

“Why...would anyone want to change current grading practices?”

The answer is quite simple: grades are so imprecise that they are almost meaningless.”

-Robert Marzano

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Part I: Standards-Based Reporting - Overview

What is a Standard?

Because of student mobility, Texas has adopted curriculum standards that are to be used in all the state's public schools. The current standards, which outline what students are to learn in each course or grade, are called Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The standards are adopted by the State Board of Education after extensive input from educators and other stakeholders.

Below are links to the current standards, as well as information about the adoption process:

[TEKS Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills](#)

[TEKS in Spanish](#)

[TEKS Review](#)

What is Standards-Based Instruction?

In a standards-based classroom, student focus is on true mastery of skills and content. Teachers plan and implement lessons based on standards that every student must learn. Instruction is aligned to the standards in all content areas. Teachers will present “learning targets” leading students to the goals they must meet for mastery. Learning targets are clear and students must be aware of the targeted outcomes for lessons. Based on student need for differentiation, teachers will provide multiple opportunities for students to meet learning targets over the course of instructional time.

What is the purpose of Standards-Based Reporting?

The purpose of a Standards-Based Reporting system is to provide detailed feedback to parents, students, and teachers regarding the progress being made toward specific learning standards at a given grade level. A standards-based report provides parents and students with a clearer understanding of what is expected in school and how to partner with them to achieve maximum success.

“Students can hit any target that they can see and doesn’t move.”

--Rick Stiggins

How does a standards-based system differ from a letter grade system?

Traditional letter grades typically include a combination of three elements: academic achievement based upon student work exhibits or **products**, the **process** or development of work habits, and the level of **progress**. The combination of these three elements makes letter grades subjective and less accurate in conveying students' achievement in the elementary grades.

The standards-based system measures how well individual students are doing **solely** in relation to identified standards. This information provides parents, teachers, and students with an understanding of what an individual student has mastered and what they need to continue to work toward learning. Standards identify students' specific strengths and weaknesses providing information to help generate a plan for continued growth.

Standards-Based Grading	Traditional Grading
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only achievement or learning evidence related to the standards is assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grades are a combination of achievement, attitude, effort, and behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual performance in comparison to the standard is assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grades may include a combination of individual performance and group grades
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses assessments aligned to standards-based learning targets that are specific to a grade level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Variation in assessment quality; assessments do not align directly to the standards for the grade level
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning expectations, targets, objectives are communicated to students prior to instruction and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are unfamiliar with the learning targets to be assessed or what mastery looks like
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment methods are concrete and reflect student performance toward the standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are unsure about grading measures. Rubrics are not provided

What are the benefits of a standards-based system?

1. Based upon recognized standards for learning.
2. Defines the knowledge and skills students should master at each grade level.
3. Establishes clear learning goals for each school year.
4. Promotes consistent communication among teachers.
5. Uses a common language for instruction across all grade levels.
6. Identifies learning patterns and trends over the course of a student's elementary school career.
7. Supports current educational and learning-based research.

**“If parents want to give their children a gift,
the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love
challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep
on learning.”**

--Carol Dweck

Part II: Standards-Based Reporting - Research

Why should the Midlothian Independent School District move to a standards-based reporting system?

The change to a Standards-Based reporting system comes from the belief that our previous report card and reporting system did not fully communicate what students are expected to know and be able to do as set forth in the state standards. This new reporting system will benefit students, teachers, and families. It will allow students to be more aware of what is expected of them. It will provide families with a more detailed outline of the expectations in each of the major academic areas. We believe that understanding of what is expected of

your child and how well he or she is progressing toward the goals at his or her grade level is very important, and the standards-based reporting system will assist in this endeavor.

What Principles Guide Standards-Based Progress Reporting?

- The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills State Standards (TEKS) describe what a student should know and be able to do at a given grade level.
- Quality assessments and learning tasks are aligned to the standards.
- Clearly designed teacher rubrics are presented in advance of evaluation to ensure that students understand what is expected of them to perform at a proficient level.
- Student progress is reported to both students and parents regularly to communicate movement towards achieving the standards. The Progress Report document is not the single method of reporting student progress.
- Standards-based instruction, grading, and reporting should be clear and meaningful to all stakeholders involved---including students and parents.
- Grading should reflect academic standards. Grades should be a direct reflection of what students know and are able to do based upon a given standard.
- Learning behaviors are essential to understanding the progress of the whole student. These behaviors should be reported separately from academic grades. Effort, compliance to school or classroom rules, social interactions, etc. should be reported within the **Social and Emotional Learning/Work Habits** of the report card.
- Progress reporting in the related arts provides a continued view to whole student development and focus on content, affinity and effort.

How will teachers evaluate student achievement over the course of a grading period?

Within standards-based classrooms, student performance is evaluated on a continual basis. Progress is monitored through observation, work products, and assessments including, but not limited to, portfolios, unit tests, discussions, projects, district assessments, presentations, and daily work. Teachers measure learning against standards and then use these measures to guide and direct subsequent instruction. This on-going cycle of teaching and assessing allows students to move along a natural continuum of learning, including challenges or additional support.

How will a standards-based reporting system motivate my student?

Standards-based reporting systems provide students with opportunities to take personal responsibility and satisfaction in their learning. As a student becomes involved in the learning process, knowing their own strengths and needs, the students can work with teachers and parents to set and meet meaningful goals and ultimately experience success.

As students continue to gain an understanding of a standards-based reporting process, they will gain a clearer insight into their learning style and needs. This insight will set them up for future success as they move to middle school and beyond.

Part III: Standards-Based Reporting - System

What can I expect to see on my student's progress report?

Standards-based progress reports provide a level of proficiency on specific standards for each subject area. Each subject is further broken down into a list of competencies students need to master. Scores are derived from student work products. Each listed competency receives its own score. Student mastery is based upon multiple sources of evidence. Reporting will be based upon clearly specified learning goals and performance standards identified in rubric statements. Rubric statements will be provided in each content area per competency statement per quarter.

How frequently will progress be shared?

Every nine weeks, students will receive a standards-based report card. During the fourth week of each nine-week reporting period, students will receive a progress report if it is needed.

What will a student's grades look like on the new Standards-Based Report Card?

Grading will be based upon the following Main Categories on the Report Card:

1. Academics:
 - a. Reading and Language Arts
 - b. Mathematics
 - c. Science
 - d. Social Studies

2. Specials: Art, Music, and Physical Education
3. Future Ready Foundations/Skills
4. Social and Emotional Learning/Work Habits

1. Academics

Report Cards for academic subject areas will reflect a student's performance toward standards, not a numerical comparison to other students. There will be four levels defining movement toward mastery:

Kindergarten - Second Grade:

- **4---Mastery of Standard:** Student work demonstrates *consistent, accurate, and independent evidence* of the grade level standards at the expected time of the report card. The student is performing **at or above the grade level expectation**, has a deep understanding of the concept, and can demonstrate it in multiple ways.
- **3---Approaching Standard Mastery:** Student work demonstrates *progressing evidence* of the grade level standards at the expected time of the report card. The student is **approaching mastery of the grade level expectation** and can do parts of the standard independently but has not quite mastered the skill in its entirety. Student is making ongoing growth, but might need additional practice and/or teacher support in order to master the full level of the standard.
- **2---Limited Progress Towards Standard:** Student work demonstrates *basic evidence* of the grade level standards at the expected time of the report card. **The student is performing below standard expectations** but is progressing toward grade level expectation by performing the basic application of the skill. The student still requires some support and/or intervention from the teacher in order to meet the grade level expectations.
- **1---Area of Concern:** Student work demonstrates *limited evidence* of the grade level standards at the expected time of the report card. **The student is performing below standard expectations** or requires substantial support and/or prompting from the teacher. Intervention is needed from teachers in order for the student to progress toward meeting grade level expectations.

Student grades for academic achievement in all subject areas will reflect an accurate evaluation of the knowledge a student demonstrates over the course of

a grading period using a variety of measures. Standards-based evaluation focuses on what a student knows at a particular time of the year. The goal is to have all skills mastered at a level 4 for each reporting period. The report card skills have been broken down into learning progressions and are defined on the rubric. The skills become more complex through the grading periods in order for students to reach full mastery of the skill by the end of the year.

Students are evaluated on the development of the skills and knowledge needed to show mastery of the standard. Mastery is measured by what skills they know and can do rather than their completion of tasks or activities. (Task completion will be rated within the Work Habits portion of the Progress Report.)

2. Specials: Art, Music, and Physical Education

The study of the related arts is key in the development of the whole child, allowing for the acquisition of technical and artistic knowledge and skills necessary for creative, expressive, and artistic production. Specials will be scored as follows:

E = Excellent, S = Satisfactory, N = Needing Improvement, or a
U = Unacceptable

3. Future Ready Foundations/Skills

Today's students need to accomplish particular skills in order to be prepared for the future and to be successful in later years of schooling and life. Using technology as an instructional tool to create and being able to work as a team are skills the future will rely on. The study of learning for the future will be scored as follows:

E = Excellent, S = Satisfactory, N = Needing Improvement, or a
U = Unacceptable

4. Social and Emotional Learning/Work Habits

Students need skills to be able to work with others and build strong independent work habits. Social and emotional learning is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. These skills will be scored as follows:

E = Excellent, S = Satisfactory, N = Needing Improvement, or a
U = Unacceptable

Part IV: Standards-Based Reporting - Grading

How do teachers assess student mastery?

Standards require students to understand more than just identified facts. Students must understand the concepts and demonstrate understanding using the skills while learning the content. Teachers determine when a student achieves mastery by that student's performance on multiple, varied assignments and assessments using concrete indicators as on the 'Rubrics'.

Is the Standards-Based grading 4, 3, 2, 1 equivalent to traditional letter grading?

The 4, 3, 2, 1 Standards-Based scale is not synonymous with the traditional grading scale A, B, C, D. A "4" is not equal to an A. Grades and proficiency levels do not correlate with each other. Traditional grading systems average academic factors over a grading period.

Standards-based grading measures a student's knowledge over time by reporting the most recent, consistent level of performance. Many times, a student may struggle when a new concept is first introduced, but then, after practice, the student is able to demonstrate a proficient level of performance by the end of the grading period or school year.

Is student behavioral progress assessed with achievement progress?

Effort and work habits are equally as important as academic learning. Within this document, achievement is reported through the *Academics* category. Observable behaviors, such as effort, attitude, collegiality, organization, and perseverance, are documented separately in the *Future Ready Foundations/Skills* and the *Social Emotional Learning/Work Habits* sections of the report card. Student work habits may also be communicated separately by your student's teachers as needed.

How do parents explain to their student why he/she has not received a 4?

Learning is a lifelong process. Many skills are at varying difficulty levels for mastery. This being said, given time, guidance, and motivation, students can continually challenge themselves. It is important to look at the rubric and celebrate the academic achievements that your student can do and work towards mastery of the next level on the rubric.

While measuring progress toward a grade level standard, can a score ever “go down”?

Yes. Student skills are expected to develop in sophistication and depth over the course of a school year. As concepts grow in complexity, expectations, and evaluations also increase in complexity.

Consider this hypothetical example: In First Grade Mathematics, students might be assessed on their ability to “Compose and decompose numbers up to 120”. During the first grading period, they are expected to compose and decompose numbers only up to 20 to meet the standard, but by the end of the school year, they are expected to compose and decompose numbers up to 120 to meet the standard. After the first quarter, the student is “Meeting the Standard.” As the school year continues and the skill demands increase, the student’s abilities must consistently improve to maintain that “Meeting the Standard” mark.

How will standards-based teaching, learning and assessing continue to challenge a student who is academically strong and in need of continued challenge?

In the classroom, our teachers have always been and will always continue to be focused on challenging students who are achieving grade-level standards. Differentiation of instruction is routinely used by teachers to meet and extend student learning strengths and needs. In addition to differentiation, ongoing assessment of student achievement will continue to provide current input of student strengths and needs for teachers to modify instruction. To this end, these tools will further support the teacher’s ability to identify who has mastered the standards and who needs additional instruction and interventions.

How will a standards-based reporting system affect a student with an IEP?

Learning standards for all students remain consistent. However, students with Individualized Education Plans may have specific goals, accommodations and modifications that enable them to meet the standards. Students with IEPs will receive quarterly feedback on their own specific learning goals through the IEP document. All other reporting will be conveyed through the standards-based report card.

How will a standards-based reporting system affect English Language Learners?

English Language Learners come to our community with various educational backgrounds and require a variety of supports to access the curriculum standards. At

times, the educational program for an ELL student may be adjusted to enable the student to acquire more academic vocabulary. If the standards are modified, this is described in the supplemental progress report accompanying the progress report.

Why are there multiple competency statements under each subject?

By providing more specific descriptions of the learning expectations within each content area, students and parents can see specific skills and the performance for that skill, showing areas of proficiency and areas of concern. The aligned rubric will explain the expectations for the grading period with the expected skills.

Since the standards are end-of-year expectations, how can my child get a 4 (master the standard) in the first, second, or third quarter?

The standards are end-of-year expectations, but they have been broken down into quarters and explained in more detail on the rubrics for each grading period. Although the same skill may show up on multiple grading periods, the level of rigor increases throughout the school year.

What if students meet the standard before the end of the year?

If a student shows early mastery of fundamental skills and concepts in a particular standard, the teaching and learning do not stop. The students who have met the standard can concentrate on a more challenging, higher level of rigor within that skill.

Part V: Standards-Based Reporting - Implementation

Who will use the standards-based reporting system, and when will it be used?

The Midlothian Independent School District Standards-Based Reporting System is designed for the elementary school, grades K-2nd grade.

Part VI: The Development of the Standards-Based Reporting Document

Midlothian Independent School District started the journey of transitioning to standards-based report cards for kindergarten during the school year 2017-2018. During the spring of 2017, a group of kindergarten teachers, with a representative

from each elementary campus, met with the Director of Elementary Learning for training on what is a standards-based report card. The committee studied multiple standards-based report cards from other districts, as well as studied the state standards to ensure that the standards chosen for the report card were most important for student success in kindergarten and beyond.

During the spring of 2018, a feedback form was sent out to all Kindergarten teachers about any needed changes for the school year of 2018-2019. A few minor changes in wording were made for the following school year. A group of first grade teachers, representing every campus, met to be trained and to develop the First Grade Standards-Based Report Card, following the same protocols as kindergarten did the year before. The First Grade Standards-Based Report Card was implemented during the 2018-2019 school year.

During the spring of 2019, a group of kindergarten and first grade teachers met again to discuss any changes needed for the 2019-2020 school year. With the change in the English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) state standards for the upcoming school year, a deep study of these new standards was completed by the committees. Since the district had finalized the MISD Cultural Tenets, the committees made changes to ensure those traits were measured on the report card as well.

Also during the spring of 2019, a group of second grade teachers met to be trained and to develop the Second Grade Standards-Based Report Card for the 2019-2020 school year, again following the same protocols as kindergarten and first grade.

During the spring of 2023, a group of teachers and iCoaches, facilitated by the Elementary Reading and Math Coordinators, updated the rubrics for more clarity and coherence. Each year the report cards and rubrics are reviewed for accurate expectations that are clear for teachers, students, and parents for the grade level and across grade levels, as well as how to measure the skills expected to be mastered during each grading period.

What are grade level standards based upon?

The following standards documents provided the basis for Standards-Based Report Cards language and expectations:

[Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills](#)

Where do I go for more clarification on my child's report card?

Your child's classroom teacher is the first point of contact for understanding your child's academic strengths and needs. You may also review the [rubrics on the website](#) for each grading period and content for a full understanding of the expectations of each level and skill on the report card.

