talent (portfolios, demonstrations, real-world problem-solving) keeps widening. Who should schools prepare students for?

**If you're considering SBG, what's the one question keeping you from moving forward? If you've implemented it, what's the one thing you wish you'd known before starting?
Hit reply—let's learn from each other.**

Elevating Education to Excellence for Impact,

H. Anand

Chief Education Officer



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Excellence for Impact