



Arlington
Heights
SCHOOL DISTRICT 25

The Elementary
Standards-Based Grading
Parent Handbook
2018-2019

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As District 25 continues to improve teaching and learning for all students, we know that parents and families are our most valuable partner. This is especially true as the District continues to transition to more rigorous standards in each subject area and grade level. The Illinois Learning Standards set high expectations for our students, staff, and schools. It is important to us to communicate your child's achievement toward these rigorous expectations in all content areas. The implementation of a standards-based report card gives us a tool to accurately communicate your child's learning on the district-identified reporting standards for each grade level and subject area from kindergarten through fifth grade.

These reporting standards were identified as the foundational learning that students need to master in order to be successful. The new report card communicates whether a student meets standards, is developing towards standards, or does not meet standards. These reporting descriptors are explained in more detail later in this document. The report card will also include information on your child's student skills, including work completion, organization of materials, and following directions.

The standards-based report card is helpful in many ways. First, it clarifies and reinforces high expectations for all District 25 elementary schools. Second, the report card helps students, teachers, and families focus on the standards throughout the school year. Finally, the new report card provides feedback on student achievement towards specific standards in a way that is meaningful for all.

This Parent Handbook provides information about the report card, including background information, a description of performance levels being used, a snapshot sample of the report card, further details on additional resources for parents, and frequently asked questions.

I hope you will find the Parent Handbook and the standards-based reporting system helpful and informative.

Sincerely,



Kristin Williams
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Overview:

Standards-Based Grading (SBG) is designed to provide a more comprehensive picture of students' academic progress by identifying specific areas of strength, as well as areas where additional work may be needed. It thus facilitates collaboration between parents and educators in their efforts to help students improve their performance (Guskey & Bailey, 2010). It also reports nonacademic factors independently to separate student subject knowledge from student performance or skills.

The report card is one piece of communication amongst the many ways we communicate with families. It is a descriptive tool designed to enhance teaching and learning. The report card was designed to meet the unique needs of District 25 with input of various stakeholder groups as well as current research. It is consistent and uses clearly defined terminology from kindergarten through fifth grade.

Purpose of the Report Card:

The purpose of this report card is to describe academic achievement and student skills based on our district's grade level learning expectations. It reflects student successes, guides improvements, and provides students opportunity for self-evaluation and reflection.

Design:

The District 25 elementary report cards are designed by grade level standards (including student skills) and will be reported out in trimesters. The grade level standard descriptors on the report card remain the same throughout the year. Each grade level has a different report card unique to their grade level standards. **All report cards have the same five student skills.**

- 4-8 reporting standards per subject area
 - Reporting standards may include several learning standards in one parent-friendly descriptor. There are various standards that will NOT be directly reported via the report card, but are still expected to be taught.
- 5 reporting standards for student skills
 - A common rubric was designed in order to document student performance on the student skills.
 - Student Skills Rubric can be found [here](#).
- Report cards will be sent home electronically.

Grading Principles:

- Grades should be based on clearly specified goals and performance standards
 - All students grades K-5, no matter their school, will be graded using the same standards.
- Evidence used for grades should be valid
 - Students are assessed individually on their performance towards the standards, not in comparison to peers.
- Grading should be based on established criteria
 - Example: on a math assessment, students are graded on the math standards assessed. Other factors, such as poor handwriting, no name on the paper, etc. should not be included, yet can be addressed with students in other ways.
- Focus on achievement
 - Students' achievement should be the only aspect included in their content area grade. Their student skills are reported separately.

- Avoid grading based on (mean) averages
 - Focus on the most recent, comprehensive or frequent evidence and/or performance levels.

Content Descriptors:

Student achievement on the report card is “benchmarked” per trimester, meaning, the expectations may change each trimester becoming more difficult. For instance, one of the Kindergarten math standards states, “Counts to 100 by ones and tens”. In the first trimester to meet standard, a student must be able to orally count by ones to 20. In the second trimester to meet standard, a student must be able to orally count by ones to 50 or higher and can orally count by tens to 50 or higher. In the third trimester, a student must be able to count to 100 by ones and tens to meet standard.

There are three levels of performance for the content areas on the report card.

- **Meets Standard (M):** The student demonstrates a thorough understanding of the standard and can apply the knowledge and skills learned.
- **Developing Towards Standard (D):** The student demonstrates a partial understanding of the standard and/or occasionally applies the knowledge and skills learned.
- **Does Not Meet Standard (N):** The student does not independently demonstrate an understanding of the standard.

There are two other descriptors that may appear on your child’s report card.

- **Standard was not assessed (grey box):** These grey boxes are consistent across the district. A standard may have a grey box for a variety of reasons: the standard was not taught in that trimester, it was not assessed in that trimester, or it was expected to have been mastered prior to that trimester.

- **‘Slash’ mark:** Standards marked with a ‘slash’ are on an individual student basis and could appear for a variety of reasons: if your child leaves the class for that whole content area (ie: writing) in the trimester, or perhaps you moved into district late in the trimester, etc. If a standard has a ‘slash’, the reason will be listed in the comments.

The following are text boxes taken from the kindergarten report card:

Academic Code	
M	Meets Standard <i>The student demonstrates a thorough understanding of the standard and can apply the knowledge and skills learned.</i>
D	Developing Towards Standard <i>The student demonstrates a partial understanding of the standard and/or occasionally applies the knowledge and skills learned.</i>
N	Does Not Meet Standard <i>The student does not independently demonstrate an understanding of the standard.</i>
Indicates Standard was not assessed	

This is the academic code section, listed at the top right of the report card.

Writing	T1	T2	T3
Uses a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to communicate ideas and information			
Prints many upper and lowercase letters			
Spells simple words using letter sounds and word patterns			
Capitalizes the first word in a sentence and the pronoun "I"			
Recognizes and names end punctuation			

Content areas are listed at the top of the section, as well as T1/T2/T3 (Trimester 1, 2 and 3).

Some standards may be greyed out because they were not assessed in that specific trimester.

Physical Education	T1	T2	T3
Demonstrates spatial awareness and knowledge of safety rules			
Demonstrates control when performing motor skills			
Participates in physical activity to improve or maintain health-related fitness			

Art, Music, & Physical Education are also reported K-5 in our standards-based model.

Student Skills:

There are five student skills on the report card, K-5. These skills address how children perform as students overall, which is separate from their knowledge of the content in the various subject areas:

- Follows Directions
- Completes Work on Time
- Works Independently
- Works Cooperatively in Groups
- Organizes Materials

There are three levels of performance for the student skills area on the report card:

- **Regularly (R):** The student consistently demonstrates the skill.
- **Occasionally (O):** The student sometimes demonstrates the skill.
- **Not At This Time (N):** The student does not independently demonstrate the skill.

These skills can be measured throughout the day, and describe your child's work habits as a student. The next page shares the rubric teachers will use to assess student skills:

Student Skills	Regularly	Occasionally	Not At This Time
Follows Directions	Follows directions and seeks clarification when necessary.	May need repetition of directions, <i>or</i> may be reluctant to ask for clarification.	Needs multiple supports to follow directions, and does not seek clarification.
Completes Work on Time	Consistently completes work within the allotted time frame with little to no assistance.	Sometimes completes work within the allotted time frame. Additional time or teacher support may be needed.	Does not complete work within the allotted time frame. Work completion relies on additional time and teacher support.
Works Independently	Works independently with little to no assistance.	Sometimes works independently with little to no assistance, but may need support from time to time.	Needs assistance to work independently.
Works Cooperatively in Groups	Consistently participates and contributes during group work.	Inconsistently participates and contributes during group work.	Does not participate and contribute during group work.
Organizes Materials	Materials are consistently organized, which positively supports learning.	Materials are inconsistently organized, which sometimes interferes with learning.	Materials are unorganized, which often interferes with learning.

English Learners (EL) Guidelines:

All English Learners must acquire the English skills necessary for academic success and for success in a global, multicultural, and multilingual society. With that, **all EL students are reported at their current grade level standards.**

EL students will receive an ELD (English Language Development) report detailing student achievement in the EL resource room. This is sent home at the same time as the report card.

Special Education Guidelines:

- Almost all* students in special education will be reported at their current grade level standards:
 - *Those students who are in the Communications program will receive an **alternate standards-based report card.**
- There will not be a ‘modified’ box on the report card to indicate a child receives any type of modified curriculum.
- IEP Goal updates are written by the special education teachers and sent home at the same time as the report card.

Advanced Learners:

Advanced Learners will use the grade level standards that match the grade level content being taught. The different standards will be indicated as ‘advanced’ in the heading of that content area on the report card:

- 4th grade advanced math students will have 5th grade standards as descriptors
- 5th grade advanced math students will have 6th grade standards as descriptors
 - There is an additional supporting document for the 6th grade math standards

Frequently Asked Questions:

How is standards-based reporting different from traditional grading?

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

In traditional grading systems, a student's performance for an entire trimester 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 may indicate.

Standards-based report cards also separate academic performance from work habits/behavior in order to provide parents a more accurate view of a student's progress in both areas.

Traditional Grading	Standards-Based Grading
Connected to assessment methods	Directly connected to standards
Norm-referenced	Criterion-referenced
Achievement, effort, attitude & behavior all factors	Achievement is the only factor
Every grade recorded with minimal support for reassessment	Most recent assessment information used
Averaging all grades	Various forms of data collected
Variations of assessment quality	Quality assessments aligned to standards

Will my child still receive comments on the report card?

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

Where can I find more information on the new report card?

Please find some valuable parent supporting documents on the district website under ‘Departments’ → ‘Student Learning’ → ‘[Elementary Report Card](#)’. You can access two different documents: the first, report card supporting document 1 is listed by grade level. Within this report card supporting document 1, you will find a table with detailed information on how performance levels are determined by standard by trimester (please see sample below):

Grade level → **Kindergarten - Trimester 1** Time of year

Content area → **READING**

Reporting Standard	Definition	Meets	Developing	Does Not Meet
Identifies basic features of books <i>Exact language from the report card</i>	Students identify cover, back, and directionality (page order) <i>A more detailed definition of the standard</i>	Students consistently identify all three features of books	Students can identify one to two features of books	Students cannot identify any features of books
<i>Criteria in the LISTED trimester for Meets, Developing, Does Not Meet</i>				