



## **Understanding Standards-Based Report Cards in a Standards-based System**

Each grade-level K – 5 has a specific report card to communicate with parents and students where each student falls in relation to the standards in Literacy and Mathematics. In addition, each report card communicates progress towards Science and Social Studies content and Social Development Skills.

A report card is an integral part of a standards-based system. Its main purpose is to allow a teacher to accurately communicate a student's progress towards meeting content standards at specific points in a school year. The report card has more parent-friendly language than you may find in the standards.

A standards-based report card:

- provides a clear message to parents about which skills and concepts students know and are able to demonstrate in relation to established state and national standards
- helps teachers and students focus on identified end-of-year expectations from the very beginning of the year, giving students a direction for their learning
- aligns instruction, assessment, and grading with standards
- creates a higher level of consistency and continuity in assessing among teachers and across grade levels

### **What are standards?**

The MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has mandated a standards-based educational system. Standards are specific learning goals applied to all students which contain consistent targets for students to meet. Standards provide a focus for aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They are the general categories that organize knowledge within a content area. Each local school district in Massachusetts develops curriculum aligned with the MA Standards. In the Norwell Public School District, the local curriculum meets or exceeds these standards in all areas. Both the MA Standards and the district curriculum are reflected on the report card.

### **What is Standards-based Assessment?**

Standards-based assessment is based on the belief that every student can learn given adequate instruction and opportunity for practice. It allows teachers to accurately communicate achievement of learning targets or benchmarks to students and parents, as well as providing information to plan for instruction. State and national learning standards inform teachers, parents and students what skills and content students should learn at varying points in their educational experience. Developing assessments and report cards based upon learning standards measures how well

students are acquiring skills and knowledge relative to those established standards. Standards-based assessment is used to help every student understand where he or she is in relation to meeting standards so they can improve.

By aligning curriculum, assessment, and student report cards to standards, teachers measure learning against consistent, established criteria. This is different from traditional assessment and reporting, which gives a single letter or number for broad subject categories. A standards-based report card puts the emphasis on learning, rather than on a comparison between and among students. Standards-based report cards will provide more consistency between teachers over the years than traditional report cards, because all students are evaluated on the same grade-appropriate skills. Parents can see exactly which learning objectives their child has mastered.

### **How does standards-based assessing affect student motivation?**

When students can clearly see the learning goals/objectives for each activity and connect the outcome of those activities to actions that are within their control, motivation improves. In other words, when students can see that the level and amount of work they contribute to a learning activity is directly related to the outcome, they will be empowered and encouraged to work hard.

### **How does a standards-based report card improve teaching and learning?**

Knowing where the students are in their progress towards meeting standards-based learning objectives is crucial for planning and carrying out classroom instruction. Teachers teach to the needs of the student. Standards-based assessment gives teachers more information about each student's progress in meeting the level of proficiency required by each standard. In addition, teachers share the standards with students and parents, helping them to better understand the learning that needs to take place.

### **Why move to a new reporting system?**

The purpose of this new reporting system is to provide accurate information about student performance on the MA Academic Content Standards for parents, teachers, and students. The goal is to communicate student achievement progress. 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 should I, as a parent, best communicate the meaning of my child's report card in an accurate and productive way?**

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 the adults involved convey to the child that learning is a process that needs to be respected.

### **Why are some standards "blacked out" for certain trimesters?**

It is impossible to teach all standards to mastery at the same time. Teachers and administrators

have mapped out standards as to allow for mastery at different times of the year. This is based on readiness, development and backwards planning. If a category is “blacked out” on the report card, it means direct instruction has not yet occurred and so the students have not yet been summatively assessed. Over the course of a school year, teachers are consistently formatively assessing students as to direct instruction for their specific population of students. This is always done with the end-of-year objectives in mind. By formatively assessing, teachers are able to differentiate instruction to challenge all levels of learners.

For academic and social development categories our grading scale will stay the same. However, within the academic description the term “expectation” has been replaced with “standard”. **The marking code in no way correlates to a letter grade.**

### Marking Code

| Marking Code          | Translation  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>B - Beginning</b>  | I am learning new skills and can use them with support.                            |
| <b>D - Developing</b> | I am learning new skills and can use them with some support and some independence. |
| <b>S- Secure</b>      | I am learning new skills and can use them with consistency and independence.       |

For more information on grade-specific content and ways in which you can help your child at home you can visit the following webpages:

- [www.norwellschools.org](http://www.norwellschools.org) - Under “Instructional Services” page you will find all K – 12 Curriculum