A Parent Guide to the Standards-based Report Card

ELEMENTARY/K–8 SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

As Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) continues to improve teaching and learning for all students, we know that parents and families are our most valuable partners.

This is especially true as the district continues to implement more rigorous standards for what every child should know and be able to do in each subject area and grade level. The Common Core State Standards, to which MPS’ Comprehensive Literacy Plan and Comprehensive Math/Science Plan are aligned, set high expectations. Achieving these career- and college-ready standards requires continuous monitoring of progress and additional support targeted to those who need it.

Like teachers, parents need accurate and meaningful information about student strengths, challenges and performance to better understand and support student learning.

To that end, MPS has developed this report card that is directly connected to the Common Core State Standards. The Standards-based Report Card, which MPS began implementing in 2010–11, has been viewed by parents, families and teachers as a positive step in better communicating what students are expected to learn at each grade level — and in providing information about their child’s work habits, behavior and effort. Parents may also view videos in English, Spanish and Hmong to better understand the report cards at mpsmke.com/reportcards.

All schools participate in the use of the Standards-based Report Card. This report card is different from report cards you might be used to. Students in grades K–8 do not receive a letter grade for each subject.

The Standards-based Report Card:

- Clarifies and reinforces consistent high expectations for students and schools.
- Helps teachers, students and families focus on standards throughout the year.
- Provides specific feedback on progress to the standards so students, families and teachers can work together to set meaningful goals for improvement.

Based on the information in the Standards-based Report Card, additional support at home and school can reinforce the concepts and knowledge that students learn.

This document is designed to help you better understand your child’s report card. Please make good use of this document and bring it to parent-teacher conferences. It will be especially helpful come report card time. Please contact your child’s school if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Darienne B. Driver, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Ruth Maegli
Chief Academic Officer
Components of a Standards-based System

There are four essential components of a standards-based teaching, learning, assessment and reporting system:

1. **Content Standards** – describe what a student should know and be able to do at a given grade level.
2. **Standards-based Curriculum** – the teaching plan to ensure that Instruction targets the content standards.
3. **Assessments** – measurements to see if students have met the content standards for their grade level.
4. **Standards-based Report Card** – allows teachers to communicate a student’s progress on content standards at specific points in the year.

The Standards-based Report Card does not give a traditional letter grade (A, B, C, D, U). Instead, proficiency levels are given for each standard taught and assessed during that marking period.

### Definitions of Proficiency Levels

Elementary students have three standards-based reporting periods. For the first two reporting periods, students are evaluated based on expected progress at that particular point in the school year. Students who receive a “PR” or “Proficient” are performing at the level expected for their grade level at this point in the school year. Students receiving “BA” or “Basic” are performing below the level expected for their grade level at this point in the school year.

In the third and final reporting period, the Report Card proficiency level reflects a student’s achievement of grade-level standards in all content areas. The grading scale aligns with proficiency levels used on the Wisconsin Forward Exam. Proficiency levels are defined as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Proficiency Scale</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>PR</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>MI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced</strong> (AD)</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficient</strong> (PR)</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic</strong> (BA)</td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minimal</strong> (MI)</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The student consistently **exceeds** grade-level expectations on standards as demonstrated by a body of evidence that shows depth of understanding and flexible application of grade-level concepts.

The student consistently **meets** grade-level expectations on standards as demonstrated by a body of evidence that shows independent understanding and application of grade-level concepts.

The student performs **just below** grade-level expectations on standards as demonstrated by a body of evidence that shows incomplete/inconsistent understanding and application of grade-level concepts.

The student performs **far below** grade-level expectations on standards as demonstrated by a body of evidence that shows limited understanding and application of grade-level concepts.
Special Student Populations and the Standards-based Report Card

**Students with Special Needs:** All students must be graded according to grade-level standards, in line with their peers, on the grade-level report card. Proficiency levels given on the Standards-based Report Card must be based on expectations for that grade level. This means any student performing below grade level *cannot* receive a PR-Proficient or AD-Advanced in any content area, including reading. For students with special needs, the IEP Progress Report informs parents about their child’s progress toward IEP goals and is included with the mailing of every report card. Students whose IEP includes modified standards will receive an alternate report card based on alternate standards. See the specific handbook that accompanies the alternate report card.

**Early Childhood Scale and Explanation:** Students in grades K3 and K4 are assessed based on the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS). Students are evaluated based on expected developmentally appropriate progress at that particular point in the school year. The performance scale summarizes, at that point in time, the frequency of behavioral and academic benchmarks.

**Students in the Bilingual Program** are Spanish-speaking students working to achieve the skills of understanding, speaking, reading and writing in two languages, one of which is English. The goal is greater success in Spanish and English, along with the understanding of customs and values of the cultures associated with the two languages being taught. The premise is to foster continued development and retention of a child’s literacy skills in his or her native language and to utilize the language as a vehicle for exploring and acquiring a second language.

**Students in the Bilingual Program** are graded according to grade-level standards in line with their peers on the grade-level report card. There will be an additional line in the reading section that states, “Your child has transitioned to reading in English” with a Yes or No indicator.

**English Language Learners (ELL):** Milwaukee Public Schools recognizes the continuum of language development within the four areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing with six English language proficiency levels. These levels describe a learner’s progression from knowing little to no English to acquiring the English skills necessary to be successful in an English-only mainstream classroom without extra support. Students’ English language proficiency levels fall within this continuum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entering</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Expanding</td>
<td>Bridging</td>
<td>Reaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All English language learners (ELL) must acquire the English skills necessary for academic success and ultimately for success in a global, multicultural and multilingual society. Consequently, ELL students are graded according to grade-level standards in line with their peers on the grade-level report card.

**Students Learning a World Language**

World language courses are designed to prepare students for citizenship in a multicultural, multilingual global community. These courses promote proficiency in languages along with knowledge of cultures and literature. The standards in world language courses include:

- **Interpersonal** – Active negotiation of meaning among individuals
- **Interpretive–Reading** – Interpretation of meaning, including cultural, that occurs in reading
- **Interpretive–Listening** – Interpretation of meaning, including cultural, that occurs in listening
- **Presentational–Writing** – Creation of written messages that facilitates interpretation by an audience
- **Presentational–Speaking** – Creation of oral messages that facilitates interpretation by an audience
How to Read Key Parts of the Report Card

The report card lists the standards within each subject/content area. On the Standards-based Report Card, students do not receive an overall grade in each subject/content area but instead are graded on each standard.

1, 2, 3, F reporting periods – Students and parents receive this report in December, April and June. The fourth column marked F reflects Final proficiency levels.

Additional content areas and the Personal/Social Development section are on page two of the Report Card along with teacher comments for each of the three marking periods.
Frequently Asked Questions about the Standards-based Report Card

Why did MPS change to a Standards-based Report Card?

MPS is aligning classroom instruction, evaluation and feedback to the rigorous and more challenging Common Core State Standards to improve teaching and learning. The Standards-based Report Card reflects Common Core State Standards and provides meaningful, standards-specific assessment and feedback to engage students and families in monitoring student progress.

The Standards-based Report Card allows MPS to communicate with parents and students about grade-level standards. It identifies student progress levels with regard to the standards and identifies areas of strength and weakness where additional time and effort are needed to meet expectations at a particular point in the school year. The report card helps students, teachers and families to transition to the Common Core State Standards language and expectations.

Other efforts to embrace Common Core State Standards include classroom assessments based on standards, student and parent conferences, and STAR, the district’s universal screener/benchmark assessment, to support more differentiated instruction and identify students for additional supports. These strategies create opportunities for individual instructors and groups of teachers to reflect on student learning and their own practice.

How did MPS include parent and teacher feedback in the process?

Focus groups and surveys of teachers and parents were used to collect data from pilot schools, and these responses guided revisions. Parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the amount and type of information.

Is MPS the only district making the change to a Standards-based Report Card?

Many large districts across the nation have pursued Standards-based Report Cards, including Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina; Denver, Colorado; San Diego, California; and local districts such as Shorewood and Wauwatosa.

Will some groups of students be graded differently on this Report Card?

The MPS commitment is to teach each child to achieve the same high standards. Therefore, the proficiency levels given on the Standards-based Report Card must be consistent with expectations for that grade level for all students (including students with special needs and English language learners). This means any student performing below grade level cannot receive a PR–Proficient or AD–Advanced in any content area, including reading.

| AD: Advanced, exceeding grade-level expectations |
| PR: Proficient, meeting grade-level expectations |
| BA: Basic, just below grade-level expectations |
| MI: Minimal, far below grade-level expectations |
How will this Report Card show the effort a child is giving to schoolwork?

An Effort line has been added to show student work habits in each subject area. This allows teachers to keep nonacademic factors (neatness, promptness, work completion, etc.) separate from the academic assessment for each standard. Teachers can indicate high effort for struggling students or low effort for high-performing students. Each student will receive a mark for Effort in each content area (except physical education). Teachers will use the same proficiency levels for both academics and effort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AD: Advanced</th>
<th>PR: Proficient</th>
<th>BA: Basic</th>
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Are there any other scales used on this Report Card, and what do they mean?

The Personal/Social Development section is aligned to the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system used in MPS schools. This system teaches students to make good choices and then acknowledges those positive decisions. It uses a frequency scale to report on how often students are choosing positive classroom behaviors.

For K3/K4 and some areas of the K5 Report Card the frequency scale is used to show developmental progress on Wisconsin Early Learning Model Standards. Here is the Frequency Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 — Seldom</th>
<th>2 — Sometimes</th>
<th>3 — Usually</th>
<th>4 — Always/Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Grade-level Standards

Milwaukee Public Schools has developed a one-stop website for parents to see the specific grade-level standards in each content area. These include the Common Core State Standards in reading, math and English/language arts, along with standards in science, health, social studies, art, music, physical education and instructional technology.

Visit mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/en/Families/Education-Resources/Academic-Expectations.htm or click on Families, then Academic Expectations at the MPS website to see the standards. If you do not have access to the Internet at home, you can see the site on a smartphone or by visiting your local library branch or school.

These grade-level standards can be an excellent tool to help you work with your student to remain on track for academic success!

For additional questions, please contact your child’s school.