

STANDARDS-BASED REPORT CARDS FAQs

WHAT ARE STANDARDS-BASED REPORT CARDS?

Wadsworth City Schools' standards-based report cards, used in Grades Pre-K through 4, are easy-to-understand reports of a student's academic progress. The standards-based report card is formatted with places to report on two measures and give brief information about standards.

WHY WERE THEY DEVELOPED?

At the core of accountability is the process of communicating results. Standards are changing the conversation among parents about new expectations of students, yet parents in nearly every school district are confused when they see that student progress is still measured using traditional grades and reports. The Wadsworth City Schools developed its standards-based report card as a clear and logical method for reporting student progress. The district needed a way to communicate to teachers, parents, and students that it was serious about standards. One way to do that was to report achievement of the standards on report cards.

HOW WERE THEY DEVELOPED?

A district Standards-Based Grading Guidelines Committee, composed of teachers and administrators, met for 2½ years to bring this project to fruition.

WHY ARE THEY VALUABLE?

Parents understand that a student has to achieve all of the academic standards in all core subject areas (reading, language arts, math, social studies, and science) in order to be promoted. The standards-based report card not only gives parents the definition of the standard, but also provides a reference or checklist to show that a child has achieved one standard but not another. With the standards-based report card, the district has a way for parents to see what it is everyone is supposed to be teaching, what it is everyone is supposed to be learning, and how well their kids are progressing.

WHAT WILL YOU DO FOR THE CHILD WHO HAS MASTERED THE STANDARD EARLY? HOW WILL YOU CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE HIM/HER? CAN A CHILD RECEIVE A "3+"?

*In the classroom, teachers have always been, and continue to be, required to challenge the students who are achieving at or above grade level. Teachers differentiate instruction so that students continue to grow and progress. This will be no different with the new reporting tool. In fact, more than ever, they will be able to see who really has mastered the standard and who needs additional instruction or intervention. A **3** on the report card indicates this mastery. A **3+** would provide little or no information that would help you work with your child. Also, if a child receives a **3** in the first or second trimester, the teacher will continue to assess the standard to ensure that mastery is sustained.*

SHOULD ALL CHILDREN HAVE 3s BY THE END OF THE YEAR? WILL MY CHILD BE HELD BACK IF HE/SHE HAS NOT ACHIEVED ALL 3s?

*It would be our ultimate hope that all children would have **3s** by the end of the year. However, we recognize that some students have challenges that may make this difficult. Children will not be retained solely on the results posted to this report card. A decision to retain requires a comprehensive discussion and a plan of action based upon the unique needs of that child.*

WITH SO MANY STUDENTS, WILL THE TEACHER ACTUALLY HAVE TIME TO TUTOR ALL OF THE STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT MEETING THE STANDARD?

It is great that you appreciate the complexity of the challenges facing our teachers. However, teachers have not changed what they are teaching. They have been teaching the standards for several years. Now we simply have a reporting tool that matches what they are teaching. They have provided re-teaching in the past when a student had difficulty with a topic. They will continue to do this, but now they will have an even clearer picture of which students need the re-teaching.

IF A 3 IS AVERAGE, WHY SHOULD A CHILD TRY HARDER TO ADVANCE?

This is one of the challenges we face. Sadly, students have been motivated in the past, to achieve grades, but we can help them see that it is not about the grade but about the learning. For example, learning all of their multiplication facts can be more motivating than achieving the "A" in math. Students will take more ownership of what they are learning.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL? WILL COLLEGES ACCEPT THIS FORMAT FOR EVALUATING OUR STUDENTS? WHAT IF WE MOVE OUT OF STATE?

Currently, this standards-based report card is a K-4 initiative in Wadsworth. There has been no decision at this point to move it into upper grades. Our district believes this tool will better reflect achievement during these particularly formative years than traditional grade cards. At this point, colleges only look at high school transcripts. Other districts, both in and out of Ohio, are also using this format. We have had many students move to our district, and we receive a standards-based report card in their records. We are pleased with how much we know about that student's skills when he/she arrives.

WHAT INTERVENTIONS ARE PLANNED FOR THE CHILD WHO RECEIVES A "1" IN THE SECOND TRIMESTER?

What a terrific question! That is exactly what we have planned – interventions. Those interventions will be provided by the classroom teacher in the course of a typical student day, based upon the needs of the students. Those interventions could look like a quick re-teach lesson, computer-assisted instruction, small group reinforcements, reading with a high school aide, or others. The teacher will design the most appropriate interventions for the child.

THIS SYSTEM SOUNDS SUBJECTIVE. GRADES WERE OBJECTIVE.

Surprisingly, this system will actually provide more consistency across grade levels than grades did. In the past, an "A" from one teacher might have actually not been an "A" from another teacher. With the standards-based report card, teachers have collaborated and created a rubric together, identifying the necessary skills needed for each standard. They will use this rubric to determine if a child is beginning, developing or has mastered the standard. Homework and effort will now be reflected in the personal achievement section so that the 1 or 2 actually reflects your child's competency with the standard.

HOW IS THE SYSTEM BEING COMMUNICATED TO STUDENTS SO THAT THEY UNDERSTAND THAT ALTHOUGH THEY ARE NOT EARNING A GRADE, THEY ARE STILL HELD ACCOUNTABLE?

This is the challenge for our classroom teachers. Again, we are hoping this system will give ownership to our students for their learning. They will recognize that they are accountable for the standards. No longer will it simply be a matter of what the grade is, but whether they learned the content.

ARE THERE ANY PLANS OR LEGISLATION TO IMPOSE THIS TYPE OF REPORTING TOOL BY THE STATE IN THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS? IS THIS TIED TO ANY FUNDING FROM THE STATE OR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?

In Ohio, we are a standards-based state. The state of Ohio has required all school districts to adopt the Ohio Academic Content Standards to drive their curriculum. Though there is no particular legislation indicating that standards-based report cards are required, there is some discussion that they eventually will be. We wish to be ahead of the state in this. No, there is no funding attached to this initiative.

HOW IS MASTERY OF A STANDARD DETERMINED? IS IT A SINGLE ASSESSMENT?

Teachers have developed varied ways to assess students. They will be gathering evidence of progress throughout each trimester so that they can accurately determine if the student has achieved mastery. This will allow them to re-teach or offer interventions if a student has not mastered the skills. One single assessment will not be used to determine mastery.

IS MEETING A STANDARD THE SAME AS MASTERING A SKILL?

We believe that meeting a standard requires mastering the skills. There are many skills that need mastered in order to meet that standard. We will continue to hold the bar high for our students to ensure they have strong, foundational skills before they leave elementary school.

HOW CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION TO HELP ME UNDERSTAND THIS CHANGE?

You have many options to gain further information about standards-based report cards. The Ohio Department of Education produces "A Family Guide to Standards." This document talks specifically about the standards for your child's grade level, and gives you ideas on how to help with those standards.

If you would like to read more, we have included resources that further explain standards-based report cards.

www.ascd.org : publications; Educational Leadership; Archived Issues;
May, 2006 – "Can We Get Beyond the Letter Grade?"
September, 2001 "Helping Standards Make the Grade"

Activating the Desire to Learn, written by Bob Sullo.

Transforming Classroom Grading by Robert Marzano.

If you have specific questions or you believe your question was not answered above, you are welcome to directly contact Mrs. Paula Canterbury, Director of Instruction, at wadc.canterb@wadsworthschools.org.