

Standards-based Reporting

Frequently Asked Questions

"By comparing one child's performance to a clear standard, parents, students and teachers all know precisely what is expected. Every time a student attempts a task, the performance is compared to the standard, not the other students' performances. The most important advantages for students and families are fairness, clarity, and improved learning." (Douglas B. Reeves, 101 Questions and Answers about Standards, Assessment and Accountability, 2004)

What are standards-based report cards and why are schools converting?

The standards-based report card provides information about how your child is progressing towards meeting the Common Core and New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards during the course of the school year. Standards specify what all students should know by the end of their school year.

Other positive attributes of ***standards-based report cards*** are as follows:

- Your child's performance is measured against the standard, rather than simply being compared to other students in his/her class.
- It measures how well your child is performing in relation to the grade-level standards as compared to the traditional letter-grade system that gives a compiled grade for work completed in a subject area
- It gives every child in every school the opportunity to meet or exceed Common Core and New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards.
- It gives you, the parent or guardian, a more detailed and accurate assessment of how your child is progressing academically.

What is the purpose of the Standards-based report card?

The purpose of the Standards-based report card is to provide more detailed feedback regarding the progress 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.

How does the Standards-based report card compare to the traditional letter grade system?

Standards-based reporting is different from traditional letter grade reporting. Letter 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 believes the student put in, and how the student is performing in comparison to classmates. Letter grades do not tell parents which skills their child has mastered or whether he or she is working at grade level. The Standards-Based report card measures how well an individual student is performing in relation to the grade level standards, not the work of other students. This gives parents a better understanding of their child's strengths and needs and encourages all students to do their best.

1. Students are evaluated based on what students actually know.

There are differences in the grading practices of teachers. In the same school, one teacher might base grades mostly on tests and quizzes while another awards a large number of points for homework completion. This means that an "A" in one teacher's class indicates something different than the "A" in the other teacher's class.

Standards-based grading eliminates these types of discrepancies. Rather than receiving arbitrary points or letter grades, students must demonstrate proficiency on a common list of course objectives.

2. The focus becomes learning.

Standards-based grading shifts the focus from earning points to actual learning. Rather than worrying about how much an assignment is worth, or if it is going to be graded, students must focus on mastering the content. Students also have a clearer understanding of which concepts they still need to work on and which ones they have grasped. Freeing students from the pressure of receiving a certain letter grade allows them to take more educational risks, deepening their learning.

3. Teachers have a clear understanding of a student's strengths and needs.

If a student receives an "A" as a grade, what does that really mean? Does it mean they have demonstrated mastery of 90 percent of the content, or does it mean they merely turned in 90 percent of what was assigned? If a grade book shows that a student has a 70 percent in the class and a reasonable homework average, it does not tell what the student knows and does not know. Standards-based grading allows the teacher to quickly scan a list of objectives and see where the majority of students are proficient and where many of them are still struggling. The focus is on the needs of each child. The objectives an individual student needs to work on can also be pinpointed. (A teacher can clearly state, "Your child needs to work on solving multi-step equations," instead of, "Your child needs to do better on tests and quizzes.")

Resources utilized:

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