

K-4 Standards Based Report Card FAQs

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1. What is a standards-based report card (SBRC)?

A SBRC tells specifically how a child is performing based on each standard listed and it indicates what areas may need additional attention. All teachers in a grade level measure student learning against a set academic criteria, excluding other performance factors such as homework, attendance and effort. Although these are important aspects of student work habits and should be communicated to parents, it is a misrepresentation of a child's ability level when it is grouped into an academic rating.

2. What is the purpose of SBRC at the elementary level?

The purpose of a standards based report card is to communicate clearly and objectively how a student is progressing toward mastering the grade level state standards set forth by the Department of Elementary and Secondary education (DESE). In this way, students are measured against a consistent set of academic criteria.

3. Where do the standards come from?

The [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](#) provide teachers, students and families with clear and shared expectations for what all students should know and be able to do at the end of each year. They formalize the expectation that all students in the Commonwealth have access to the same academic content, regardless of their zip code, background, or abilities. It is important to remember that these are end of grade level standards. Mastery is not expected until the end of each school year.

4. Why are there multiple standards under each subject?

Each subject is broken down into specific learning standards that fall within that subject area. In this way, students and parents can see where performance is proficient and where additional practice may be needed.

5. What are the key differences between traditional grading and standards based grading?

There are some key differences between traditional grading and standards based grading. When it comes to traditional grading, the teacher has autonomy to

TPS District Strategy

The Tewksbury Public Schools Community believes that our educational program will reflect our collective Vision of a Learner. Our consistent observable growth among our students and staff will be evident in the achievement of academic, social, and emotional success in school and far beyond.

determine what is graded or what counts. So a teacher may decide that they're going to count certain assignments, tests or quizzes toward the grade and not others. In standards based grading, all students are measured against the same set of standards - so all of the assignments and assessments are providing the teacher with information related to how the student is progressing toward the standard. The teacher is able to use this information to plan targeted instruction to move progress forward.

In traditional grading, different tasks may be assigned different weights - so teachers may decide quizzes are 20% of the grade, in class assignments are worth 30% and so on...In standards based grading all tasks are designed to measure progress toward the standard. So, no assignment is necessarily more important or weighted more heavily than another because it is viewed as more formative information designed to provide more targeted instruction.

In traditional grading an average of all assignments, tests, quizzes, etc is used to determine the overall grade. With Standards Based Grading, that is not the case at all. Instead we use more of a **decaying average**, which means that a student's most recent performance is weighted more heavily. We aren't focused on how quickly the student mastered the standard or how long it took the student to master the standard, only that the student mastered it.

Another big difference is that homework, participation, effort, behavior are not factored into the grade because we are only measuring progress toward the specific standard. Not to say that all of these things aren't important, they are. Especially in elementary school, when you are just learning how to learn, but we know that students can struggle with some of these things and still master the standard and vice versa. For example, some students can get all of their homework in on time, participate, work hard and be the model student, but struggle to master the content. As a result, these things are reported separately in a new **habits of character** section.

6. What is the difference between benchmarks and standards?

Standards are what students should know and be able to do by the end of the school year. Benchmarks are simply markers along the way that allow us to monitor that students are on schedule to meet the end of year standard.

7. Since the standards are end-of-year expectations, how can my child achieve MASTERY in the first or second term?

The standards are end of year expectations, but may be broken down into three phases, the expectation at the end of the first term (i.e. term one benchmarks), the expectation at the end of the second term (i.e. term two benchmarks) and the end-of-year expectations (i.e. standard).

8. 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 does not stop. The students who have met the standard can concentrate on more challenging work that is at a higher level of Bloom's revised taxonomy.

9. Do the performance descriptors on the report card correlate with letter grades?

No, they do not correlate with traditional letter grades. Performance descriptors (Not at Mastery, Approaching Mastery, Near Mastery, Mastery) are used to indicate a student's progress in meeting academic grade-level standards.

10. How many report cards will we get each year?

There is no change to the reporting periods in Kindergarten. Students will still receive two report cards one each semester, February and June.

Students in grades 1-4 will have three reporting periods - trimesters - December, March and June.

Students on IEPs will receive their special education progress reports with each report card. For Kindergarten, we added one additional progress report. Instead of waiting until February for the first progress report, students in Kindergarten will receive a progress report in December.

11. How will I receive my student's report card?

Report cards will be sent as an attachment in ASPEN. The report card will be created in OTUS, which is a student growth platform that allows us to build assessments and rubrics, track student progress toward the standards and build a standards based reporting system. Our new report card will be generated using the OTUS platform. As a result the report card will look quite different from what you might be used to.

12. What marking system is used on the report cards?

SBRC Proficiency Levels:

MASTERY: The student demonstrates a thorough understanding of grade level concepts and skills. Performance is characterized by the ability to apply the skills with accuracy, quality, and independence.

NEAR MASTERY: The student demonstrates a thorough understanding of grade level concepts. Performance is characterized by the application of skills with accuracy and quality. The student may require occasional support and direction.

APPROACHING MASTERY: The student demonstrates a basic understanding of grade level concepts. Performance is characterized by the application of skills and strategies with support and direction.

NOT AT MASTERY: The student inconsistently demonstrates the application of grade level concepts. Performance is characterized by limited application of skills and strategies and requires considerable support and direction.

13. How should I prepare my child for these report card changes?

We encourage you to have a conversation with your child to explain the ratings using age-appropriate language. For example, a third grade parent may tell his/her child the following:

- “Mastery” means that you are learning what is being taught and doing amazing work on your own. Keep doing what you’re doing!
- “Near Mastery” means that you are learning what is being taught and sometimes you need some help from the teacher to show what you know. Keep asking questions and doing your best!
- “Approaching Mastery” means that you are on your way to learning that standard but need some more time. This is okay because all kids learn at different rates and in different ways. Keep asking questions and doing your best.
- “Not at Mastery” means that you have not met this standard YET, but we will work together with your teacher to help you keep moving in the right direction. Keep asking questions and doing your best!

14. How will I check in on my student’s progress between reporting periods?

Please reach out to your child’s teacher if you have any questions or concerns regarding your child’s progress.

15. How is assessment different for standards-based report cards?

SBRC assessments focus solely on a student’s academic achievement and continue mounting evidence that indicates a true assessment of the child’s attainment of learning targets. Extraneous factors, like work habits, homework, attendance and effort, are assessed and reported separately.

Standards-based assessments evaluate progress toward mastery of learning targets. Each standard is assessed over time and the reported performance on the report card indicates whether or not a child has mastered the particular benchmark and/or standard.

Teachers will be collecting data from formative and summative assessments to measure whether or not a child has met each standard or benchmark by the end of each term. This data can be in forms of classwork assignments, projects, observations, assessments, etc.

16. What if my child is “Not at Mastery” or “Approaching Mastery” on their report card?

A student may have “Not at Mastery” or “Approaching Mastery”, depending on when new concepts/standards are introduced during the year. For example: Number and Operations is a math standard - multiplication of a 2-digit number by a 1-digit number may be taught in the first quarter and a student masters the skill (Mastery), and in the second quarter multiplication of a 3- digit by 3-digit number is taught. In the second quarter the student may receive an Approaching Mastery since the standard has not been mastered.

17. How can I support my student at home?

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has a very helpful and informative [Family Guide](#) section to support learning at home.

18. Standards Based reporting and Special Education: How will students receiving special education services be graded?

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) must be provided with the same opportunity to receive grades in relation to expectations for grade level standards; this is a civil right. Since special education students are a heterogeneous group with various abilities, which impact learning, some may not achieve certain grade-level standards without special education services and support. For students with accommodations, the content of the standard remains the same, but the method for learning and demonstrating mastery of a standard may be adjusted. In accordance with the law, documentation of progress specific to IEP goals and objectives will be reported to parents on IEP progress report forms each term.

19. How will Multilingual Learners/ELLs receiving ELD (English Language Development) support be graded?

English Language Learners will be given the elementary SBRC. The ELL teacher will provide a progress report each term.