



# STANDARDS-BASED GRADING & THE K - 5 REPORT CARD

A GUIDE FOR SMYRNA SCHOOL DISTRICT FAMILIES



## INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, Smyrna School District will shift to a standards-based grading approach in Kindergarten through grade 5. The purpose of this shift is to provide students, parents / guardians, teachers and administrators a more accurate view of students' progress in academic and personal growth.

The new report card is fully aligned with the State of Delaware's Common Core Standards in English/Language Arts and Mathematics, the Delaware Social Studies State Standards, and the Next Generation Science Standards. The indicators on the report card do not reflect every standard taught and assessed throughout the school year. Rather, they reflect *prioritized* standards that are considered to be indicators of future academic success.

Standards-based grading (1) communicates how students are performing on a set of clearly defined learning targets, and (2) measures students' mastery of grade-level standards by prioritizing the most recent, consistent level of performance.

The report card is designed to:

- ❖ Align with current state standards;
- ❖ Reflect student progress towards grade-level standards;
- ❖ Be unique to the grade and the standards of that grade; and,
- ❖ Provide more objective evaluation according to consistent grade-level standards.

Research supports standards-based grading and reporting as a basis of communication that will help students learn more effectively through better feedback for teachers, students and families. The Smyrna School District K - 5 Standards-Based Report Card is only one component in our effort to improve outcomes for every student in every classroom.

## HOW IS STANDARDS-BASED GRADING DIFFERENT FROM TRADITIONAL GRADING?

Standards-based grading communicates how students are performing on a set of clearly defined learning targets called standards. The purpose of standards-based grading is to identify what a student knows, or is able to do, in relation to pre-established learning targets.

Unlike the traditional grading system, 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 when encountering new material at the beginning of a unit may still be able to demonstrate mastery of key content and concepts by the end of the marking period.

Standards-based grading essentially gives students the practice they need and more than one opportunity to demonstrate success. It uses assessments based on prioritized standards and multiple scores per student, which reflect a student's ability at a specific moment in time.

This is in contrast to the traditional grading system, where a student's performance for an entire marking period is averaged together and typically involves a single, overall numerical grade. As an

example, early quiz scores that may have been low would be averaged together with more proficient performance later in the course, resulting in a lower, overall grade than the students *current* performance indicates. The traditional grading system does not always convey precise information regarding student growth. (View a sample report card [here](#).)

Additionally, parents can view a parent-friendly standards guide for each grade level reporting student progress with the new Smyrna School District Standards-Based Report Card by clicking the appropriate grade level: [Kindergarten](#), [Grade 1](#), [Grade 2](#), [Grade 3](#), [Grade 4](#), and [Grade 5](#).

## ACADEMIC PROGRESS INDICATORS

Academic progress is reported on the following scale:

### **E = EMERGING**

Students' understanding of content and concepts is still **emerging** in this skill, and is not approaching grade-level expectations. The student does not grasp the concept or skill. Performance is inconsistent even with guidance and support. Additional instruction, intervention, and support may be necessary to move the student toward grade level standards and expectations.

### **P = PROGRESSING**

Students at this level are **progressing** toward grade-level expectations. Performance is characterized by the ability to apply skills with increasing success. Performance varies regarding accuracy, quality, and level of support needed. The student requires additional practice and support to meet grade level standards and expectations. This is an appropriate level of achievement as the student advances toward mastery.

### **M = MEETS**

Students at this level consistently **meet** grade-level expectations with minimal support. Performance is characterized by thorough understanding of concepts and skills. The student is able to demonstrate this skill independently with relative consistency. This is an excellent level of achievement and indicative of future success.

### **D = DISTINCTION**

Students' performance at this level is characterized by self-motivation and the ability to routinely apply skills with exemplary accuracy, independence, and a high level of precision and quality. The student is particularly talented in this skill, should be recognized, and is meeting grade-level standards and expectations with **distinction**.

### **N/A = Not assessed at this time**

Some skills and standards are introduced and taught at specific times over the course of the school year. **N/A** would be reported if the specific skill or standard is not covered during instruction over the reporting period, or there is inadequate evidence of student achievement available to make a determination.

## STUDENT EVIDENCE TO DETERMINE PROGRESS

As students work toward achieving grade-level expectations in all areas--both academic and non-academic--teachers carefully consider the following in determining progress:

- A collection of work over time;
- Daily written and/or oral tasks;
- Application of skills; and,
- Periodic formative and summative assessments (quizzes, tests, project-based performance tasks).

Teachers will continue to add comments in narrative form in each of the end-of-trimester report cards. Teachers' comments will address student strengths and areas for growth (both academic and non-academic) as well as individual student goals regarding what is necessary to reach grade-level expectations.

## RELATED ARTS, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT & WORK HABITS

Related Arts (Art, Library, Music, Physical Education/Health, Technology), Social-Emotional Development, and Academic Work Habits will be assessed using the same performance level indicators as academic content, as described above.

## GRADING & REPORT CARD COMMUNICATION

Research indicates that a student's chance of success in school improves when there is regular and meaningful two-way communication between the family and the school. The K-5 report card provides direct feedback to families, students, and staff regarding student progress towards the end-of-grade standards.

Reporting student progress is an essential part of this communication process between home and school. Families should have information that accurately reflects a student's level of performance and progress in meeting academic standards. The information that is included on the report card and the accompanying documents should enable families to best support their children at home.

The report card is one way of learning about your child's progress in school. Conferences with your child's teacher, along with work samples, can add to your understanding of his or her performance in school.

FACE-TO-FACE	INTERIM REPORTS	REPORT CARDS
Orientation - August	1st Trimester - October	1st Trimester -December
Open House - September	2nd Trimester -February	2nd Trimester -March
Conferences - November	3rd Trimester -May	3rd Trimester -June

Even though formal conferences are held in November, parents are encouraged to reach out to their child's teacher to ask for a conference at any time. Additionally, schools offer countless avenues for communication throughout the year, including:

- ★ Phone calls, emails and other communication apps
- ★ Samples of student work
- ★ District, school, and teacher websites
- ★ Newsletters and SSD Alerts
- ★ School-wide events
- ★ Parent organization meetings

## STANDARDS-BASED REPORTING AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) 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 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. For all students with an IEP, a supplemental progress report is provided that identifies how students are performing on appropriately challenging learning tasks as outlined in the goals and objectives of their IEP.

## PROMOTION GUIDELINES FOR KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 5

The fundamental purpose of standards-based grading is to compare student performance to established levels of proficiency in knowledge, understanding and skills. The intent is to evaluate student work in relation to pre-established standards. The promotion of each student will be determined individually, and the decision to promote a student is made on the basis of multiple factors including progress toward meeting reading and math standards, social and emotional development and school attendance ([SSD Board of Education Policy 5112](#)). When a recommendation for a student's retention is made either by the school or the family, a best-interest team meeting that includes parents/guardians, school administration, teachers, and counselors, will be conducted.

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For information specific to how to help your child, please contact your child's teacher.

For further questions regarding the updated report card, contact your school administrators or the Office of Curriculum and Instruction at 653-4311 or at the following email addresses:

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