In American today, most schools across the country uses a grading system that has been used for many years. From kindergarten to the time you are a senior in high school, and even into college, schools and universities use a grading scale that uses the letters A through F. Most people understand this system since they have used it for all, or most, of their lives. In this system, getting an A means you did extremely well is the class, and an F means that you failed. This grading scale is supposed to show how well, and how much you learned in a class. Even though this system has been used for many years, one must ask, does this system actually work? Do students actually learn what they are supposed to learn? The current system does not provide students an actual opportunity to learn in school. It puts students in a situation where all they have to do memorize a topic for one test, and then they never have to remember it again. The students do not actually learn and instead, waster time by memorizing and forgetting a month later. Standards based grading is a system that will fix this problem. The concept behind standards based grading is: instead of a grading scale where the letters of A through F are used, numbers are used. The number scale used can be any variation of numbers, as long as it is consistent. For example, instead of A through F, the system would use the numbers one through five. The standards based grading system measures actual learning by looking at how proficient a student is in different areas of a subject. If a student is proficient in an area, they would receive a five. If they are not proficient then they would receive a one. The difference between the standards based grading system, and the system commonly used today, is that students are tested over and over again to make sure that they are proficient in a subject. If a student gets a five the first time they are introduced to a topic, they will have to continue to get fives until the course is over. This ensures that students actually learn a topic, instead of memorizing it for a short period of time. Standards based grading also allows students to learn at different paces. If a student learns slower than their peers, the standards based grading system allows them to have the chance to learn as their peers. If a student gets low standards on a topic, the have each retest to show that they have learned, and have become proficient. This way, if students do not learn right away, they have many weeks to actually learn the subject. People will argue against this system because it goes against what we have used for a very long time. They will argue that this system will be abused and will not work. Eliminating the current grading system; and replacing it with standards based grading will create a system where students actually learn. Standards based grading will change the landscapes of school, and will greatly affect the students. It will have to be implemented in all subjects, and will have to be used correctly and not abused.

The grading system that most of America uses today fits perfectly into the curriculum that they use. It allows a consistent method of grading and fits into every subject. The problem is students are not actually learning. A student can receive a letter grade, and not actually deserve it. The perfect fit of the A through F scale comes at the cost of the student’s actual education. The standards based grading system will dramatically change this. Critics will say that it will be very difficult to apply standards based grading into all the subjects taught at school. First, to make sense of the how it will be applied in school, one has to understand how the system works. The standards based grading system I will be referring to is one used in a blog titles: Standards-Based Grading Implementation. The author of this blog describes what he thinks the scale for standards should be. He believes that schools should use a zero to four grading scale. Zero is a marking a student receives when they have absolutely no evidence of learning. A one shows that the student can do most of the simple stuff without any help, a two shows that the student can do all of the simple things, and a three shows that the student can do all of the simple and complex things. A student only receives a four when they show that they can go above and beyond just basic memorization. A four is given to a student when they can actually apply what the learned. Students can also receive half points if they are somewhere in between two numbers. After a student receives a zero through four rating, they are continuously retested to make sure that they learned it, instead of just memorizing it. The standards based grading system also allows students to learn at different rates. Most teachers that use standards based elect not to require homework to be due, but still assign it. This is important because it gives the students different opportunities. Some students need to do homework, and they know this. Other students do not need to do work outside of school, because they get learn the material faster. The system is also based on trust. Teachers have to trust that their students will do the homework if the need to, and have to trust that they will understand that if they do not do the extra things, and they need too, they will fail. Since students are granted more freedom with this system, they are more willing to learn. Instead of being told what to do, and being rewarded for compliance, students are given the chance to actually learn and are rewarded for creativity. In most situations, the freedom the students are given makes them more willing to study, and learn material.

Understanding how standards based grading works allows it to be put into the different subjects taught in schools. Standards based grading can be easily put into subjects such as Math and Science. In Math, you can look at how well students understand different topics, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and much more. If a student can apply these things after they learn them, they are obviously proficient and will receive the highest number. In Science, students can show a great understanding if they can show how to apply the things they learn in science into the real world. If they can do this, they would receive the highest number. It only becomes difficult to apply standards based grading when talking about English and Social Studies. To apply standards based to Social Studies, a teacher could teach as they always do, but require the students to be able to apply the knowledge of government into other countries around the world. To be able to do this, students would have to understand how many different types of government worked and would have to have an understanding of countries. Having an understanding of countries and governments would give students the ability to recommend and make plans for these countries that would benefit them. If students were able to do this, they would receive the highest number given. The implementation of standards based grading in English is what critics of standards based will call its downfall. To fit English into the standards based system, schools and teachers have to change how English is taught. The topics in the subject of English would include things such as introduction writing, creating thesis’s, having solid body writing (where body paragraphs are well formed and stay on topic), and conclusion writing. To show that a student is proficient in these things, they would have to create an almost perfect paper. They would have to spend many weeks writing it and researching their topic. If a student created a paper that was virtually flawless, and was well written and truly intrigued the reader, they would receive the highest number they could receive. To give English even more of a standards based feel, teachers could allow students to write what the truly care about. The students could pick any topic they wanted, as long as they could create a well-structured paper. Teachers could also require students to create many different types of papers, such as research and persuasive.

Some people might argue that the English aspect of standards based grading sound just like English does now. They might argue that there is no difference between the two systems, and because of the similarities, that the effort of changing the grading scale across America would be too much for too little reward. The main difference that standards based would offer students in English would be the fact that they get to choose what they write about, and how they write it. If students had this opportunity, they would find writing English papers more enjoyable. Employing standards based grading in schools across America would provide students with the chance to actually learn instead of memorizing pointless material that they will never remember. This aspect of standards based grading would have a great effect of the student population of America.

When asked about how they feel towards school, most students will tell you that they greatly dislike it. When children come home and their parents ask them what they learned at school and they respond with “I don’t know” or “nothing” it proves that the current system that most of America uses is not working. Standards based grading would make school more enjoyable for the students, and would actually permit them to learn something, instead of simply going through the motions of school. According to www.ascd.org there are several reasons why standards based grading is good for students. Standards based gives grades a meaning. Instead of just getting a simple A, B, C, D, or F, a student really knows how much they understand a topic. The system puts learning into perspective for the students so they know what they actually know. Standards based grading also removes meaningless paperwork. If students do not need extra work, then they do not have to do it. This would give students more time to work on other classes that they might not be as proficient in, and would also allow them less stress at home which comes with having to constantly do homework. The standards system also teaches students what quality looks like. Having students go above and beyond to get a high number teaches them how to put effort into their work, and teaches them to be self-sufficient. When students are exposed to standards based grading, the reaction is predominantly good. Students feel that they are actually learning something and that going to school and class is not pointless. From personal experience I can agree with this. When I was put into a class that used standards it quickly became one of my favorite classes I had ever taken. I found going to class enjoyable and when I left the class, the grade I received felt deserved. I knew exactly what I had learned, and to this day I still remember what was taught.