

Greetings Kindergarten, First, Second, and Third Grade Families,

Liberty and Central Elementary Schools have developed a new Standards-based report card to more accurately reflect and gauge student performance in academic and behavioral areas. This format and grading is a major change from past scoring scales and terminology. To assist you in understanding and interpreting your child's report card, we are providing the following information.

STANDARDS-BASED REPORT CARDS

- 1) What is a standards-based report card?
- 2) What is a trimester marking period?
- 3) What are the proficiency levels on the report card?
- 4) How do teachers determine proficiency levels?
- 5) Will there still be conference opportunities available to discuss my child's progress?
- 6) Will parents be able to view the grading benchmarks?

What is a standards-based report card?

A standards-based report card highlights the most important skills students should learn in each subject at a particular grade level. In our elementary school learning environment, students receive marks that report student progress toward meeting content and performance standards three times a year. Benchmarks for each of the trimester marking periods are used to determine if the student is progressing toward the end-of-year standards.

What is a trimester marking period?

Our new standards-based report card is based on three marking periods (Fall, Winter, Spring). Teachers will use marking period grading benchmarks to evaluate student progress. Benchmarks often change each trimester to reflect new standards and expectations for student growth. These benchmarks will provide consistency between teachers and schools because all teachers will be using the same district benchmarks.

What are the proficiency levels on the report card?

The proficiency level represents a student's progress on the report card. There are four categories, 1-4. Earning a "4" means the student has advanced understanding and exceeds grade-level expectations. A student receiving a "4" demonstrates academically superior skills in that specific area. This student shows initiative, challenges himself or herself, and demonstrates this advanced knowledge at school. A "4" is difficult to obtain and indicates unusually high achievement.

Earning a “3” means the student has proficient understanding and meets grade-level expectations. We want all of our students to reach a level “3.” A student receiving a “3” is right on track with our high academic expectations. A “3” is something to be celebrated!

Earning a “2” means the student has basic understanding and partially meets grade-level expectations. A student receiving a “2” understands the basic concept or skill, but has not yet reached the proficient level. A “2” should indicate to parents that their child may need some extra help or extra time to practice/understand that concept or skill.

Earning a “1” means the student has minimal understanding and does not meet grade-level expectations. A student receiving a “1” has academic delays according to our district standards, and interventions may be needed to learn and stay on track with district expectations.

Please keep in mind that these numbers are not indicators of a linear performance from trimester to trimester; rather, they are reflective of the goals of the current trimester. For example, your child may receive a “2” in a content skill in one trimester, but he/she may not automatically receive a “3” in that same content skill in the next trimester. This can be reflective of the natural progression of skills and curriculum benchmarks that developmentally change throughout the year.

We want parents to recognize that our teaching and assessments are directed at ensuring that all students have an opportunity to meet our curriculum standards. Different students progress at different rates, so standards may be met in varying amounts of time, with varying amounts of teacher support.

How do teachers determine proficiency levels?

Teachers determine which proficiency level your child has earned by using a report card benchmark. A report card benchmark outlines exactly what your child needs to know or be able to do to earn a 4, 3, 2, or 1 on the report card.

Throughout the trimester, teachers assess students. With the standards for that grade level in mind, they consider: knowledge of the child (How does this child learn best? In what way does this child communicate his/her learning?); evidence of student performance (work samples that have been collected, student performance on activities and assessments, teacher anecdotal notes); and, finally, knowledge of what the child is expected to know or be able to do (district curriculum and standards, report card benchmarks). After going through this process, the teacher assigns a proficiency level for each line of the report card.

Will there still be conference opportunities available to discuss my child’s progress?

Yes. We will continue with the usually scheduled parent-teacher conferences or requested meetings to discuss progress and growth.

Will parents be able to view the grading benchmarks?

Liberty and Central schools currently use an online assessment tool that is not viewable by parents, however the assessment reports are presented at parent meetings when there are concerns regarding a student's performance compared to grade level benchmarks. The AIMSweb program is the current assessment tool that provides several tests addressing reading, comprehension, as well as mathematical concepts and skills. Depending on the assessment, it may be given in the Fall and Spring, or Fall, Winter, and Spring. Benchmark scores provide teachers with actual data to help them tailor their instructional goals to meet the variety of skill and ability levels present in their classes.

When students perform below specific benchmarks and are required to participate in an intervention program, the interventionists engage in what is called *Progress Monitoring*. Progress monitoring includes more frequent assessments to gauge how effective interventions are in addressing the areas of concern identified through initial benchmark assessments. This too allows for additional revisions to action plans geared towards helping students perform at expected levels.

Why the change?

In June of 2010 the state of New Jersey adopted the Common Core State Standards in addition to the existing New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. This move coincided with the district's mandatory curriculum revision process required by the state. As a result, the report cards and grading scales for grades Kindergarten through Third grade no longer accurately reflected the content and skills students were being graded upon. The move to a standards-based report card with revised grading schemes was the next logical step in the process. Through the efforts of parents and staff, new report cards were developed that are more informative and which demonstrate greater objectivity in assessing student academic performance and behavioral development. Should you have any questions about your child's report card, please do not hesitate to contact your child's school for further assistance.