

Elementary Standards-Based Report Cards FAQ's

Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, Kindergarten through sixth grade will be using standards-based grading.

Why were the elementary report card and grading guidelines revised?

The elementary curriculum and instructional methods have undergone significant revisions since the last versions of the K-6 report cards were originally developed. These include the adoption of new instructional materials, the consistent and pervasive use of research-based best instructional practices, and the alignment of the curriculum with the PA Core Standards for ELA and Mathematics. We want to improve student achievement for every student. Research supports standards-based grading and reporting as a basis of communication that will help students learn more effectively through ongoing feedback. Providing specific and frequent feedback has proven to be a factor in increasing student achievement. There is also a greater emphasis on improving parent communication regarding student progress toward essential learning. This communication will help to promote more effective home-school support, intervention, and enrichment. Parents and guardians will now be able to identify and measure progress toward meeting important end-of-grade level performance indicators. These revisions also provide a better alignment to Junior High preparation and transition, and students will be empowered to identify their strengths and areas of need.

What is a standards-based report card?

The purpose of a standards-based report card is to improve communication with parents and students about a student's progress toward meeting important end-of-grade level learning targets, which are essential skills and concepts at each grade level based on the PA Core Standards.

How were the learning targets identified?

The PA Core Standards for ELA and Math were used to identify the learning targets in grades K-6. There are more standards than we can assess at each grade level, so teachers and administrators went through a process designed to identify the standards that are most important for students to master in order to be successful in meeting the learning targets in the next grade level. OASD ELA and Math curricula is aligned to all PA Core Standards, but we are reporting out only on what the District has determined to be the "power standards" via the learning targets in each core subject.

What are the advantages of Standards-Based Grading and Reporting to students?

Learning targets are clearly articulated to the students throughout instruction. Parents and students can see which learning outcomes students have mastered and which ones need re-teaching or re-learning. Standards-based grading can change the complexion of at-home conversations between the student and parent/guardian from, "Why didn't you finish your work?" "Did you make up that quiz you missed?" and "Have you finished your project?" to "Tell me your understanding of this learning target," "How does your teacher connect your in-class work to the unit's objectives?" or "What more do you need to know and be able to do to achieve this learning target?" Some students struggle at the beginning of units, fail assessments, and give up. With standards-based grading, the student is not penalized for not knowing during the learning process and the door remains open to achieving the learning targets by the end of the school year. Students are assessed based on what they have "learned" in a standards-based system. In a traditional grading system, they are given a grade based on an average of what they have "earned".

How will student progress be measured?

Teachers will evaluate a student's level of mastery for each learning target listed on the report card using the following scale:

M = Consistently meets grade level expectations/standards

SP = Demonstrates steady progress towards meeting grade level expectations/standards

LP = Demonstrates limited progress towards the grade level expectations/standards

NA = Not Assessed at this time (some performance indicators will not be assessed every trimester)

How can I find out more information about my child's performance for each learning target?

For ELA and Math in K-6, the District has created rubrics that describe a student's performance at each level for each learning target on the report card and what types of evidence of learning teachers are using to inform their assessment of each learning target. Parents/Guardians will have access to those rubrics, along with a copy of the report card, once they have been finalized.

Why is there no measure to indicate a student exceeds the grade level expectation/standard?

Currently, we do not assess above the grade level standards. The PA Core Standards are rigorous, but if a student demonstrates early and consistent mastery of grade level learning targets, then teachers will differentiate instruction to provide more challenging activities to enrich a student's learning. We will still follow the same criteria to identify students who may qualify for gifted services.

If letter grades will no longer be given, how will students be identified for top, or accelerated classes in grades 5-7?

Currently, multiple data measures are used to place students into top ELA and/or Math classes in grades 5 and 6, and into accelerated courses in grade 7. The measures include standardized test scores (PSSA), DIBELS, easyCBM Math, Orleans-Hanna Algebra Readiness, benchmark and common assessments, teacher recommendation, and report card measures. In this case, when we factor in report card measures, we will know exactly which learning targets students have mastered and which they haven't. This will provide more specific information, together with the other measures, than a traditional letter grade did.

Will standards-based grading be practiced in grades 7-12?

At this time, there are no plans to extend standards-based grading and reporting beyond grade 6.

If a student has an IEP will he/she still receive a report based on mastery of the end of grade-level standards?

All IEP students who are participating in grade-level instruction will receive a standards-based report card. In addition, IEP students will continue to receive quarterly IEP report cards which communicate progress towards the IEP goals.

For further information or if you have additional questions, please contact your building principal, or Dr. Elena Tachau, Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

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