



The Rutherford Public Schools is proud to introduce standards-based report cards for grades K-5 this school year 2013-2014. The change to a standards-based report card comes from a need to communicate what students are expected to know and be able to do as set forth in the Common Core State Standards. This new report card will benefit students, teachers and parents/guardians.

As a reminder, the standards-based report card is a shift from a traditional report card in several ways:

- There will be no traditional letter grades on your child's report card.
- Report cards will reflect progress that your child is making on specific skills selected from the Common Core State Standards or the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards in each subject area.

Progress will be evaluated as the following:

- 4 – Exceeding expectations
- 3 – Meeting expectations
- 2 – Working toward expectations
- 1 – Not meeting expectations
- NA – Not Assessed at this time

With the previous report cards, letter grades were calculated by combining how well the student met his/her teacher's expectations, how the student performed on assignments and tests, and how much effort the teacher believed the student put in, but it did not inform parents which skills their children had mastered or whether they were working at grade level. Simply stating that a student earned a "C" in mathematics does not help a student or their families know what the student can or cannot do.

The new standards-based report card goes beyond just a letter grade. It informs parents if their child has met the standards by the end of the grade and tells what areas may still be in need of remediation. It lists the most important skills students should learn in each subject at a particular grade level. It will provide parents with a more detailed outline of the expectations in each of the major academic areas. We believe that your understanding of what is expected of your child and how well he or she is progressing towards the goals at their grade level is very important. We look forward to working together to provide your child with the knowledge and tools to be successful and to reach his or her fullest potential.

1. What is standards-based grade reporting?

A standards-based grade reporting system is designed to inform parents about their child's progress towards achieving specific learning standards. They describe what students should know and be able to do, and serve as the basis for the curriculum, instruction and assessment model.

2. Why was the report card changed to the standards-based report card?

The report card was changed to provide more information to parents about student progress on the Common Core State Standards. On a traditional report card, students receive one grade for reading, one for math, one for science and so on. On a standards-based report card, each of these subject areas is further expanded by a list of skills and knowledge students are responsible for learning. Students receive a separate mark for each indicator.

3. What is the purpose of the standards-based report card?

The purpose of the standards-based report card is to provide feedback that is more detailed to parents regarding the progress their children are making towards specific content indicators at each grade level. This report card allows parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected at each grade level. With this understanding, parents will be better able to guide and support their child, helping him/her to be successful in a rigorous academic program.

4. How does the standards-based report card compare to the traditional letter grade system?

Standards-based report card reporting is different from traditional letter grade reporting. Letter or numerical grades are often calculated by combining how well the student met a teacher's expectations, how the student performed on assignments and tests, how much effort the teacher believed the student put in and how the student is doing in comparison to classmates. Letter or numeral grades do not tell parents which skills their child has mastered or where he or she is working at grade level. The standards-based report card measures how well an individual student is doing in relation to the grade level standards, not the work of other students. This will give parents a better understanding of their child's progress and encourage all students to do their best.

5. How can your child exceed the standards?

Another change for students is understanding the concept of exceeding the standard. Exceeding is not the equivalent of an A on a traditional report card. For example, if a first grader received A's on every math test during the marking period, he or she would probably receive an A on a traditional report card. If those math tests measured only the

concepts first graders are expected to master, those A's would be the equivalent of meeting the standard on a standards-based report card; the student is doing what he or she should be doing very well, but not necessarily more. Standards-based report cards encourage students to demonstrate their ability to apply skills and knowledge beyond grade level expectations. Performance is characterized by self-motivation and the ability to apply skills with consistent accuracy, independence, and a high level of quality.

6. Why not have a standards-based system as an additional reporting component to the traditional report card?

Traditional grading for elementary level students does not communicate to parents what teachers want them to know about their child's progress. The elementary level is based on a development model where learning is valued as a process. Traditional letter and numerical grades and standards-based rubrics do not assess in the same way and therefore are not compatible to one another.

7. Won't the entire grade level receive the same grades, mostly 2's and 3's?

Learning is a process and it should be expected that repeated exposure and experiences are necessary to gain ownership of new skills and strategies. An assessment score of 2 indicates the student is progressing toward the standard. Once a student demonstrates thorough understanding of concepts and skills with a performance characterized by the ability to apply skills with accuracy and quality, he or she would receive a 3. This move from a 2 to a 3 can take place at any point during the school year and is very student specific. Once a student demonstrates he or she meets the standard, they can then consistently demonstrate their ability to apply a thorough in-depth knowledge of basic and extended concepts and skills with performance characterized by self-motivation and the ability to apply skills with consistent accuracy, independence and a high level of quality. This would result in a 4. This again is very student specific and can occur at any time during the school year.

8. My child has an IEP. How will he or she be assessed?

There are modifications and accommodations in your child's IEP to support his or her progress on grade level standards as assessed on a standards-based report card.

9. Does this new system place more emphasis on daily interactions between teacher and student as opposed to standardized scores?

Neither traditional nor standards-based report cards rely solely on standardized test scores. A major characteristic of elementary assessment has always been the daily interaction throughout the process of learning. Standards-based report cards better provide for in-depth communication on the continuum of learning.

10. How do you expect parents to explain to their children why they did not get a 4?

It is important that parents and teachers have honest conversations with students. Some concepts and skills are more difficult to grasp than others, but given time and motivation, students can continually challenge themselves. Attitudes are contagious and it is important that adults involved convey to the child that learning is a process that needs to be respected. A score of 2 while learning a new skill or concept is appropriate. A score of 3 demonstrating mastery is to be celebrated. A score of 4 indicates a strength being recognized that is above and beyond the grade level expectations. Please do not place a burden on your child if they are not at a 4. A 4 level does not indicate an A grade. It indicates that your child has exceeded the grade level expectations; this may be something that occurs only in some standards but not all, and it may not happen until the very end of the school year.