

A Parent's Guide to Standards-Based Report Cards

August 2018

Dear Parents/Guardians of Kindergarten through Fourth Grade Students,

We are pleased to announce that we are in our third year of implementing standards-based report cards for kindergarten through grade 4 at VES.

These report cards will provide information on a student's developmental abilities and progress in attaining learning expectations in each subject as defined by the Connecticut Core Standards. The standards are designed to be relevant to the real world, making students fully prepared for their future.

Reporting student progress is an essential part of the communication and partnership between home and school. The standards-based report card gives us a tool to accurately communicate to parents/guardians the progress that your child is making on learning the standards for each grade level. It is simply a new and improved way of communicating student progress. Additionally, it will ensure more consistency of expectations from teacher to teacher.

It is our hope that standards-based report cards, together with teacher conferences, will provide a more comprehensive and meaningful lens for you to understand and support your child's learning.

The following informational sheet will provide a description of the process for determining performance levels, a description of performance level ratings, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Standards are what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade level. Students are taught and assessed on all grade-level expectations. However, please note, the standards on the VES Standards-Based Report Card are a snapshot, a "collapsed" version, of the CCSS. Attached you will find a copy of your child's grade level "Standards-Based Report Card Parent Guidelines".

As always, we strive to support your child's academic and social growth. ***Please remember that success is measured by improvement and not by perfection.*** If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 860-376-2325.

Warm Regards,

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Why did VES change the report card?

The State of Connecticut requires all students to receive instruction and master specific content “standards” for each grade level. A standards-based report card gives a clear message to parents about what their children know, what they are able to do, and what they need to learn in relation to the standards. A standards-based report card also shows a higher level of consistency in scoring among teachers and across grade levels.

How are standards-based report cards different from traditional report cards?

On many traditional report cards, students only receive one grade for reading, one for math, one for science and so on. On standards-based report cards, each of these subject areas is divided into a list of standards that outline specific skills and knowledge that students are expected to master by *year-end*. Students receive a separate mark for each standard (Math and English Language Arts). The achievement marks indicate a child’s progress toward meeting specific grade-level standards. The standards-based report card uses representative numbers that indicate a student’s growth towards mastery of the grade-level standards. Effort and learning behaviors are reported separately.

What examples of data do teachers use to assign performance levels?

Teachers evaluate student learning in a variety of ways using classroom observations, class work and rubrics, along with assessments (quizzes, tests, etc.). The combination of these pieces of evidence provides a more detailed picture of student progress towards grade level expectations. Teachers will use a variety of methods to provide feedback to students. Some teachers will still give students numerical or letter grades on some of the work students complete. Teachers will also use pre-determined scoring guides to measure student performance. In addition, teachers and students will review performance rubrics before beginning certain tasks, especially projects. Feedback to students can and should be in many forms.

Standards-Based reporting and Special Education?

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP’s) must be provided with the same opportunity to receive grades in relation to expectations for grade level standards; this is a civil right. Since special education students are a heterogeneous group with various disabilities, which impact learning, some may not achieve certain grade-level standards without special education services and supports. For students with accommodations, the content of the standard remains the same, but the method for learning and demonstrating mastery of a standard may be adjusted. Modifications, on the other hand, can mean changing the standard itself, identifying standards that are fundamentally related but also developmentally appropriate. The Planning and Placement Team (PPT) makes decisions regarding what content areas, if any, require modifications of the grade level standards. For all students with an IEP, a supplemental progress report, “Instructional Level Report Card”, is provided that identifies how students are performing on appropriately challenging learning tasks as outlined in the goals and objectives of their IEP.

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Definitions of Performance Levels

The **ACADEMIC** and **SPECIAL SUBJECT** performance levels are as follows:

4	3	2	1
Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Progressing Towards Expectations	Minimal Progress Towards Expectations
- Student demonstrates an understanding above and beyond what is expected	- Student has mastered an understanding of the knowledge and skills expected	- Student is adequately progressing toward mastery of the knowledge and skills expected	- Student has not yet demonstrated an understanding of the knowledge and skills expected

A few important things to remember:

- **Learners are scored on their progress made toward mastery of expectations set for each marking period.**
- A "4 - Exceeding Standards" is not equivalent to an "A". A traditional letter grade cannot be compared to performance levels.
- Marks of "3" and a "2" both indicate that a student is working within the expectations of his/her grade level. The difference is the level of independence and support a student needs to demonstrate mastery. The expectation is that most students will achieve a "3" by the end of the year for each grade level standard.
- If a student is working below a grade level marking period expectation, she/he would receive a "1 - Minimal Progress Towards Standard" on the report card. The student may need additional instruction in prerequisite skills in order to eventually meet the grade level expectation.

The **SUCCESSFUL LEARNER** performance levels are as follows:

4	3	2	1
Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Reminders Needed	Needs Improvement
- Student exceeds expectations	- Student meets expectations	- Student needs reminders in order to meet expectations	- Student needs improvement in this area

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Is it possible for students to “fluctuate” from one reporting period to another?

It is important to note that the student does not necessarily drop a grade. The score is an indication of performance with expectations of difficulty that increase throughout the school year. In other words, the concepts increase in difficulty as the year progresses. Therefore, a student who demonstrates a score of “3” in the first trimester could earn a “2” in the second trimester when the rigor of the standard has been increased. The shift from a “3” to a “2” indicates the student understands the major elements of the concept but may need more development of the details or application and more teacher support.

How do I help my child “get a 4”?

Remember, a mark of “3” indicates that a student is meeting grade level expectations with independence and excellence. With high and challenging expectations, a “3” is exactly where a competent student should be. “Getting a 4” is not about what *more* a student does. It is about what a student knows, and at what level she/he applies what she/he knows to new and higher-level situations that exceed what is explicitly taught in class.

What are the Connecticut Core standards?

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are high-quality, rigorous standards adopted by Connecticut along with most other states. Part of a national movement, CCSS provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help the student learn. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need to have for success in college and careers. Designed to develop twenty-first century, globally competitive students, the CCSS were carefully constructed using evidence-based research.

VES continually updates our district's curriculum and makes the instructional shifts needed to successfully implement the CCSS. As a parent, it is important to recognize that these new standards have created shifts in the way that teachers teach, how and what students learn, and the depths of understanding a child must demonstrate to achieve “mastery”.

A committee of teachers, administrators, and technology personnel worked diligently to create this new report card, which we are proud to announce, is aligned to the CCSS with an expectation for high-quality teaching and learning. Our educators look forward to a continued partnership with you as we prepare your child for college and career readiness. We encourage you to visit www.corestandards.org for further information regarding the Connecticut Core Standards.

References:

East Hartford Public Schools, East Haven School District, Madison Public Schools and Orange Elementary School System
