

## **Jackson Township School District**

### **Parents' Guide to Standards Based Grading—FAQ**

*During the 2016 – 2017 school year, the Jackson School District will be using Standards-Based Report Cards for Grades K-5. The change to a Standards-Based Report Card came from the belief that our previous report card did not fully communicate what students are expected to know and be able to do as set forth in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and now the Common Cores State Standards. This report card benefits students, teachers, and parents/guardians and allows students to be more aware of what is expected of them and provides parents with a more detailed outline of the expectations in each of the major academic areas. We believe that your understanding of what is expected of your child and how well he or she is progressing towards the goals at his or her grade level is very important. We look forward to working together to provide your child with the knowledge and tools to be successful and to reach his or her fullest potential.*

#### **1. What is Standards-Based grade reporting?**

Standards-Based grade reporting is designed to inform parents about their child's progress towards achieving specific learning standards. The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and the Common Cores State Standards establish high and challenging performance expectations for all students. They describe what students should know and be able to do, and serve as the basis for the Jackson School District's curriculum, instruction and assessment model.

#### **2. Why do we use a Standards-Based Report Card?**

The report card provides more information to parents about student progress on the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and the Common Cores State Standards. On a traditional report card, students receive one grade for reading, one for math, one for science and so on. On a Standards-Based Report Card, each of these subject areas is further expanded by a list of skills and knowledge students are responsible for learning. Students receive a separate mark for each item on the list.

#### **3. What is the purpose of the Standards-Based Report Card?**

The purpose of the Standards-Based Report Card is to provide feedback that is more detailed to parents regarding the progress their children are making towards specific content indicators at each grade level. This report card allows parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected at each grade level. With this understanding, parents are better able to guide and support their child helping him/her to be successful in a rigorous academic program.

**4. How does the Standards-Based Report Card compare to the traditional letter grade system?**

Standards-Based Report Card reporting is different from traditional letter grade reporting. Letter grades are often calculated by combining how well the student met a teacher's expectations, how the student performed on assignments and tests, how much effort the teacher believes the student put in and how the student is doing in comparison to classmates. Letter grades do not tell parents which skills their child has mastered or whether he or she is working at grade level. The Standards-Based Report Card measures how well an individual student is doing in relation to the grade level standards, not the work of other students. This gives parents a better understanding of their child's strengths and weaknesses and encourages all students to do their best.

**5. 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 grade 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.

**6. Will my student receive feedback on formative and summative work?**

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

**7. Does each assessment explain how the student met or missed the standard(s) being addressed?**

Yes, teachers will provide feedback in a variety of ways: oral, written comments, rubrics, etc. We want to shift from discussing how many points something is worth to what a student is learning and specifically what they might need to work on. Additionally, the district is providing a benchmark document, which will serve as an interpretive guide for teachers and parents who want more detailed information regarding the meaning of an academic progress score for a particular standard.

**8. What will each of the numbers in the 4 point scale represent in terms of student academic performance?**

**4 – Exceeds Standards**

Indicates the student consistently surpasses grade level standards. Performance is characterized by self-motivation and ability to apply these skills with consistent accuracy, independence, and high levels of quality and complexity.

**3 – Meets Standards**

Indicates the student consistently meets grade level standards. The student regularly demonstrates proficiency in the majority of grade level standards. The student, with limited errors, grasps and applies key concepts, processes, and skills for the current grade.

**2 – Partially Meets Standards**

Indicates the student occasionally meets the grade level standards. The student often needs teacher support to complete tasks. The student needs more time and instruction to develop skills.

**1 – Below Standards**

Indicates the student is not yet meeting grade level standards. The student demonstrates minimal understanding of concepts and skills. Performance is inconsistent with support and interventions.

**NE – Not Evaluated**

Indicates the standard was not evaluated.

**9. Is it possible to achieve a grade of 4-Exceeds Standards?**

Yes it is. However, a score of (4) indicates performance that consistently **surpasses** what is expected for mastery at that point in the school year. Level 4 work would indicate a much deeper

understanding of a standard, the ability to apply that knowledge, make connections and extend learning beyond the targeted goal.

**10. How should a student/parent view 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 (3) 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.

By definition, level 4 work reflects higher order thinking, application, connection and extension of targeted goals. Performance is characterized by self-motivation and the ability to apply skills with consistent accuracy, independence, and a high level of quality. Exceeds standards, however, **is not** the equivalent of an A on a traditional report card. For example, if a fourth-grader received an A on every math test during the marking period, he or she would probably receive an A on a traditional report card. If those math tests measured only the concepts fourth graders are expected to master, those “A”s would be the equivalent of a 3--meeting the standards-- on a Standards-Based Report Card; the student is doing what he or she should be doing very well, but not necessarily more. Standards-Based Report Cards encourage students to demonstrate their ability to apply skills and knowledge beyond grade level expectations.

**11. How will I know if my child needs help?**

Receiving a 1 or 2 on a 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.

**12. If a student receives 1s all year, does that mean the student will be retained?**

If a student receives 1s or 2s, it means his/her work is not yet meeting grade level standards. A number of academic interventions (differentiated support in small group or one-to-one settings, diagnostic assessments and appropriate re-teaching, etc.) will be offered to those students who are struggling to meet the established standards. Grade level retention is not a practice that is generally supported by research.

Parents are encouraged to remain in constant contact and collaboration with their children's teachers. Working together, we will be able to provide each child with the instruction and support required to reach his/her highest potential.