



Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow

PK-8 Standards Based Report Cards FAQs for Families

Learning is a journey, with students growing and developing at their own pace. A standards-based report card highlights your child's current progress, allowing you to partner with teachers to support them in reaching their learning goals for the year.

What is the difference between standards based grading and traditional grading?

Standards-based grading (SBG) focuses on assessing students' mastery of specific learning standards set forth by the state of Massachusetts ([MA Common Core State Standards](#)), providing detailed feedback about their progress toward proficiency in each area, and separating academic achievement from non-academic factors like effort or behavior. Traditional grading, by contrast, typically combines test scores, homework, participation, and behavior into a single percentage or letter grade, often reflecting a mix of achievement and effort. This approach relies heavily on averages, which can obscure a student's actual understanding of the material, penalize early mistakes, and provide less specific feedback about areas for improvement.

What is a standards-based report card?

A standards-based report card is designed to provide detailed and specific information about a student's progress in meeting established learning standards. Here's what it shows:

1. **Clear Communication:** It communicates to parents which specific skills, concepts, and knowledge their child has mastered, based on state or district learning standards. This helps parents understand their child's academic strengths and areas for growth.
2. **Focused Learning Goals:** It guides both teachers and students by highlighting the end-of-year expectations from the start. This clarity helps students understand what they are working towards.
3. **Alignment with Standards:** It ensures that instruction, assessments, and grading practices are directly tied to the standards. This creates a coherent and transparent

system where grades reflect mastery of content rather than effort, participation, or other factors.

4. **Consistency Across Classrooms:** By providing a common framework, it fosters consistency in how student performance is assessed, both among teachers and across different grade levels. This reduces variability in grading and helps ensure fairness and clarity.

In essence, a standards-based report card shifts the focus from traditional letter grades to a more detailed, skills-based evaluation of student learning. It emphasizes growth and mastery over time, giving all stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents) a clear picture of academic progress.

How will my child be graded?

Lower School (PK-5) Academic Achievement Descriptors:

- 3: Exceeding Standard
- 2: Meeting Standard
- 1: Progressing Toward Standard

Upper School (6-8) Academic Achievement Descriptors:

- 4: Exceeding Standard
- 3: Meeting Standard
- 2: Progressing Toward Standard
- 1: Beginning to Develop Standard

What if my child receives all 1's and 2's? Does this mean they are failing?

Not at all. Standards-based report cards focus on progress rather than traditional passing or failing. A score of a 1 or 2 indicates that your child is actively working toward proficiency. Even high-achieving students may receive a 1 or 2, which can sometimes surprise families. It's important to understand that early scores are not averaged into the final grade. Once your child masters a concept/standard, their final grade will reflect that achievement.

How can I tell if my child is "on target"?

A score of 2 (lower school) or 3 (upper school) indicates that a student has met or mastered grade-level expectations for a specific standard. It reflects that the student is performing at the appropriate level for their grade during the reporting period. Unlike traditional grading, a

standards-based report card evaluates how well a student is meeting grade-level standards, rather than comparing their performance to other students.

How will my child receive a 4?

Levels 3 (lower school) and 4 (upper school) can be the most challenging to grasp. These levels represent performance that goes beyond grade-level expectations for a specific standard. They indicate that a child has a deeper understanding of the material, can apply their knowledge, make meaningful connections, and extend learning beyond the intended goals. In traditional report cards, students who earned A's may have done so by meeting teacher requirements, but not necessarily by exceeding grade-level expectations for that standard.

How will students receiving special education services be graded?

Special education students are also given the standards-based report card. To comply with the law, documentation of progress specific to IEP (Individual Education Plan) goals and objectives will be reported to parents on IEP progress report forms each trimester.

Do the performance descriptors on the report card align with letter grades?

No. Performance descriptors indicate a student's progress in meeting academic learning standards, whereas the marks on a standards-based report card differ from traditional letter grades. Letter grades are typically determined by a combination of how well a student met the teacher's expectations, their performance on assignments and tests, and the effort the teacher perceives they put in. Unlike performance descriptors, letter grades do not provide insight into which skills a student has mastered or whether they are working at grade level.

How does standards-based grading impact student motivation?

Standards-based grading enhances student motivation by providing clear learning targets for each activity, allowing students to connect their classwork to actions within their control. When students understand that their effort and engagement directly impact their progress toward these targets, they feel empowered and motivated to invest the necessary work. This clarity fosters a sense of ownership over their learning and encourages persistence, transforming challenges into opportunities for growth and reinforcing their commitment to academic success.

Why the change to the Social Development section?

In addition to the updated content reporting, the new report card provides families with a more detailed description of their social-emotional learning. A child's ability to regulate their emotions and behavior, make responsible decisions, and form positive relationships with peers and adults are key factors in supporting their ability to learn. Our school-wide expectations of C.A.R.E.S., which asks students to be Cooperative, Assertive, Responsible, Empathetic, and demonstrate Self-Control, are integral to this development. By encouraging students to work collaboratively,

express themselves confidently, take accountability for their actions, understand others' feelings, and manage their emotions effectively, we create a safe and structured learning environment that fosters social-emotional growth.

How will my child be graded in C.A.R.E.S.?

3-Demonstrates

2-Partially Demonstrates

1-Does Not Demonstrate

How does a standards-based report card enhance teaching and learning?

Understanding students' progress toward achieving standards-based learning goals is essential for effective classroom instruction planning and execution. Teachers tailor their teaching to address the individual needs of each student. Standards-based assessment provides educators with detailed insights into each student's progress in meeting the proficiency levels required by the standards. Furthermore, teachers communicate these standards to students and parents, fostering a clearer understanding of the learning process.

Resources:

*Assistance from Perplexity and Chatgpt
Dennis-Yarmouth Regional Schools
Groton-Dunstable Regional School District*