

Watertown City School District

K-4 Standards-Based Report Cards FAQs



What are standards-based report cards?

Standards-based report cards are report cards intended to communicate how students perform on skills over time and their pattern of performance rather than how they perform *overall* in a subject area, like an average would. Standards have been identified by teachers as being critical to student success in that subject. In standards-based grading, skills performance is separate from the effort and behavior a student exhibits so you, as their parent, can clearly see where your child shines and where they may need additional work to continue their growth.

Why did Watertown City School District make this switch?

Watertown CSD opted to make this switch first because we felt it would be in the best interest of our students to communicate where they do well and where they need to grow. Secondly, research suggests that this is more effective in working with students both on achievement and growth when scores are specific to skills and not averaged overall. This way, students' scores benefit from their learning over time instead of an average, which in essence, punishes a student for coming in with little background on a topic or skill, or for not performing well on one or two pieces within a subject area.

Why not just use averages on a 100-point scale, like the high school does?

What is the difference between a 73 and an 85? Or a 73 and a 75? Do you know which skills your child does well or the skills in which he/she needs more support or practice? Especially at the foundational level, this is critical to student success. Standards-based grades are intended to show a student's performance when compared to the expectations of the New York State Learning Standards.

Why aren't all of the standards on the report card?

The short answer is - there are too many of them! If we were to include all standards in each subject area on the report card, it would grow to multiple pages in length and be very overwhelming for teachers to create and for parents to read. The standards on the report card are what the report card committee has determined to be the critical standards on which you should have information on your child's performance.

How should I look at the score my student receives on a given standard or behavior?

Look at the score your child received in isolation first. Is your child meeting the standard or not? If your child is, terrific. The goal now is to maintain that skill, as it will become more complex as the year progresses. If your child is not meeting the standard, the next question is *why not?* Examine the effort score next. If your child is demonstrating satisfactory or outstanding effort, it may be that your child needs additional practice to become better at this skill. If your child is inconsistent in his/her effort, it might be that your child is doing minimal demonstrations of this skill but has the potential right now to fully demonstrate that skill.

Note: These standards are end-of-year goals in the way they are written as New York State Learning Standards. When you see them on the report cards in Marking Periods 1-3, we are not necessarily expecting that students perform this skill to the full extent at that moment in time. But, we may be teaching portions of that skills and, thus, our expectations are based on what students have received instruction on and had practice opportunities available, and on which they have been assessed. For example, you might see the standard expressed as counting to 100 by ones and tens. That means that, by the end of the year, students should be successful in doing this. But, by the end of Marking Period 1, it might be that the teacher expects students to count to 20 successfully, or that they can count by ones to 100 but not by tens yet. Keep this in mind when you are looking at your child's performance.

If my child meets a standard or exceeds a standard in Marking Period 1 and then is approaching the standard in Marking Period 2, what does this mean?

This can mean multiple things. It could mean that your child was doing well with the requirements within the standard for Marking Period 1 and then, as the requirements became more complex, he/she showed gaps in their performance of the skill. It could mean that your child was able to meet requirements within the standard for Marking Period 1 with minimal effort, but did not increase

effort as the requirements became more complex, and therefore did not demonstrate performance as regularly as he/she did previously. The takeaway is that your child may need additional support or practice on this skill, whether it is through exerted effort or through guided practice, to more regularly demonstrate the skill at the expected level of performance.

My child is academically advanced. How does standards-based grading (and teaching/learning) challenge my child?

Standards-based grading allows parents to see where students are performing against expectations for the grade level. Some students will be above this (exceeding), some will be at this level (meeting), others will be below expectations but almost there (approaching), and some may be below expectations and in need of intensive support (below). Students who are identified as regularly meeting the standard should be provided opportunities to go beyond the expectations of that standard.

How does this system of grading separate out my child's performance from other students?

A student's performance should be against criteria of success, not other students. Teachers and principals can use this information as one indicator of where students need additional support, intervention, or enrichment.

Are other area school districts using standards-based grading?

Yes. Most districts have adjusted their report cards, particularly at the elementary level, to be standards-based.

Why does Kindergarten have a different scale than Grades 1-4?

Kindergarten standards tend to be very concrete and singular in their expectations. For example, a Kindergarten standard in Math asks that students, by the end of the year, be able to count to 100 by ones and tens. It is difficult to identify when a student is close to this standard and the concepts within it versus far below expectations for this standard and its concepts.

How will students transition to the average system on a 100-point scale, used at Wiley Intermediate?

Students will transition as they have done in the past from kindergarten report cards, which were more standards-based, to first grade report cards, which used numerical averages, until 2018-2019. But, now, this transition won't occur until students enter fifth grade.

Parents already know what a 100-point scale is. Why switch to a system some people are not familiar with?

Our standards-based report cards will provide you with more detailed, specific information about where your child is with regard to effort, learner behaviors, and skills. If you attended school during the 1980s and early 1990s, you may remember the system that used VG = Very Good, G = Good, etc. This system is similar to that approach.

What does a student need to do to "meet the standard"?

Standards-based grading reflects consistent patterns of performance. That means that when it comes to a particular skill, how often is a student able to perform that skill at the expected level without assistance? If a student is doing this regularly, then he/she is meeting the standard.

How will English Language Learners or students with an Individualized Education Plan be graded using this system?

Students who have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or are English Language Learners (ELLs) are held to the same grade-level outcomes as their peers. They, by law, are required to have the same opportunities to receive passing grades and move forward grade levels as their fellow classmates. Thus, the standards on the report cards and the grading scales remain the same. However, students who have an IEP receive program accommodations and modifications to support them in meeting these standards. An accommodation does not change the language of the standard, but adjusts the method in how students meet that standard. A student's IEP progress report will identify how that child is performing on skills that are relevant to their areas in need of support; the report card will reflect what he/she is able to do in the classroom on a particular standard with those program accommodations. As an ELL progresses in his/her language acquisition, skills tend to increase alongside these. Look at the scores on individual skills in conjunction with the comments from the ENL teacher. If modifications within a student's services are made that change the language of a standard, the supplementary progress report and/or ENL teacher comments will reflect this.