



October 2017

Dear Families,

We are pleased to report that all students in grades K-4 will receive a standards-based report card. This standards-based approach will give more accurate, specific feedback about a student's progress toward the skills and understanding of each standard in a subject area. This is important because it better identifies where a student is excelling in a subject, as well as where he/she might need additional assistance.

Why do we use standards-based grading report cards at the elementary level?

The district decided to implement a standards-based report card to allow parents/legal guardians to receive more detailed information about their child's academic strengths and challenges and to better ensure consistent grading practices in all elementary schools.

What is a "standard" and where are they located on each of the report cards?

Report cards for each grade level include a variety of subject areas such as math, reading, science, social studies, music, art and health/physical education. Under each subject area is a breakdown of the "standards" or expectations for student learning and achievement tied to those subject areas. These standards are written in a parent-friendly format. Your child receives proficiency scores for each standard to indicate his/her progress in a subject area. For example, instead of receiving an overall score/grade for the subject area of math, a third grade student will now have proficiency scores that detail progress in addition, subtraction, multiplication, units of measure, and the concepts of probability.

How does a standards-based report card help parents?

Standards-based report cards enable parents to receive more accurate information based on cumulative student progress over a marking period. This reporting offers more detailed information to foster meaningful conversations at parent/teacher conferences because it allows for careful monitoring of student achievement in relation to grade-level standards and expectations so parents have a clearer understanding of student progress.

How will my child be graded?

All students will only receive a proficiency score indicating how well he or she understands the concept or skill taught during that marking period. This proficiency key will look like:

- 4- Consistently and independently meeting the grade-level standard
- 3- Frequently meeting the grade-level standard
- 2- Progressing toward meeting the grade-level standard
- 1- Making minimal progress toward meeting the grade-level standard

Why aren't all standards listed on the report card?

Teams of teachers reviewed the standards for each grade level and chose the benchmarks that were most essential for student learning at each grade level; however, all standards are taught and assessed throughout the year.

When would the grade "NA" (Not Assessed) be found on the report card?

The report is designed to highlight your child's understanding of the essential standards for an entire school year. There is a progression of skills and content throughout a year, so some areas are covered earlier in the year and some are covered later; therefore, they will not be assessed until that time. If a student was not evaluated on a standard taught, a grade of "NA" will be found in the box.

Can a student perform at a level 4 and then move to a lower level in the next marking period?

Yes. The expectations change from one marking period to the next as students progress through the year. This means that a student may meet the grade-level expectations during the first marking period, but as the expectations increase, the student may not demonstrate the same level of proficiency during the next marking period.

Why is "Characteristics of a Learner" reported separately from the academic areas?

Academic grades should reflect what a student knows and is able to do at an identified point in time; therefore, a student's grade will be based on their academic achievement only. One of the main benefits of standards-based grading and reporting is the separation between student behavior and what a student actually knows academically. Characteristics of the learner focuses on the behaviors of your child, and how those behaviors can impact their education, while the academic standards focus on what your child knows or demonstrates about that particular standard. The "Characteristics of a Learner" key will look like:

- M – Meeting Expectations
- P – Progressing Toward Expectations
- N – Not Meeting Expectations

How will a student be graded if they have an IEP?

There are accommodations or modifications in your child's IEP to support his/her progress on grade-level standards. Effective grading adaptations help schools implement those provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and call for maximum access to the regular curriculum for students with disabilities. Adaptations that involve the grading of prioritized content and assignments, and processes used to complete the work with the IEP goals in the forefront, can help focus instruction and support the challenging aspects of the regular curriculum. We can expose students with disabilities to the rigors and challenges of the regular curriculum with the advantage of a grading system that will accurately reflect their individual progress.

If I have a question about the new report card, whom should I contact?

Parents should contact their child's teacher or school principal to discuss questions about their child's report card. Report cards will be located in SchoolTool and can be printed at home from the portal.

Sincerely,

The North Syracuse CSD Grading Committee