

Sayreville Public Schools

**Standards-Based  
Report Cards  
Grades K – 2**

**Handbook**

October 2016

# **Introduction/Rationale for Standards-Based Grading:**

## **Standards-Based Reporting System**

The purpose of the reporting system is to report separately:

- Student achievement based on content standards with end of the year grade-level expectations
- Student social development and work habits

### **Benefits of a Standards-Based Reporting System**

- Measure what a student should know and be able to do by the end of each grade in each learning area.
- Identify the concepts and skills in each learning area based on these standards.
- Indicate what skills students have mastered, as well as their strengths and areas for growth.
- Progress will be reported for each of the grade level standards identified rather than a single grade in each subject area.
- Alignment of the Sayreville Public Schools curriculum to the national and state standards including assessments to measure learning and the extent to which students meet the learning targets.
- Students, parents and teachers work together toward shared goals to ensure that students make progress each year.
- Students will know exactly what is expected to master goals for a particular subject area and parents will be better able to support their child's learning at home.
- All teachers across the District will have the same expectations and common understandings about learning targets at each grade level and be able to build student knowledge based on student mastery of the previous year's grade level standards.

### **What is Standards-Based Grading?**

Standards-based grading focuses a student's learning on the essential standards for a class, or how well the student understands and can apply the key material in class. At the beginning of each unit, a teacher will break down the content standards for that unit into smaller components and criteria using a detailed scale. During the unit, the student receives feedback on frequent formative assessments to gauge their understanding and application of the material. These assessments may be administered by variety formats, such as traditional pencil-and-paper tests, online assessments, projects, discussions, reports, or any other format by which learning may be evidenced. At various points throughout the unit, and/or at the completion of a unit, students will participate in summative assessments, which will demonstrate a student's mastery of the essential content standards – ultimately, what they KNOW and what they can DO.

The goal of standards-based grading is to provide the most accurate picture of student learning. Constant assessment will track student growth, provide immediate and clear feedback, and identify any needs for either intervention or enrichment. Learning is a process that takes place over time and requires active participation by all those associated with that process – teacher (providing feedback), student (opportunities to practice and present knowledge/skills), and parent (supporting the process). Standards-based grading creates a scenario in which all parties are able to engage in pointed and meaningful conversations about that learning process. As learning is reflected, instruction adapts to support continued growth.

## **How is standards-based grading different from traditional grading?**

In the traditional 100-point grading system, grades are typically generated from a series of scores from all work assigned in the class, including classwork, homework, projects, quizzes, tests, etc. These scores are often arranged in the grade book by the type of assignment rather than by the essential outcomes for the class. Therefore, the final grade becomes a cumulative numerical average from many unrelated activities, which also often include points for non-academic factors, such as behavior, participation, effort, and attitude.

Standards-based grading, however, focuses solely on progress toward mastery of the essential standards. A standards-based grade book tracks learning through activities that focus on standards and do not include non-academic factors such as behavior, participation, effort, and attitude. These factors are important and are assessed and reported, but through a separate and more appropriate method.

## **Why is the district using standard- based grading?**

The goal of Sayreville Schools is to improve student learning by reporting grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning, and the shift to standards- based grading is an effort to reach that goal. Here is how standards based grading addresses each of those four criteria.

## **How do the teachers determine students' proficiency levels?**

Throughout the year, our teachers use multiple types of assessments in order to determine students' progress toward the grade-level standards. In order to determine students' proficiency levels and the accompanying development progress codes, teachers utilize our district-created rubrics. These rubrics clearly delineate what a child needs to know or be able to do in order to earn an ES, MS, AS, or NS on his or her report card. These rubrics align to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, the Next Generation Science Standards and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. The standards are available for you to read on the district webpage under Curriculum & Instruction.

## **What are the proficiency levels on the report cards?**

On our standards-based report cards, teachers report students' progress using the following developmental progress codes, which are also listed on the report cards themselves:

ES (Exceeds Standard) = Student is consistently exceeding the standard for the grade level. Student grasps, applies, and independently extends key concepts, processes, and skills.

MS (Meets Standard) = Student is meeting the standard. Demonstrates proficiency and with limited errors, grasps and applies concepts, processes, and skills.

AS (Approaching Standard) = Student is making progress towards the standard for the grade level. The student is beginning to grasp and apply key concepts, processes, and skills.

NS (Needs Support) = Student is making minimal progress towards the standard for the grade level. The student is working below grade level. Improvement is needed.

It is important to remember that an "ES" on the standards-based report card does not equal an "A" in the traditional grading method. The proficiency levels reflect whether a child's performance on key assignments typically exceed, meet, fall somewhat below, or fall significantly below standards. In prior reporting, an "A" may have meant that a child met all the standards for the test or assignment; in the new report card, this would be represented by a "MS." An "ES" on the new report card means that a student is regularly able to demonstrate a level of skill and understanding beyond the proficiency standard for his or her grade level.

## **Reporting Student Progress**

Reporting student progress occurs throughout the year and takes various forms. The overall process helps parents understand the topics studied in each learning area, the skills and concepts introduced and the expected levels of performance at each grade level. Progress reports are issued three times each year, in the middle of the. Report cards will be issued in December, March and June trimester monitoring student progress of grade level goals. In late January, parent-teacher conferences are held to further discuss student progress. The final report card distributed in June indicates student mastery of end of the year grade level goals and standards.

## **Ongoing Methods of Communication**

Back to School Night

Phone/Email Conversations

Samples of Student Work

Parent Portal

## **FAQ**

### **Why are only some of the standards listed on the progress reports and report card?**

Teams of teachers and administrators reviewed the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, Common Core State Standards and the New Jersey Core Curriculum State Standards for each grade level in the process of developing the reporting system. In the review, the committee chose the descriptors which were considered most significant for student growth in each subject area and at each grade level. These standards are often referred to as "priority standards." It does not mean that the other standards are less important, or that they will not be taught. In order to effectively communicate student progress, specific standards were selected to efficiently report growth during each of the three marking periods.

### **What should the expectations for my child be?**

Remembering that every child learns differently, the goal for students is to reach a Level 3-Meets Standards when the teacher has completed a topic.

### **Can a student perform at a Meets Standard (Level 3) during one marking period and then receive an Approaching Standard (Level 2) or Needs Support (Level 1) in subsequent marking periods?**

The expectations change from one marking period to another as the student moves toward the grade level expectations for the end of the year. As such, a student may find that expectations have increased in each marking period. This may result in very different levels of proficiency. A student could receive a 3 in the first marking period, and a level 2 or 1 in the subsequent marking periods

### **Some areas on my child's report card were not evaluated this marking period and the report card shows N/A, or not applicable. Why wasn't this standard evaluated?**

Some standards will be taught each marking period. These standards will be assessed more frequently, and progress will be reported every marking period. The level of difficulty in the task and/or text may change, or the level of text complexity may change, making the expectation more demanding (i.e.: main idea). In other areas, the skill can progress to something more difficult. Other standards require an entire unit of study that may be unrelated to the current topic. In this case, the unit may be greyed out for a marking period since the skill may not have been assessed at that time. When the standard is taught, the standard is evaluated.

# GLOSSARY

**Academic Standard Indicators:** The descriptors Needs Support, Approaching Standard, Meets Standard and Exceeds Standard will be used on the standards based report card to indicate a student's level of understanding and performance.

**Assessment:** Ongoing process by which teachers gather data to determine a student's progress relative to a standard.

- **Formative Assessment:** ongoing information about a student's progress in learning (e.g. homework, quizzes, conferencing, logs and journals, drafts, anecdotal observations).
- **Content Based:** assessments consisting of elected responses and a short constructed response on the content taught that month/term
- **Standard-Based:** assessments consisting of the same format as the content based, but measuring the understanding of the standard application
- **Summative Assessments:** end of unit information determining what students have learned (e.g. tests, performance tasks, projects, final writing pieces).

**Benchmark:** A learning goal or target for a particular time in an academic year.

**Standards:** The New Jersey Student Learning Standards, Next Generation Science Standards and New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.

**Mastery:** A student has met or exceeded targets for a given learning goal in a content area or grade level.

**Performance Task:** End of unit application of skills.

**Priority Standard:** Learning objectives considered most significant for student gains in each subject area at each grade level.

**Rubric:** A scoring tool used to rate a student's performance relative to the degree at which a standard has been met.

**Standard/Learning Objective:** A statement that identifies the skill or concept that a student should know and be able to achieve at each grade level.