

Chatting with the PrinciPAL

INTERIM REPORTS – ESSENTIAL STANDARDS

Next week we will be publishing interim reports on School Speak. The interim report form is used to report academic achievement at midpoint of the present quarter. You will notice that the marks given indicate the student's progress in meeting the essential standard. I thought it would be helpful to explain what we mean by "essential standard."

Learning standards explain what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education. Learning standards are organized by subject area and there are usually multiple standards per subject. The term "essential standard" refers to a subset of the learning standards that educators have determined to be the highest priority or most important for students to learn. Essential standards do not preclude the teaching of other standards. For example, one of the essential standards for 3rd grade is "Concepts of Multiplication." The learning standards that are connected to this essential standard are: interpret products of whole numbers, determine the unknown whole number in a multiplication or division equation relating three whole numbers, and apply properties of operations as strategies to multiply and divide. The learning standards support the mastery of the essential standard. In other words, the learning standards reflect the knowledge and skills needed to master the essential standard. The essential standards are the standards reflected on the interim report and report card.

The purpose of a standards-based report card is to communicate the progress a student is making toward mastering grade-level standards. Reporting all the standards to parents at each grade level would be overwhelming. For example, in third grade there are over 40 standards in Language Arts alone. For the most part, these standards are not taught in isolation.

I hope this information is helpful. Please reach out to your child's teacher if you need to know more about the learning standards being taught at his/her grade level.

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How is Standards-Based Grading different than traditional grading?

Traditional Systems	Standards-Based Systems
<p>Grades given by subject as an average of all assignments.</p> <p>Percentage system (101 levels) is used with incomplete assignments (zeros) having a disproportional effect.</p>	<p>Grades given by reporting standards, reported separately.</p> <p>Three levels of reporting that only consider the evidence produced.</p>
<p>Criteria for success is often unclear or assumed to be known by students.</p>	<p>Publicly published criteria for success.</p>
<p>Letter grades are a mix of achievement, attitude, effort, and behavior.</p> <p>Penalties, extra credit, and group scores are included.</p>	<p>Reporting levels indicate the degree of achievement on each reporting standard.</p> <p>Achievement and effort are reported separately.</p> <p>Only individual evidence is used.</p>
<p>Curriculum and instruction are teacher centered, textbook driven, and may not be aligned to the standards. (teaching focused)</p>	<p>Curriculum and instruction are student centered and aligned to standards. (learning focused)</p>
<p>All assignments included, regardless of purpose.</p> <p>Homework completion can be a major factor.</p>	<p>Only those assignments which come at the end of learning (summative) are included.</p> <p>Assignments which are part of the learning process (formative) are used for feedback and planning instruction, not grading.</p>
<p>All scores from the grading period included.</p> <p>Multiple assessments recorded as average.</p>	<p>Most recent evidence emphasized and students are able to demonstrate mastery in a variety of ways.</p>
<p>Mean is the primary way grades are "calculated."</p>	<p>Grades are "determined" using professional judgement, relying on the median, mode, or most recent.</p>

Adapted from O'Connor, K. (2009). *How to grade for learning, k-12*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.