

Frequently Asked Questions for Standards- Based Grading and Standards-based Report Cards

What are standards-based report cards and why are schools converting?

The standards-based report card provides information about how your child is progressing towards meeting Ohio's Learning Standards during the course of the school year. Standards specify what all students should know and be able to do by the end of their school year.

Other positive attributes of ***standards-based report cards*** are as follows:

- Your child's performance is measured against the standard, rather than simply being compared to other students in his/her class.
- It measures how well your child is performing in relation to the grade-level standards as compared to the traditional letter-grade system that gives a compiled grade for work completed in a subject area
- It gives every child in every school the opportunity to meet or exceed Ohio's Learning Standards.
- It gives you, the parent or guardian, a more detailed and accurate assessment of how your child is progressing academically.

What is the purpose of the Standards-based report card?

The purpose of the Standards-based report card is to provide more detailed feedback regarding the progress children are making towards specific content indicators at each grade level. This report card allows parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected at each grade level. With this understanding, parents will be better able to guide and support their child, helping him/her to be successful in a rigorous academic program.

How does the Standards-based report card compare to the traditional letter grade system?

Standards-based reporting is different from traditional letter grade reporting. Letter grades are often calculated by combining how well the student met a teacher's expectations, how the student performed on assignments and tests, how much effort the teacher believes the student put in, and how the student is performing in comparison to classmates. Letter grades do not tell parents which skills their child has mastered or whether he or she is working at grade level. The Standards-based report card measures how well an individual student is performing in relation to the grade level standards, not the work of other students. This gives parents a better understanding of their child's strengths and needs and encourages all students to do their best.

- **Students are evaluated based on what students actually know.**

There are differences in the grading practices of teachers. In the same school, one teacher might base grades mostly on tests and quizzes while another awards a large number of points for homework completion. This means that an "A" in one teacher's class indicates something different than the "A" in the other teacher's class.

Standards-based grading eliminates these types of discrepancies. Rather than receiving arbitrary points or letter grades, students must demonstrate proficiency on a common list of course objectives.

- **The focus becomes learning.**

Standards-based grading shifts the focus from earning points to actual learning. Rather than worrying about how much an assignment is worth, or if it is going to be graded, students must focus on mastering the content. Students also have a clearer understanding of which concepts they still need to work on and which ones they have grasped. Freeing students from the

pressure of receiving a certain letter grade allows them to take more educational risks, deepening their learning.

- **Teachers have a clear understanding of a student's strengths and needs.**

If a student receives an "A" as a grade, what does that really mean? Does it mean they have demonstrated mastery of 90 percent of the content, or does it mean they merely turned in 90 percent of what was assigned? If a grade book shows that a student has a 70 percent in the class and a reasonable homework average, it does not tell what the student knows and does not know. Standards-based grading allows the teacher to quickly scan a list of objectives and see where the majority of students are proficient and where many of them are still struggling. The focus is on the needs of each child. The objectives an individual student needs to work on can also be pinpointed. (A teacher can clearly state, "Your child needs to work on solving multi-step equations," instead of, "Your child needs to do better on tests and quizzes.")

How does standards-based grading differ from traditional grading?

Unlike with traditional grading systems, a standards-based grading system measures a student's mastery of grade-level standards by prioritizing the most recent, consistent level of performance. Thus a student who may have struggled at the beginning of a concept, when first encountering new material, may still be able to demonstrate mastery of key content/concepts by the end of a grading period.

In a traditional grading system, a student's performance for an entire quarter is averaged together. Early quiz scores that were low would be averaged together with more proficient performance later in the course, resulting in a lower overall grade than current performance indicates. Standards-based report cards separate academic performance from work habits and behavior in order to provide parents a more accurate view of a student's progress in both academic and behavioral areas. Variables such as effort, participation, timeliness, cooperation, attitude and attendance are reported separately, not as an indicator of a student's academic performance.

How are my child's marks determined?

A student's performance on a series of assessments (both formative and summative) will be used to determine a student's overall grade in a course. Practice assignments (homework) are just that, practice, and thus should serve primarily as a source of feedback and instructional support for both students and teachers. Scores on practice assignments should not be used as a major component of a student's academic grade. Teachers may require students to complete all of their practice work prior to allowing them to take, or retake, an assessment.

Will my student still receive teacher comments on their report card?

Yes. Individualized feedback is an essential component of standards-based grading. Effective feedback is a more useful source of information than simply assigning a numeric value or letter grade to student work.

What will each of the letters represent?

A mark of (4) would indicate that a student exceeds a standard by consistently demonstrating an advanced level of understanding and/or the ability to apply their knowledge at a higher level. A mark of (3) would indicate that a student has independently achieved the standard. The student demonstrates proficiency of the standard and is on track with grade level expectations.

A mark of (2) would indicate that a student is developing an understanding of a standard, but still may be in need of additional instruction and/or support.

A mark of (1) would indicate minimal understanding of a standard. The student shows limited evidence of understanding the standard.

How should a student/parent view student grades now that the system of A-F or O, S, U has been replaced by different marking system? What is considered to be an A in the new grading system?

You cannot really compare a traditional grading system to standards-based grading. It is like comparing “apples to oranges”. Standards-based grading identifies a standard and indicates whether or not a student is meeting the standard at a given point in the school year. A mark of (3) is defined as meeting grade level standards and indicates that a student has demonstrated mastery of the skills that were expected to be learned by that point in the grading period.

Is it possible to achieve a mark of (4)?

Yes it is. However, a mark of (4) indicates performance that is consistently above what is expected for mastery at that point in the school year. Level (4) work would indicate a much deeper understanding of a standard, the ability to apply that knowledge, make connections and extend learning beyond the targeted goal.

If a student is being accelerated in any grade level/subject area with above grade level standards or materials, is that student required to get a (4) on his report card?

By definition, level (4) work reflects higher order thinking, application, connection and extension of targeted goals. While being instructed above grade level is not required in order to achieve an (4), students who are taught above grade level have consistently shown mastery of a subject at their current grade level. Achieving an (4) does not preclude a teacher from suggesting areas for improvement in the comment section of the report card. Receiving an (4) does not guarantee that a students’ performance would remain at that level across all reporting periods, or for all course standards.

If a student receives 1’s all year, does that mean the student will be retained?

If a student receives 1’s, it means his/her work is not yet meeting grade level standards. A number of academic interventions will be offered to those students who are struggling to meet the established standards. If grade level retention is being considered this will be discussed with the parents, teacher and principal before any decisions would be made.

How will I know if my child needs help?

Receiving a (1) on a grade report/report card can be a sign that a student is in need of extra support in the areas where they are receiving low marks. This is one benefit of a standards-based report card, areas in need of support are clearly evident.