

Frequently Asked Questions

? What is the purpose of the new report card?

The purpose of the Standards-Based Report Card is to provide more detailed feedback to parents regarding the progress their children are making toward specific learning standards at their grade level. The report card allows parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected of students and how to help them be successful in a rigorous academic program.

? How does the Standards-Based Report Card differ from what we have had in the past?

Currently, our report cards tell parents and students very little about what students actually know and are able to do. Letters (E, S, I, N, and U) are used to report student progress and do not give specific information regarding a student's mastery of specific content standards.

In a standards-based learning environment, the emphasis is on learning and continual progress. The new report card will measure how well an individual student is doing in relation to the grade level standards. This will allow parents to see exactly which skills and knowledge their child has learned, as well as, their strengths and areas to strengthen.

? What are curriculum standards?

The Tennessee Department of Education, in collaboration with other educators across the state, has developed new curriculum standards to be implemented the 2009-2010 school year. Standards are specified learning goals applied to all students and provide consistent targets for students to meet. Standards provide a focus for aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Anyone can access the state's curriculum standards at <http://tn.gov/education/curriculum.shtml>.



How does a teacher evaluate a student's performance?

In standards-based classrooms, the focus is on a student's performance over multiple opportunities, not simply the grading and averaging of tests and quizzes. During each six-weeks, students will have multiple opportunities to practice, attain, and demonstrate proficiency of the standards being taught. The student's knowledge and skills will be measured on a continual basis, stretching students to perform at their highest level of potential. Teachers will collect evidence of each child's achievement through careful observations, the examination of the student's work, discussions, projects, performance tasks, quizzes, and tests. Teachers will record information about each child's progress on a frequent basis, analyze and compile that information, and finally use the data to evaluate each child's progress.



How is academic achievement noted on the report card?

A committee of teachers, administrators, and central office staff developed the following rubric to report students' progress toward mastering specific grade level content standards.

| Marking Code | Translation | Comments |
|--------------|---|--|
| 4 | Exceeding the grade level standard. Producing quality work consistently. | This grade will be reported when a student demonstrates performance beyond expectations on a <i>consistent</i> and <i>independent</i> basis. |
| 3 | Meeting the grade level standard and producing quality work. | This grade means that a student <i>consistently</i> and <i>independently</i> demonstrated mastery of subject material. A 3 should be considered an excellent grade, one that a student should be working towards, as developmentally appropriate. |
| 2 | Progressing toward the standard. Producing the required grade level work with teacher direction and assistance. | As indicated in the marking code, a 2 indicates that a student can meet expectations with teacher <i>assistance</i> and <i>support</i> , but often does not demonstrate consistent mastery in a set subject area or grade level standard. The student may need to continue developing a specific skill set, and progress is being encouraged. |
| 1 | Beginning to develop the standard. Not yet able to produce required grade level work. | A 1 will be reported if there is growing concern for a child's performance in a given subject, skill, or grade level standard. |

M Modified work or program. Student is accessing the curriculum at his/her identified level of ability.

Standard not addressed this term. You should expect to see several blank areas used in the first term. This is because the entire curriculum cannot be taught at once. While some learning standards will be addressed throughout the entire year, others will be phased in as the school year progresses.

It is important to understand that these performance levels are **not** equivalent to letter grades. Performance levels are indications of what the student knows and is able to do.

Note that some of the standards on the report card will be taught and assessed throughout the year, so it will not be unusual for students to be “progressing toward the standard” at the beginning of the year, with growth to “meeting or exceeding the standard” at the end of the year.



“Exceeding the Standard”...What comes after proficiency?

Teachers work with all students to motivate and educate each to their highest potential. Instruction for all students is differentiated in a standards-based system. When a student’s academic performance exceeds the grade level standard on a consistent and independent basis, the teacher will differentiate the instruction to develop deeper levels of understanding.



How can parents support their children at home?

A key advantage to the new reporting system is that it provides more specific information to parents in working with their child at home on identified skill areas, either to support the school’s efforts in educating the child to reach proficiency or to reinforce the school’s effort to move the child beyond proficiency to advanced levels.

The list of skills helps parents know what their child is working on in school and can provide the basis for conversations at home between parents and their children. Coupled with on-going discussions with the child’s teacher, the new report card provides parents with a closer look at the type of skills the child is working on at his or her grade level and helps to set a clear direction toward proficiency, excellence, and lifelong learning.