

Standards-Based Grading and Reporting Parent Night Questions

Why do the standards seem lower than they were in the past?

The new Illinois Learning Standards for all subjects are actually more rigorous than in the past. The reporting standards on the report card are written in parent-friendly language for ease of use, but they are not lower than in the past.

Overall, will our students learn less material than in the past?

The content and expectations for what occurs in the classroom has not changed. Students are learning the same material as they have in the past.

Is this being done because more students should really be repeating a grade, but we can't leave them behind?

A student repeating a grade level is extremely rare and has nothing to do with the new report card.

How are students to understand if they did well on a test?

Teachers will continue to give students feedback on their performance, whether that be the number of right/wrong, whether they are meeting particular standards, and/or how they are progressing through the content.

How much was the consulting firm paid to develop this?

District 25 did not hire a consulting firm to develop the new report card. A committee of teachers and administrators met for two years to determine philosophy and layout of the report card, and then 6 grade-level committees (each making up one of the grade levels: Kindergarten through 5th grade) met to determine the particular reporting standards for each grade's report card.

How did the committee determine the priority standards for each content area and grade level?

A committee of teachers and administrators met for two years to determine the philosophy and layout of the report card, and then 6 grade-level committees (each making up one of the grade levels: Kindergarten through 5th grade) met to determine the particular reporting standards for each grade's report card. The reporting standards are only the key aspects that we want to communicate to parents. Teachers are expected to teach all of the Illinois Learning Standards throughout the school year, and we have designed our curriculum to achieve this.

How were parents selected for this committee?

Last year we met with the PTA Presidents' Council, made up of all the PTA presidents of all the schools, to review the report card and receive feedback.

Are the standards on the report card compilations of 2 or more of the Illinois standards? How is this different than what was done in the past, where school districts were picking which ones to teach?

As was shared at the parent nights, before the new Illinois Learning Standards, the old set of standards had so many of them that districts chose which ones to implement. This is no longer the case. The reporting standards on the report card are either a combination of standards or are the ones we believe are most important to report to parents. Teachers, however, are expected to teach all of the Illinois Learning Standards throughout the school year, and we have designed our curriculum to achieve this.

If a student gets an A in a class, doesn't that mean they know the content and have the knowledge to move on to the next skill or level?

Yes, it is likely that a student who earned an A in a traditional grading system knew the content and was ready for the next skill. We believe, however, that a standards-based report card will give the student and a parent a greater focus and detail on what exactly the student knows and is able to do.

If your standards are specific for District 25, how do we know our students are ready for high school and college?

The Illinois Learning Standards are the same for all students in the State of Illinois, yet how they're taught and the exact expectations of each are determined by each district. District 25 regularly communicates with District 214 (the high school district into which our students will enter) to gauge how our students are performing, and we use that information to adjust our curriculum accordingly. As a whole, District 25 students perform very well in District 214.

How will high schools know where to place students without grades? Will it be based only on MAP and PSAT scores?

Our middle schools currently still use a traditional grading system of A-F. Determinations for placement at the high school level come from a combination of test scores and teacher recommendation. There are no current plans to change this format.

How is this going to prepare students for high school and college, which are grade-based? How will they cope if they're not used to knowing where exactly they stand?

Standards-based grading and reporting actually gives better information to students and parents on how they're performing. It's much more specific than a standard letter grade.

If our curriculum continues to get easier, how much will our students be ready for honor and AP classes in high school?

The content and expectations for what occurs in the classroom has not changed due to the report card. We have over the past five years adopted new curriculum in some of our subject areas, yet all of them are more rigorous than what was used in the past. District 25 places students into more honor classes than any other district that feeds into District 214.

[Are there plans to do standards-based grading at the middle school? If this moves to the middle school, how will Awards Night and graduation work?](#)

We have just started an exploration committee made up of middle school teachers and administrators to investigate standards-based grading at the middle school to determine if this is something we want to do, and if so, what form it would take. It would be at least two years before this determination would be made. Should a standards-based report card be something the committee wishes to pursue, determinations for aspects like Awards Night and graduation would occur then.

[How do parents volunteer for the middle school committee?](#)

Should a standards-based report card become something the middle school committee wishes to pursue, we would seek parent input and feedback before implementation, yet at this time, no determination has been made on what form that would take.

[What type of training did the teachers receive to implement this new system? What training have teachers had to ensure congruent assessments of kids from grade to grade?](#)

Many teachers were either involved in the main committee to determine the philosophy and design of the new report card or in the grade-level committees that determined the particular reporting standards at each grade level. Last spring, each member of the committee along with another partner teacher each piloted the new report card, and all teachers received training both in the spring and this fall. Teachers will continue to receive training over the next couple of years to implement the new report card and philosophy.

One of our Board of Education goals over the last couple of years is to align our curriculum across the district. As we do this, we are also aligning assessments, and the new report card has helped make the consistency of how students are assessed more congruent than what had occurred previously.

[How is this being communicated to the students?](#)

Each teacher is working with students to help them understand meaning from the new form of grading, just as in the past our primary teachers (K-2) helped students understand what B (beginning), D (developing), and I (independent) meant on the primary report card, and what A-F meant on the intermediate (3-5) report card.

[Why can't we have \[traditional\] grades on the standards separate from the student skills?](#)

While that certainly could have been an option, the committee designed the new report card to best give parents and students feedback on how students were performing, and we believe standards-based does this in a better way than traditional report cards.

[With this new method, how do you identify advanced kids?](#)

The determination for placement of students into advanced classes was not based on grades previously and is still not today. Students are placed from a combination of standardized measures, performance on a district placement test that demonstrates their knowledge of

content and/or ability, and on teachers rating student performance in particular subject areas. More information on advanced placement can be found on our website: (<https://www.sd25.org/Page/1291>).

How will kids stay motivated? How can high performers be motivated to grow their knowledge and not settle for meeting the standards?

Our goal is always that the desire to learn comes from wanting to grow and develop as a learner. Our teachers regularly seek to meet the needs of each learner by both guiding and supporting their learning, while also challenging them to reach for more when they're ready to do so. This would be the same whether the student was meeting a standard or achieving a high letter grade.

As a reminder, the reporting standards on the report card are meant to give parents a summary of the learning that has occurred in a trimester. There are many concepts and skills that may lead up to one standard, and teachers will continue to differentiate when students have met expectations and are ready to go beyond.

Whenever processes change, there are always "glitches." What have we learned from neighboring districts which have already changed?

Some districts chose at first to put all of the state standards on the report card, which turned it into a 15-20 page document that was too overwhelming for parents to absorb. Some districts eliminated the narrative (or comments) portion of the report card, as they felt the standards spoke for themselves, yet parents expressed concern that the comment section was still important. The committee agreed, so we included it. Most districts don't include the Supporting Documents (which can be found on our website: (<https://www.sd25.org/Page/1353>) that explain in detail what a student needs to achieve a Meets, Developing, or Does Not Meet. The committee felt this was an important resource for parents.

Further education qualification will still be grade-based. How will this new evaluation process change student mindset going forward?

We want our students to see the value in our grading system, regardless of whether it's standards-based or traditional. After examining this for two years, the elementary committee believes that standards-based grading is the best system for our elementary students. We believe this philosophy will better help students understand their progress with learning in each of the subject areas at each of the grade levels, and it will help parents better understand their student's progress as well. We want students to have the mindset that learning is more than earning a particular letter grade.

How will students in younger grade levels (K-3) who don't have the option of advanced math, etc., but who are advanced in their learning (i.e. have had an official IQ test and are "gifted") going to be assessed? Even if they "meet" standards, how will we know they are being challenged/learning material they don't already inherently know?

Teaching and learning in school is more differentiated than ever before. Our teachers have high expectations for our students and will continue to meet the needs of our students whether they are meeting standards, were earning an Independent rating (the highest grade on the old K-2 report card), or an A.

What if a child starts the year with straight M's or achieves them quickly? What is the incentive to teach beyond an "M", to learn beyond an "M"? My daughter already asked me why she should retake a test to get a better grade if she already got an "M"?

As a reminder, the reporting standards can be different for each trimester. Just because students achieved an M on a standard in the first trimester doesn't mean they will in the 2nd trimester, as the expectations may be different. Furthermore, our teachers have high expectations for our students and will continue to meet the needs of our students, regardless of what grade they have earned. Finally, if students are demonstrating that they have met standards on a particular activity or assessment, they shouldn't have to retake it.

How come there's no indicator for exceeding standards? Are we still creating a situation where students are encouraged to achieve at a high level? Are we going for mediocre, then?

Some of the Illinois Learning Standards cannot be exceeded, and having previously earned an A or Independent (the highest grade on the old K-2 report card) on a report card did not indicate that a student was exceeding standards. Also, the content of what is being taught has not changed. Our teachers have high expectations for our students and will continue to meet the needs of our students whether they are meeting or exceeding standards.

How are standard grades for content tied to/affect grades of student skills? Is it possible to have a "Meets" in content and a D in submitting work on time, for example?

Yes. A student is graded separately now on what they know and are able to do from how they perform as a student (student skills). A student may "Meet" the standards for a content area, thus showing they have demonstrated understanding or the ability to complete an objective, yet struggle with turning work in on time and receive an "O" for only occasionally meeting the expectation, which then is something on which to work. One of those, however, does not bring down the other, which may have happened in the past.

How does a teacher test whether the child mastered the content vs. developing? Are tests still on % basis? How many problems out of 10 must a student correctly answer to get a meet grade? There must be a % translation to each SBG. What is it?

Parents may wish to visit the Supporting Documents on our website (<https://www.sd25.org/Page/1353>), which are listed by grade level and break down each standard into what the expectation is for Meets, Developing, or Does Not Meet. Tests are no longer calculated by a percentage, but instead whether the student learned the particular skills that were being assessed.

Is the final grade given based on the skill a child attains towards the end of the trimester?

Example: if under traditional, a child would get on tests: F, B, A, A - would this result in meets?

If students are being assessed on a particular skill and the first time students receive a Does Not Meet, the second time a Developing, and then the next two times are Meeting, yes, the students are now meeting the standard and would receive a "Meets", unless the teacher felt more assessment was needed for that determination.

Would it not be a reasonable expectation to see "M" on our child's report card all of the time because it is to simply meet the standard?

The Illinois Learning Standards are rigorous and challenging, and how these standards are being assessed and the level of expectation are designed to meet the needs of a high-performing district like Arlington Heights 25. The standards may appear on the report card to be simple, as the reporting standards have been written in parent-friendly language, yet parents may wish to visit the Supporting Documents on our website (<https://www.sd25.org/Page/1353>), which are listed by grade level and break down each standard into what the expectation is for Meets, Developing, or Does Not Meet.

Has the district already implemented: standards-based curriculum for all content/subjects, standards-based teaching, and developed a standards-based child/student?

Our new report card only focuses on standards-based grading and reporting. Curriculum and teaching is already focused on standards, as they make up the foundation for what we teach and how we teach it.

How does SBG impact special education eligibility, based on various criteria?

It does not impact special education eligibility, as eligibility is not based on grades, but rather on a student's ability to achieve knowledge and skills. What is different, however, is that now the report card is showing parents of special education students exactly what areas their children are performing at grade-level and for which areas they are below the standard for that grade-level.

What are the implications for actual class tests and quizzes? Will we expect to see % on the test?

Parents should no longer see a percentage at the top of a test or quiz. Parents may see the number correct and wrong and create their own percentage if they wish. Different teams of teachers across the district have reported out student progress in different ways and will continue to do so. We are continuing to collect feedback from staff and engage in conversations regarding the best ways to give parents and students information on progress as we continue to align our curriculum and practices across the district.

Once we receive feedback that a child needs to focus on specific problems, how can we help? What is the parent's role when a child is not meeting standards?

Parents should talk with their children's teachers on how best to help when students are not meeting standards, as each situation and standard could be different. Parents may wish to visit

the Supporting Documents on our website (<https://www.sd25.org/Page/1353>), which are listed by grade level and break down each standard into what the expectation is for Meets, Developing, or Does Not Meet.

How are students being tested?

For the most part, students are likely being tested the same way they were in the past, yet with standards-based grading, the teacher may decide better methods are needed to determine progress on a particular standard. Each of these will differ, however, depending on the standard. If parents are interested in understanding how a student was assessed on a particular standard, we encourage them to ask their child's teacher.

If a standard is not met in the first 2 trimesters and the standard is not assessed in the 3rd trimester, how does a parent know if the standard has been mastered?

The teacher will continue to work with the student on the standard and will report this information to the parent, either through communication the parent and teacher determine, or in the narrative or comment section of the report card in Trimester 3.

What does it look like if a student didn't meet or is developing? Do they get pulled out or miss the beginning of the next subject?

Teachers are already well versed in designing their instructional methods to work with students who have either already achieved a skill and are ready for something more or for students who are still struggling with skills the rest of the class has already met. This is not new. There are opportunities within the school day to work with students at varying ability levels, without them having to miss new learning.

How does homework not reflect a child's understanding of a subject? How does cooperative group work not count as relevant to a child's grade?

Homework is typically assigned as practice for something students have already learned, yet depending on the particular assignment, it could be a reflection on the child's understanding. Teachers still, however, would want to assess students in class to confirm learning. *Works cooperatively in groups* is one of the student skills that is assessed and reported separately from content.

How do you stimulate competition among students?

It is not our goal to stimulate competition among students. There are times, however, where teachers may put students into teams to compete during a review, for instance, or there are opportunities like Spelling Bees or Geography Bees, but overall this is not something for which we are striving.

What happens if my third grader does not "meet the standard" by the end of the school year?

While our goal is to have all students meet all standards by the end of each of their years, we also know this is not always possible. Parents may speak with teachers regarding continued work on certain concepts over the summer, and at times where the gaps in learning are

significant, that student may be enrolled in certain programs at the school level the following year, or that information may pass on to the next year's teacher to work with the student on certain concepts.

[How can we tell with the new "grades" if a child is excelling in certain areas? How are we challenging them when we are so focused on those not meeting standards?](#)

The report card is one tool that is used to communicate student progress to parents. Parent-teacher conferences and other parent communication occurs throughout the school year, and whether a child is excelling can be discussed at those times or may be commented on in the comments section of the report card. Teachers are focused on meeting the needs of all students in their classes, and that has not changed with the new report card.

[I like the breakouts of content vs. skills, but why can't we then still grade content in ABCDF, or at least add more than 3 levels?](#)

The elementary report card committee believes that the three levels that were determined for the report card were all that were necessary for communication to parents and that additional levels were not needed. As for why to not still use letter grades, we would refer parents to the Parent-Night presentation (<https://youtu.be/8II0gZvVf1w>) that goes into greater detail on why we have moved away from letter grades.

[How can we tell if a student is beyond meets expectations for a trimester \(i.e. meets end of year goal by trimester 1\)?](#)

Parents may wish to visit the Supporting Documents on our website (<https://www.sd25.org/Page/1353>), which are listed by grade level and break down each standard into what the expectation is for Meets, Developing, or Does Not Meet by trimester.

[Can I get any feedback/grades before the trimester ends?](#)

The main reason the fall Parent-Teacher Conferences were moved from November to October was so parents could have such feedback before the end of the trimester. Parents may also reach out to teachers at any time if they have questions regarding their student's progress.

[How will you report out when students are working on standards below or above grade level?](#)

The report card is sent to parents three times a year, at the end of each trimester, which reports out student progress on the standards and whether students are meeting or below. Information may be included in the narrative or shared at parent-teacher conferences regarding a student's performance above grade level.

[What research guided this journey?](#)

Standards-based grading and reporting is a pretty common topic among educators these days, so on a weekly basis we are connecting to articles and videos on the topic, as well as attending conferences and reading books on the subject. Our work was primarily guided by Dr. Thomas R. Guskey, a leader in this field, as well as others, such as Dr. Rick Wormeli. We also

consulted with numerous districts on their processes, especially all those that also attend District 214.

How is this different from the old 1st and 2nd grade report cards?

The old report card for grades K-2 had grade designations of B (Beginning), D (Developing), and I (Independent). While there are certainly some similarities, the new report card philosophy focuses on particular and aligned reporting standards, seeks to separate the difference between content and student skills, and has new expectations for how teachers are assessing students' learning.

How is grading not subjective by the teacher?

Unless a test is graded by a machine, there will always be a level of subjectivity by a human grader. Standards-based grading, as well as aligning curriculum instruction, and assessment, helps to reduce that subjectivity. At the same time, we believe that a level of subjectivity is a good thing as well, as teachers know their students and can use that information to best help them achieve.

Will this format be used in high school, and if so, how will this format affect college applications (G.P.A.)?

Our understanding is that District 214 is not pursuing standards-based grading at this time, although there are high schools in the area that have already moved to this model.

Will children be able to retake tests to show they know material if they don't meet expectations the first time?

The possibility of retakes is still an evolving practice in District 25. Different teachers, subject area groups, and schools are experimenting with this concept. If a standard is not met, however, the teacher will continue to work with and assess the student until expectations are met.

Will teachers' feedback only go parents or will student be informed as well?

Teachers will continue to give students and parents feedback, appropriate to the age level of the children.

What happens if a child meets the trimester 3 standard benchmark in trimester 1 or 2? Do they move to additional standards?

Teachers are focused on meeting the needs of all students in their classes, and that has not changed with the new report card. If a student has already achieved a standard, that student can either go deeper with the material or will move on to different material.

How will the rubric for placing into advanced math be changed to reflect standards, like the district math test for advanced placement?

The District Placement Test portion of the rubric for possible placement into advanced math is based on both our curriculum and the Illinois Learning Standards. When we moved from

Everyday Mathematics to *Math in Focus* a year ago, the test had to be altered to align with the new curriculum. Since the Illinois Learning Standards have remained the same, the introduction of the new report card does not affect the rubric for determination of placement of students into advanced math.

If teachers are going to ensure or wait for all students to meet standards, does that not mean they are exempt from not finishing teaching all that they had planned to teach for the year? Where is the time to go back and revisit previous chapters?

Teachers have always worked with students who didn't master particular concepts while continuing to move ahead with new learning. Teaching today is more differentiated than ever before, and the introduction of the new report card does not change that. Instruction today is designed to better meet multiple levels at once, and teachers will continue to best meet students' needs, regardless of whether they are struggling or exceeding expectations.

Is the electronic copy of the report card safe and secure?

Yes. We already inform parents of important information via email and through *School Messenger*, our tool for sending mass messages to parents.

Does the report card use PARCC and other standardized testing?

Standardized test results are communicated to parents outside of the report card and are not included.