



Elmwood Community
School District #322

Parent Guide To Standards-Based Grading

At Elmwood Elementary, we always strive to do what is best for our students. For the past nine years, our Kindergarten classrooms have utilized standards-based report cards to communicate how students are performing at their grade level. Due to the increased academic achievement we've seen using this type of communication, we have implemented a similar report card at the first and second-grade levels last year. This year, we will be implementing standards-based grading within our third-grade and fourth-grade classrooms as well! Our Standards-Based Report Card seeks to provide meaningful feedback so both students and parents can track student progress toward mastery of key academic concepts, reflect upon strengths and weaknesses, and identify multiple pathways to deeper learning.

What is standards-based 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, as opposed to simply averaging grades/scores over the course of a grading period, which can mask what a student has learned, or not learned, in a specific course.

How does standards-based grading differ from traditional grading?

Unlike 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 course, 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 also separate academic performance from work habits and behavior in order to provide parents with a more accurate view of a student's progress in both academic and behavioral areas. Students at Elmwood Elementary will be given feedback regarding our 4 Be's of positive behavior: **Be Ready to Learn**, **Be Respectful**, **Be Safe**, and **Be Responsible**.



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 performance 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.

What will each of the numbers in the 4 point scale represent?

- A score of (4) would indicate that a student has independently achieved the standard. The student demonstrates mastery of the standard.
- A score of (3) would indicate that a student is approaching mastery of the standard. The student is able to demonstrate partial mastery with a few errors.
- A score of (2) would indicate that a student is making progress towards mastery of the standard, but still may be in need of additional instruction and/or support.
- A score of (1) would indicate a minimal understanding of a standard. The student shows limited evidence of understanding the standard.
- Remember that the standards reported are the skills your student should master **by the end of the year**. It is common to see 2s on the report card throughout the year as certain standards are being introduced.

How should a student/parent interpret student grades now that the system of A-F has been replaced by a 4 point scale? 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 score of (4) 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.

How will I know if my child needs help?

Receiving a (1) on the 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. Please remember all of our students will benefit from extra help both at home and during the school day. Students have been placed into instructional RtI groupings to provide extra support at school. At home, please continue to practice the skills communicated by your grade level teacher.