



STANDARDS BASED REPORT CARDS IN THE SANDWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS Frequently Asked Questions & Answers: Grades 3 - 6

What is a standards-based reporting system?

The standards-based reporting system is different from a traditional A, B, C or 1, 2, 3 system. It is based on a specific set of standards that students need to meet for each grade level. Report card “grades” are not a comparison of one student to another but rather a way to measure how well students are progressing in grade-level standards. Standards based grading is not based on an averaging of scores over the trimester – the focus on progress means that a student’s most recent work on a standard carries more weight than their first encounter with the standard.

What are standards?

Educational standards are the **learning goals** for what students should *know, understand and be able to do* at each grade level. Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful, while also helping parents understand what is expected of their children. We are using the Massachusetts State Frameworks in ELA and Math; they are based on the Common Core State Standards. In Science, the Standards have been in flux - Massachusetts has recently adopted of the nationally created Next Generation Science Standards, and made modifications to make them the Massachusetts Science Standards.

Why are we using a standards-based report card?

Sandwich Public Schools made its last revision to the K-8 report card 18 years ago. Since that time, there have been changes in the district curriculum standards and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards/Massachusetts Frameworks in 2011. There has also been significant and wide-reaching research about the most effective ways to assess student learning and to provide feedback to students and families.

What will this new style of report card do for my child?

- Your child will know what is expected in his or her learning.
- Teachers across the grade level will have the same understanding of what each child should know and be able to do at each grade level.
- You, as a parent/guardian, will understand the expectations and be able to provide support at home.

How are standards-based report cards different from traditional report cards?

The standards-based report cards provide more specific information than the traditional report cards. Each subject is now divided into the “strands” used in the Massachusetts Frameworks and list the skills or concepts that a child will learn

The performance indicators measure a child’s progress toward mastery of the standards by prioritizing the most recent consistent performance, rather than averaging grades over a term. A child who struggled with a new concept at the beginning of a term may still be able to demonstrate mastery by the end of the term or year. With traditional grading, students were penalized if they struggled at the beginning of the term since the grades across the term all had equal weight.



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Is it possible for my child to “drop” from one mark to another?

Keep in mind that the level of difficulty for each standard will increase throughout the year. It is possible that a child is progressing at the beginning of the year, but as the rigor increases, may not be showing the same consistency of progress or may not be progressing independently on a particular standard. All children will continue to receive instruction on a standard no matter their performance level.

Will my student receive teacher comments on their report card?

Yes. Report cards are designed to communicate with parents and the new report cards provide a significant amount of information about learning expectations. There is also a place on the report card for teachers to write comments.

How can I help my child?

The subject areas are now divided into list of skills to be mastered. In the past your child may have received a “2” or a “C” in Math. That grade represents class participation, homework completion and work in multiple learning standards. With this grading system, the skill that your child needs to progress further in is clearly evident. You and your child will know exactly what they need to work on in order to meet the end of the year expectations, and you will know which skills have been mastered. In your family, you are able to help your child with that particular skill in a variety of ways.

Why does my child not have any Ms first term?

Keep in mind that the standards are end-of-year standards. Children are not expected to *meet the standards* for all skills and concepts until the end of the year. Learning is a process and it takes time and repeated experiences to develop skills and concepts with accuracy and quality.

What if my child doesn’t have all M’s by the end of the year?

One of the benefits of a Standards Based Report Card is that each standard is associated with a Content Strand. (Each of the Strands is explained in the “Roadmap” documents on our website: www.sandwichk12.org -go to the Teaching & Learning tab) The strands are consistent from year to year and teachers develop and build upon the previous year’s standards within each strand. A student who is not an M by the end of the year will receive continued instruction in the Standard’s Strand the following year. Because of the specificity of the Standards/Strands, each teacher knows which skill the student needs additional experience and instruction to master.

Does “NA” mean that the standard is not taught?

NA stands for **not assessed** during a particular term. In some cases, the standard has been taught during the term, but not enough evidence has been gathered to fully assess the student’s understanding of the concept.

In other cases, a particular standard may only be taught during a particular term. This happens when the content is delivered as a “Unit of Study” - focused work on particular parts of the curriculum for 4-6 weeks. Many science topics are taught through a Unit of Study, for example.



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“Progressing” seems like a really large category. Could there be another indicator, such as “Approaching the Standard?”

In the course of creating the Standards Based Report Cards, the team considered that idea. There was a concern that having four indicators would cause teachers and families to consider them as equivalent to the letter grades of A/B/C/D. It is important that those associations are not made; standards based grades are not based on averaging on a 100 point scale.

My child goes above and beyond the expectations. How is that reflected on the Report Card?

Teachers have an opportunity to provide feedback about student effort and dedication in the Effort Grade, the Social Emotional Core Competency Grades, the comments, and of course, at the Parent-Teacher Conference.

How do I discuss the Standards Based report card with my child?

It is important that parents and teachers have honest conversations with students. Some concepts and skills are more difficult to learn than others, and adults can support students by helping them to develop persistence and motivation to keep trying and challenging themselves. Attitudes are contagious and children look to the adults in their lives to set the tone around expectations. Communicating that “learning is a complex process that takes place over time” (as it says on the report card) and that every person has what it takes to impact their achievement and the accomplishment of goals will help every student – the ones who are progressing on a straight path toward meeting the standards and those whose path is less straightforward.

We reward our children for good grades. How will I motivate my children if there are no grades?

It is a mind shift for everyone to think about report cards as pure information. The old, familiar system described grades as “being earned.” It was easier to connect grades with rewards.

With standards-based grading and reporting, students will see the specific things they need to do to meet the standards and will clearly see how to get there. Motivation, independence and a sense of personal learning responsibility increases in a standards-based system.

For families, your conversations about learning expectations can be more specific and measurable. And we would encourage you to think about the GPS Analogy - the standards are the destination and the report card tells you where students are in their journey.

Will the report cards be revised?

It is important to reflect on whether these report cards communicate effectively with families, and to make changes to increase the effectiveness of the communication. We welcome feedback from families and will revise these report cards, expecting a new edition in 2018-2019. We enter into this knowing that we will want to make future changes based on experiences and feedback. Determining that there are changes to be made is not an admission of error, or weakness. We make decisions based on the information at hand and must be willing to make changes when new or different information is available.

Questions?

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