

Process Guide

South Dakota

Standards-based Report Card

January 2014



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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Standards-based Report Card Process Guide

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Contact Information:

During the 2013-2014 school year, questions and comments regarding the contents of this process guide can be directed to:

Misty Roberts
South Dakota Department of Education
misty.roberts@state.sd.us

Development Committee:

Pat Hubert
East Dakota Educational Cooperative
phubert@edec.org

Diane Olson
ESA 3
diane.m.olson@k12.sd.us

Barb Rowenhorst
Technology and Innovations In Education (TIE)
browenhorst@tie.net

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OVERVIEW and USING THE PROCESS GUIDE

The Standards-Based Report Cards Process Guide is intended to be a process for school districts in designing a local report card.

Overarching Goal:

- To develop standards-based report cards that are meaningful to students, parents and educators(Guskey and Bailey, 2010).

A workgroup comprised of South Dakota teachers from grades K-12 was brought together in 2013 to develop standards-based descriptors that would be provided to Infinite Campus. These descriptors are currently available in Infinite Campus to use "as is" by districts. Two other options are also available to districts wanting to use a standards -based report card: revise and adapt these descriptors or develop their own descriptors (also called reporting standards). However, it is recommended that districts participate in this process in order to determine which of the three options best meet the needs of the district.

The Standards-Based Report Card Process Guide is available on the South Dakota Department of Education website including downloadable forms that may be used for local development. The Process Guide is based on a process developed by Thomas Guskey and Jane Bailey.

The Process Guide is divided according to Guskey and Bailey's (2010) six levels of development:

1. Defining the purpose.
2. Developing the reporting standards and the corresponding additional information.
3. Addressing essential steps in development.
4. Establishing performance criteria.
5. Developing the reporting form.
6. Pilot testing and revision.

Recommended Resource:

Guskey, T. R., & Bailey, J. M. (2010). *Developing standards-based report cards*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Professional Development Opportunities

The South Dakota Department of Education will be offering two opportunities for school districts to learn about the process for developing a standards-based report card. Sessions will be held across the state during the spring of 2014. The two day introductory session will be for districts that have not begun the process of developing a standards-based report card. The one day revision session will provide information about the process for districts that have already started creating a standards-based report card and may wish to revise and receive feedback from others.

Registration is located at: <https://southdakota.gosignmeup.com/public/calendar/calendarindex>

For the two day introductory session:

The SD Department of Education is offering an opportunity to learn the essential steps in building an effective standards-based report card. This training will focus on purpose, help align standards to student learning and assist in recording students' progress and achievement based on standards. The intent is to offer one approach to developing a standards-based report card through thoughtfully planned efforts and practical ideas. The training will be on two separate dates with work time allotted in the interim. This training will get your school/district on the right track to implementing a standards-based report card. Districts should send a team to these sessions.

Participants will: (with consensus)

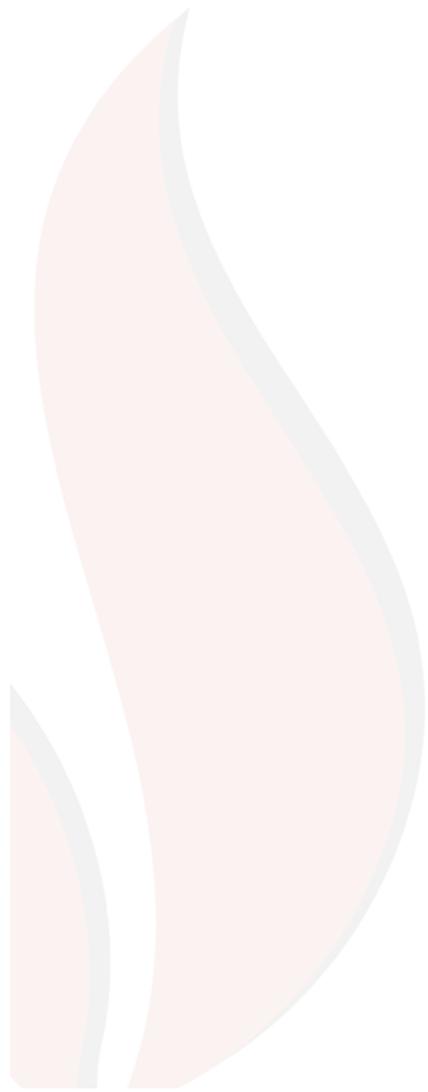
- Understand the research and reasons for a standards-based report card
- Use a process for leading the development of a district/school standards-based report card
- Address crucial questions in developing a standards-based report card
- Develop an action plan for implementation of the process in their district/school

For the one day revision session:

Have you begun work on or implementation of a standards-based report card? Do you need some reassurance or direction? The SD Department of Education is offering a training that will help you assess, refine and re-design your standards-based report card. Bring your draft for review and take an opportunity to network with other schools and districts. Get ideas, share your work, and fine tune your report cards at this training. Districts should send a team to this session.

Participants will:

- Review and assess the process and progress of action plans.
- Establish a performance criteria
- Determine report card format
- Prepare for pilot implementation
- Determine how to involve Special Education



Definition and Resources

What is a Standards-based Report Card?

A standards-based report card provides information regarding a student's performance related to product, process, or progress learning goals (Guskey and Bailey, 2010).

South Dakota Foundational Work Leading to the Development of Standards-based Report Cards

Grades should be based on clear standards for student learning. Educators are working to implement standards for student learning, define appropriate levels of student performance based on those standards, adapt instruction to help students with diverse learning needs meet those standards, and develop assessments to measure students' proficiency. Many of the SD Department of Education sponsored activities have provided a foundation for the development of a standards-based report card.

Below are links to resources found at the SD Department of Education website:

Common Core State Standards:

ELA: <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>

Math: <http://www.corestandards.org/Math>

Content Standards: <http://doe.sd.gov/ContentStandards/index.aspx>

Webb Leveling: <http://doe.sd.gov/ContentStandards/index.aspx>

Disaggregated Standards: <http://sdccteachers.k12.sd.us/home/disaggregated-standards>

Suggested Blueprints: <http://sdccteachers.k12.sd.us/home>

Open Education Resources: <http://myoer.org/>

Student Learning Objectives: http://doe.sd.gov/oatq/documents/SLO_Draft.pdf

South Dakota Assessment Portal: <http://doe.sd.gov/oats/sdap.aspx>

CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION OF A STANDARDS-BASED REPORT CARD

Beginning Steps

- _____ 1. Determine support from administration, faculty, and the school board for the development of a standards-based report card.
- _____ 2. Designate a Project Coordinator.
- _____ 3. Designate a budget.
- _____ 4. Form a Steering Committee (or use existing committee) to assume the project's plan of work.
- _____ 5. Draft an timeline/action plan for implementation.

During the Development Process

- _____ 1. Define the purpose of a standards-based report card.
- _____ 2. Communicate the purpose to all stakeholders.
- _____ 3. Seek input from parents, faculty, and administration through surveys and conversations.
- _____ 4. Review the Standards-based Report Cards Process Guide to become familiar with program components.
- _____ 5. Visit with other schools who have implemented standards-based report cards.
- _____ 6. Revisit the previously developed purpose of a standards-based report card.
- _____ 7. Determine which grade levels or curriculum to develop first.
- _____ 8. Identify the Reporting Standards.
- _____ 9. Answer the essential questions (See Appendix).
- _____ 10. Establish Performance Indicators.
- _____ 11. Determine Graduated Levels of Quality for Assessing Student Performance.
- _____ 12. Develop the Reporting Form.
- _____ 13. Develop a key or legend that explains the marking system.
- _____ 14. Prepare school plan for pilot.

Pilot Testing and Revision

- _____ 1. Communicate the standards-based report card design and plan to all stakeholders.
- _____ 2. Conduct staff development.
- _____ 3. Refine report card content, based on feedback, if needed.
- _____ 4. Implement the standards-based report card schoolwide or districtwide, as indicated in action plan.
- _____ 5. Review progress regularly, adjusting expectations and plans as needed.
- _____ 6. Evaluate whether purpose has been maintained for the standards-based report card.
- _____ 7. Provide feedback to Stakeholders about the effectiveness of the report card.
- _____ 8. Continue to develop and refine the report card based upon evaluation results.

Level 1: Defining the Purpose

Developing a standards-based report should involve a team that is committed to participation for the duration of the project. The team will work as representatives of the school in order to develop a standards-based report card that communicates student learning. Consensus must be sought at each step so that successful progress can be maintained.

One of the first tasks will be to reach consensus and develop a purpose statement for the report card. This purpose statement should include what information will be presented in the report card, who is the primary audience for the information, and how that information should be used (Guskey and Bailey, 2010, p. 21).

According to Guskey and Bailey (2010, p.26) the major purposes of report cards are:

1. To communicate information about students' achievement to parents and others.
2. To provide information to students for self-evaluation.
3. To select, identify, or group students for certain educational paths or programs.
4. To provide incentives for students to learn.
5. To evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs.
6. To provide evidence of students' lack of effort or inappropriate responsibility.

Discussion regarding the purpose of report cards should answer these three questions:

1. What information will be communicated in the report card? (Guskey and Bailey, 2010, p. 31)
2. Who is the primary audience for the information? (Guskey and Bailey, 2010, p. 32)
3. What is the intended goal of that communication? (Guskey and Bailey, 2010, p. 33)

The answers to these questions should provide guidance throughout the development process. Making the report card's purpose clear and explicit is perhaps the most important step in developing a standards-based report card. Reaching consensus is essential to success. Referring to the defined purpose will help resolve debates that inevitably arise. Process, method, and format must always follow purpose. Decisions about purpose must always come first.

The purpose should be printed directly on the report card in order to minimize miscommunication and misinterpretation.

STEP 2: Developing Reporting Standards/Descriptors

The challenge in designing a good standards-based report card is moving from the curriculum standards to the reporting standards that will communicate students' performance in a given subject area. (Note: Infinite Campus calls these Descriptors, so this document uses the terms interchangeably.) Developing reporting standards requires combining more narrowly defined curriculum standards into broader categories that summarize students' performance (Guskey & Bailey, 2010, p. 46). The categories need to be worded in parent-friendly language. The primary goal of the report card is effective communication. Reporting standards must clearly communicate what students are expected to learn and are able to do.

The best reporting standards/descriptors:

- are clear, concise, and readily interpretable.
- offer enough information of sufficient detail to communicate how well students are performing in relation to explicit learning goals.
- provide parents with enough detail to understand and know how to use.
- limited in number typically involving four to six performance or achievement standards in each subject area.
- report on product, process, and progress goals separately.
- provides a guide for teachers in describing the explicit levels of performance.
- clearly communicates what students are expected to learn and are able to do.
- are common across grade levels.

The different learning goals that may be considered in grading fit into three categories (Guskey & Bailey, 2010, p. 50). These categories correspond to 3 types of reporting standards:

- **Product goals** describe the academic learning outcomes being sought. Product goals focus on what students should know and be able to do at a particular point in time. Grades based on product goals are usually the results of summative evaluations, final projects or reports, and other culminating demonstrations of learning.
- **Process goals** focus on classroom behavior rather than specific learning outcomes. Examples include: responsibility, effort, study skills, work habits, homework completion and quality, class participation, punctuality in turning assignments, and attendance.
- **Progress goals** consider how much students gain from their learning experiences. They relate to how much improvement has been made over a period of time.

STEP 3: Essential Steps in Development:

Essential Steps in Development (Part I):

A common set of crucial questions must be addressed in specific order (Guskey & Bailey, 2010, p.58) because how each question is answered has important implications for all of the questions that follow. Ignoring or leaving unresolved any of these questions will seriously jeopardize the success of further report card development work. Answers to the questions should be documented and posted or distributed to committee members so they can be referred to throughout the process.

1. What is the purpose of the report card?
2. How often will report cards be completed and sent home?
3. Will a specific report card be developed for each grade level, or will a more general report card be used across several grade levels?
4. How many reporting standards will be included for each subject area or course?
 - The standards must be categorized as reflecting product, process, or progress goals.
 - The exact reporting standards in each subject area that will be included on the report card must be identified.
 - The reporting standards must be worded in clear, precise, and parent-friendly language.
5. What specific reporting standards will be included at each grade level or in each course?
6. Will standards be set for the grade level or for each marking period?
7. What specific process and progress standards will be reported?

Essential Steps in Development (Part II):

Part II asks the committee to answer eight additional questions in the report card development process. The key is always to remain guided by the purpose. Focusing on effective communication and commitment to do what is in the best interests of students supports the success of this process (Guskey & Bailey, 2010, p.117).

8. How many levels of performance will be reported for each standard?
9. How will the levels be labeled?
10. Will teachers' comments be included and encouraged?
 - Focus on the goals, not the learner.

- Provide detailed comments.
- Offer small, manageable suggestions for improvement.
- Relate comments to specific learning goals or standards.
- Avoid comparisons with other students.

11. How will information be arranged on the report card?

- Order: What is most important appears first.
- Space: What is most important is given more area.

12. What are parents expected to do with this information?

13. What are students expected to do with this information?

14. What policies need to accompany the new reporting procedures?

- Will a cumulative record be included on the report card?
- What grades or marks will be included on the permanent record or transcript?
- How will the report card be distributed?
- How will the report card, or some portion of it, be returned?
- What other reporting elements will accompany the report card?
- What is the process for questioning a grade or mark?
- What is the role of technology in the development of the new report card?

15. When should input of parents and/or students be sought?

- When forming the development team.
- When reviewing initial versions of newly developed standards-based report cards.
- During the early stages of school wide or district wide implementation.

STEP 4: Establishing Performance Criteria

The precise meaning of each level or category should be developed. Teachers, parents, and students need to know exactly what is expected at each level. The names or labels should clearly communicate the students' learning and level of progress. The following four guidelines have been suggested by Guskey and Bailey (2010, p.124):

1. Avoid comparative language. We want parents to think in terms of, "How is my child doing with regard to the learning standards and expectations set for this level?"
2. Provide examples based on student work. Teachers will need to engage in conversations that define what is meant by the level and what examples of student work would illustrate that expectation.
3. Distinguish between "Levels of Understanding" and "Frequency of Display". Indicators should be used that clarify what students know and are able to do. "Frequency of Display" labels, such as "Occasionally," "Frequently," and "Consistently" work well with Process Goals.
4. Be consistent. Strive to develop one set of labels that can be used on the elementary report card as well as the secondary report card. By using a consistent set of labels, educators can facilitate parents' understanding. The labels should convey the educators' expectations for student learning.

Indicators of Student Performance			
Levels of Understanding/Quality			
Modest	Beginning	Novice	Unsatisfactory
Intermediate	Progressing	Apprentice	Needs Improvement
Proficient	Adequate	Proficient	Satisfactory
Superior	Exemplary	Distinguished	Outstanding
Levels of Mastery/Proficiency			
Below Basic	Below Standard	Pre-emergent	Incomplete
Basic	Approaching Standard	Emerging	Limited
Proficient	Meets Standard	Acquiring	Partial
Advanced	Exceeds Standard	Extending	Thorough
Frequency of Display			
Rarely	Never		
Occasionally	Seldom		
Frequently	Usually		
Consistently	Always		
Degree of Effectiveness			
Ineffective	Poor		
Moderately Effective	Acceptable		
Highly Effective	Excellent		
Evidence of Accomplishment			
Little or No Evidence			
Partial Evidence			
Sufficient Evidence			
Extensive Evidence			

Source: Guskey, T. R. and Bailey, J.N. (2010).

See Appendix for examples of indicators of student performance and labels for the levels.

STEP 5: Developing the Reporting Form

Intentionally planning the report card's format is vital for success. Parents often consider the report card's format an indication of what is most important to teachers. From parents' perspectives, the most important elements in the report card are those that are listed first and those that are allotted the most space. Listing standards related to product learning goals first on the report card will communicate to parents that these are the major focus of the school. Process and progress learning goals typically come after product goals.

Report cards designed to include teacher comments typically provide a space for the teacher to insert descriptive feedback related to what students have accomplished and what areas need improvement (Guskey and Bailey, 2010, p.125). The most effective teacher comments focus on the specific standards or learning goals students are expected to attain. Any comments that are included should be helpful and instructive. Teachers should avoid words such as unable, can't, won't, always, and never. A standardized comment menu could be created that cover a wide range of achievement and non-achievement aspects of students' performance. While this provides consistency in the content of the comments, parents prefer more specific and individualized comments.

To ensure that parents receive the report card, a section should be included that requests parents' or guardians' signatures. Parents should have a way to indicate whether they would like a follow-up phone call or individual conference with the teacher.

A space can be included for student comments, questions, or goals. Students may be asked to develop short-term and long-term goals. Developing goals based on a standards-based report card helps students see reporting as an ongoing process in which change is expected. Sharing goals with parents encourages collaboration among students, parents, and teachers.

Guskey and Bailey (2010) emphasize that the most effective standards-based report cards communicate information that parents can easily interpret, understand, and know how to use.

STEP 6: Pilot Testing and Revision

The success of the report card will depend on how effectively it communicates information to parents and others. Guskey recommends piloting the report card for at least a year before doing a full-scale implementation. Parent input must be solicited during the pilot process and will often help avoid opposition to the change. That parent input, along with teacher input, should drive the revisions made before full implementation.

At the secondary school level, student input may be valuable during the pilot process. But Guskey doesn't recommend student or parent involvement during the initial development phases.

Another important aspect of the pilot and revision processes is having adequate opportunity for reflection by the stakeholders about what is working and what is not working from their unique perspectives. A reflective tool document has been provided in this Process Guide and can be found in the Appendix.

Glossary of Terms

Comprehensive Reporting Systems includes multiple reporting tools, each with its own explicit and well-defined purpose.

Consensus: a group decision making process that seeks an acceptable resolution, one that can be supported, even if not the "favorite" of each individual.

Curriculum Standards: The goals of teaching and learning that describe what we want students to know and be able to do as a result of their experiences in school. They describe specific elements of content and levels of performance.

Double Marking System: a two-part marking system in which each student receives two marks for each standard. The first mark indicates the student's level of progress with regard to the standard—a 1, 2, 3, or 4, indicating beginning, progressing, proficient, or exceptional. The second mark indicates the relation of that level of progress to established expectations at this point in the school year. For example, a ++ might indicate advanced for grade-level expectations, a + might indicate on target or meeting grade-level expectations, and a – would indicate below grade-level expectations or needs improvement.

Marking System: a set of "grades" or marks on a report card to represent student achievement for a marking period.

Narrative Comments provide an opportunity to highlight strengths, describe specific challenges or classroom learning goals, or to make suggestions parents can use to help their child at home.

Performance Indicators: specific criteria for demonstrating mastery or proficiency on a standard.

Performance Levels: graduated benchmarks, labeled with clear descriptors, used to identify a student's current location on the learning continuum.

Product Learning Goals describe the major cognitive and academic learning outcomes being sought (Guskey & Bailey, 2010). They center on what students should know and be able to do.

Process Learning Goals focus on learning activities and classroom behaviors rather than on specific learning outcomes (Guskey & Bailey, 2010).

Progress Learning Goals consider how much improvement has been made over a period of time (Guskey & Bailey, 2010).

Reporting Standards: abbreviated, parent-friendly versions of key standards, used to communicate meaningful and easily understood information about student progress and achievement.

S.M.A.R.T. Goal setting: Educators are establishing Student Learning Objectives (SLO) that are (S)pecific, (M)easurable, (A)ppropriate, (R)igorous and realistic, and (T)ime-bound.

Standards-based Grading: Standards-based grading "involves measuring students' proficiency on well-defined course objectives." (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

Standards-based Reporting: involves reporting progress on specific course objectives rather than letter grades at the end of each grading/reporting period.

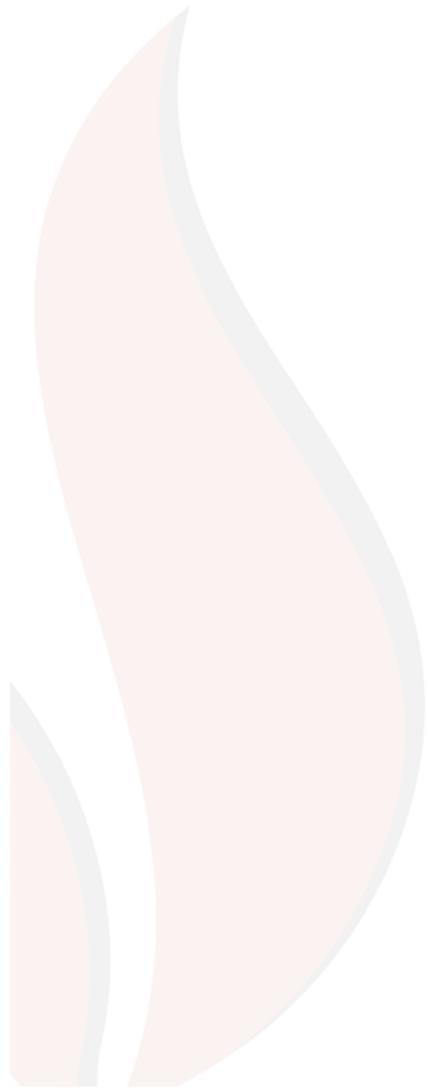
Student Growth: a positive change in student achievement between two or more points in time.

Student Learning Objective (SLO): A teacher-driven goal or set of goals that establish expectations for student academic growth over a specified period of time.

Two part Marking System: Also known as Double Marking System

Appendix

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Helping Standards Make the GRADE

Thomas R. Guskey

<http://ehsassessment.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/44848002/Helping%20Standards%20Make%20the%20Grade.pdf>

The issue of grading looms on the horizon for standards-based education. With standards and assessments now in place, educators face the daunting task of how best to grade and report student learning in terms of those standards. Most educators recognize the inadequacies of their current grading and reporting methods (Marzano, 2000). Few, however, have found alternatives that satisfy the diverse needs of students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members.

Standards don't lessen the responsibility of educators to evaluate the performance of students and to report the results. Nevertheless, the focus on standards poses unique challenges in grading and reporting. What are those challenges, and how can educators develop standards-based grading and reports that are accurate, honest, and fair?

CRITERION-REFERENCED STANDARDS

The first challenge is moving from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced grading standards. Norm-referenced standards compare each student's performance to that of other students in the group or class. Teachers first rank students on some measure of their achievement or performance. They assign a set percentage of top-ranked students (usually 10 to 20 percent) the highest grade, a second set percentage (perhaps 20 to 30 percent) the second highest grade, and so on. The percentages typically correspond to an approximation of the bell-shaped, normal probability curve, hence the expression "grading on the curve." Most adults experienced this type of grading during their school days.

Criterion-referenced standards, in contrast, compare each student's performance to clearly stated performance descriptions that differentiate levels of quality. Teachers judge students' performance by what each student does, regardless of how well or poorly their classmates perform.

Using the normal probability curve as a basis for assigning grades yields highly consistent grade distributions from one teacher to the next. All teachers' classes have essentially the same percentages of As, Bs, and Cs. But the consequences for students are overwhelmingly negative. Learning becomes highly competitive because students must compete against one another for the few high grades that the teacher distributes. Under these conditions, students see that helping others threatens their own chances for success. Because students do not achieve high grades by performing well, but rather by doing better than their classmates, learning becomes a game of winners and losers, and because teachers keep the

number of rewards arbitrarily small, most students must be losers (Haladyna, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Strong evidence shows that "grading on the curve" is detrimental to relationships--both among students and among teachers and students (Krumboltz & Yeh, 1996).

In a standards-based system, grading and reporting must be criterion-referenced. Teachers at all levels must identify what they want their students to learn and be able to do and what evidence they will use to judge that achievement or performance. Grades based on clearly stated learning criteria have direct meaning and communicate that meaning.

2 DIFFERENTIATING GRADING CRITERIA

A second challenge is to differentiate the types of grading criteria that teachers will use. Although teachers and students generally consider criterion-referenced grading to be more fair and equitable (Kovas, 1993), the specific grading criteria that teachers use may be very diverse. We can classify these criteria into three broad categories: product, process, and progress (Guskey, 1996).

Product criteria relate to students' specific achievements or levels of performance. They describe what students know and are able to do at a particular point in time. Advocates of standards generally favor product criteria. Teachers using product criteria base students' grades or reports exclusively on final examination scores; final products, such as reports, projects, or portfolios; overall assessments of performance; and other culminating demonstrations of learning.

Process criteria relate not to the final results, but to how students got there. Educators who believe that product criteria do not provide a complete picture of student learning generally favor process criteria. For example, teachers who consider student effort, class behavior, or work habits are using process criteria. So are those who count daily work, regular classroom quizzes, homework, class participation, punctuality of assignments, or attendance in determining students' grades.

Progress criteria relate to how much students actually gain from their learning experiences. Other terms include learning gain, improvement grading, value-added grading, and educational growth. Teachers who use progress criteria typically look at how far students have come rather than where students are. Others attempt to judge students' progress in terms of their "learning potential." As a result, progress grading criteria are often highly individualized among students.

Because they are concerned about student motivation, self-esteem, and the social consequences of grading, few teachers today use product criteria solely in determining grades. Instead, most base their grading on some combination of criteria, especially when a student receives only a single grade in a subject area (Brookhart, 1993; Frary, Cross, & Weber, 1993). The majority of teachers also vary the criteria they use from student to student, taking into account individual circumstances (Truog & Friedman, 1996). Although

teachers do so in an effort to be fair, the result is often a hodgepodge grade that includes elements of achievement, effort, and improvement (Brookhart, 1991). Interpreting the grade or report thus becomes difficult for parents, administrators, community members, and even the students (Friedman & Frisbie, 1995). An A, for example, may mean that the student knew what the teacher expected before instruction began (product), didn't learn as well as expected but tried very hard (process), or simply made significant improvement (progress).

Measurement experts generally recommend using product criteria exclusively in determining students' grades. They point out that the more process and progress criteria come into play, the more subjective and biased grades are likely to be (O'Connor, 1999; Ornstein, 1994). How can a teacher know, for example, how difficult a task was for students or how hard they worked to complete it?

Many teachers, however, point out that if they use product criteria exclusively, some high-ability students receive high grades with little effort, whereas the hard work of less-talented students is seldom acknowledged. Others say that if teachers consider only product criteria, low-ability students and those who are disadvantaged--students who must work the hardest--have the least incentive to do so. These students find the relationship between high effort and low grades unacceptable and, as a result, often express their displeasure with indifference, deception, or disruption (Tomlinson, 1992).

A practical solution to this problem, and one that increasing numbers of teachers and schools are using, is to establish clear indicators of product, process, and progress, and then to report each separately (Stiggins, 2001; Wiggins, 1996). Teachers separate grades or marks for learning skills, effort, work habits, or progress from grades for achievement and performance. Parents generally prefer this approach because it gives them more detailed and prescriptive information. It also simplifies reporting for teachers because they no longer have to combine so many diverse types of information into a single grade. The key to success, however, rests in the clear specification of those indicators and the criteria to which they relate. This means that teachers must describe how they plan to evaluate students' achievement, effort, work habits, and progress, and then must communicate these plans directly to students, parents, and others.

1 REPORTING TOOLS (PURPOSE)

A third challenge for standards-based education is clarifying the purpose of each reporting tool. Although report cards are the primary method, most schools today use a variety of reporting devices: weekly or monthly progress reports, open-house meetings, newsletters, evaluated projects or assignments, school Web pages, parent-teacher conferences, and student-led conferences (Guskey & Bailey, 2001).

Each reporting tool must fulfill a specific purpose, which requires considering three vital aspects of communication:

- * What information do we want to communicate?

- * Who is the primary audience for that information?
- * How would we like that information to be used?

Many educators make the mistake of choosing their reporting tools first, without giving careful attention to the purpose. For example, some charge headlong into developing a standards-based report card without first addressing core questions about why they are doing it. Their efforts often encounter unexpected resistance and rarely bring positive results. Both parents and teachers perceive the change as a newfangled fad that presents no real advantage over traditional reporting methods. As a result, the majority of these efforts become short-lived experiments and are abandoned after a few troubled years of implementation.

Efforts that begin by clarifying the purpose, however, make intentions clear from the start. If, for instance, the purpose of the report card is to communicate to parents the achievement status of students, then parents must understand the information on the report card and know how to use it. This means that educators should include parents on report card committees and give their input careful consideration. This not only helps mobilize everyone in the reporting process, it also keeps efforts on track. The famous adage that guides architecture also applies to grading and reporting: Form follows function. Once the purpose or function is clear, teachers can address more easily questions regarding form or method (Guskey & Bailey, 2001).

5 DEVELOPING A REPORTING FORM

The fourth challenge for standards-based education is developing the centerpiece of a standards-based reporting system: the report card. This typically involves a four-step process. First, teams of educators identify the major learning goals or standards that students are expected to achieve at each grade level or course of study. Second, educators establish performance indicators for those learning goals or standards. In other words, educators decide what evidence best illustrates students' attainment of each goal or standard. Third, they determine graduated levels of quality for assessing student performance. This step involves identifying incremental levels of attainment, sometimes referred to as benchmarks, as students progress toward the learning goals or standards (Andrade, 2000; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Finally, educators, often in collaboration with parents, develop a reporting form that communicates teachers' judgments of students' progress and achievement in relation to the learning goals or standards.

2 IDENTIFYING REPORTING STANDARDS

Identifying the specific learning goals or standards on which to base grades is probably the most

important, but also the most challenging, aspect of standards-based grading.

These learning goals or standards should stipulate precisely what students should know and be able to do as a result of their learning experiences. In earlier times, we might have referred to cognitive skills, learning competencies, or performance outcomes (Guskey, 1999). Teachers frequently list these learning goals in their lesson plans, make note of them on assignments and performance tasks, and include them in monthly or weekly progress

reports that go home to parents.

A crucial consideration in identifying learning goals or standards is determining the degree of specificity. Standards that are too specific make reporting forms cumbersome to use and difficult to understand. Standards that are too broad or general, however, make it hard to identify students' unique strengths and weaknesses. Most state-level standards, for example, tend to be broad and need to be broken down or "unpacked" into homogeneous categories or topics (Marzano, 1999). For grading and reporting purposes, educators must seek a balance. The standards must be broad enough to allow for efficient communication of student learning, yet specific enough to be useful (see Gronlund, 2000; Marzano & Kendall, 1995; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Another issue is the differentiation of standards across marking periods or grade levels. Most

schools using standards-based grading develop reporting forms that are based on grade-level learning goals or standards. Each standard has one level of complexity set for each grade that students are expected to meet before the end of the academic year. Most parents, however, are accustomed to grading systems in which learning standards become increasingly complex with each marking period. If the standard states "Students will write clearly and effectively," for example, many parents believe that their children should do this each marking period, not simply move toward doing so by the end of the academic year. This is especially true of parents who encourage their children to attain the highest mark possible in all subject areas every marking period.

To educators using such forms, students who receive 1 or 2 on a 4-point grading scale during the first or second marking period are making appropriate progress and are on track for their grade level. For parents, however, a report card filled with 1s and 2s, when the highest mark is a 4, causes great concern. They think that their children are failing. Although including a statement on the reporting form, such as "Marks indicate progress toward end-of-the-year learning standards," is helpful, it may not alleviate parents' concerns.

4 FACILITATING INTERPRETATION

Many parents initially respond to a standards-based reporting form with, "This is great. But tell me, how is my child doing really?" Or they ask, "How is my child doing compared to the other children in the class?" They ask these questions because they don't know how to interpret the information. Further, most parents had comparative, norm-based reporting systems when they were in school and are more familiar with reports that compare students to their classmates. Above all, parents want to make sense of the reporting form. Their fear is that their children will reach the end of the school year and won't have made sufficient progress to be promoted to the next grade.

To ensure more accurate interpretations, several schools use a two-part marking system with their standards-based reporting form (see example). Every marking period, each student receives two marks for each standard. The first mark indicates the student's level of

progress with regard to the standard--a 1, 2, 3, or 4, indicating beginning, progressing, proficient, or exceptional. The second mark indicates the relation of that level of progress to established expectations at this point in the school year. For example, a ++ might indicate advanced for grade-level expectations, a + might indicate on target or meeting grade-level expectations, and a - would indicate below grade-level expectations or needs improvement.

The advantage of this two-part marking system is that it helps parents make sense of the reporting form each marking period. It also helps alleviate their concerns about what seem like low grades and lets them know whether their children are progressing at an appropriate rate. Further, it helps parents take a standards-based perspective in viewing their children's performances. Their question is no longer "Where is my child in comparison to his or her classmates?" but "Where is my child in relation to the grade-level learning goals and expectations?"

The one drawback of the two-part marking system is that expectations must take into account individual differences in students' development of cognitive skills. Because students in any classroom differ in age and cognitive development, some might not meet the specified criteria during a particular marking period--even though they will likely do so before the end of the year. This is especially common in kindergarten and the early primary grades, when students tend to vary widely in their entry-level skills but can make rapid learning progress (Shuster, Lemma, Lynch, & Nadeau, 1996). Educators must take these developmental differences into consideration and must explain them to parents.

CHOOSING PERFORMANCE-LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Standards-based reporting forms that use numerical grading scales also require a key or legend that explains the meaning of each numeral. These descriptors help parents and others understand what each numeral means.

A common set of descriptors matches performance levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 with the achievement labels beginning, progressing, proficient, and exceptional. If the standards reflect behavioral aspects of students' performance, then teachers more commonly use such descriptors as seldom, sometimes, usually, and consistently/independently. These labels are preferable to above average, average, and below average, which reflect norm-referenced comparisons rather than criterion-referenced standards.

Such achievement descriptors as exceptional or advanced are also preferable to exceeds standard or extending to designate the highest level of performance. Educators can usually articulate specific performance criteria for an exceptional or advanced level of achievement or performance. Exceeds standard or extending, however, are much less precise and may leave students and parents wondering just what they need to do to exceed or extend. Descriptors should be clear, concise, and directly interpretable.

Many reporting forms include a fifth level of not applicable or not evaluated to designate standards that have not yet been addressed or were not assessed during that particular marking period. Including these labels is preferable to leaving the marking spaces blank

because parents often interpret a blank space as an item that the teacher missed or neglected.

5 MAINTAINING CONSISTENCY

A final challenge is consistency. To communicate with parents, most schools and school districts involved in standards-based grading try to maintain a similar reporting format across grade levels. Most also use the same performance-level indicators at all grade levels so that parents don't have to learn a new set of procedures for interpreting the reporting form each year as their children move from one grade level to the next. Many parents also see consistency as an extension of a well-designed curriculum. The standards at each grade level build on and extend those from earlier levels.

While maintaining a similar format across grade levels, however, most schools and school districts list different standards on the reporting form for each level. Although the reporting format and performance indicators remain the same, the standards on the 1st grade reporting form are different from those on the 2nd grade form, and so on. This gives parents a clear picture of the increasing complexity of the standards at each subsequent grade level.

An alternative approach is to develop one form that lists the same broad standards for multiple grades. To clarify the difference at each grade level, a curriculum guidebook describing precisely what the standard means and what criteria are used in evaluating the standard at each grade level usually accompanies the form. Most reporting forms of this type also include a narrative section, in which teachers offer additional explanations. Although this approach to standards-based grading simplifies the reporting form, it also requires significant parent training and a close working relationship among parents, teachers, and school and district leaders (Guskey & Bailey, 2001).

Why SBRC?

ADVANTAGES AND SHORTCOMINGS

When we establish clear learning goals or standards, standards-based grading offers important information about students' achievement and performance. If sufficiently detailed, the information is useful for both diagnostic and prescriptive purposes. For these reasons, standards-based grading facilitates teaching and learning better than almost any other grading method.

At the same time, standards-based grading has shortcomings. First and foremost, it takes a lot of work. Not only must educators identify the learning goals or standards on which grades will be based, but they also must decide what evidence best illustrates students' attainment of each goal or standard, identify graduated levels of quality for assessing students' performance, and develop reporting tools that communicate teachers' judgments of learning progress. These tasks may add considerably to the workload of teachers and school leaders.

A second shortcoming is that the reporting forms are sometimes too complicated for

parents to understand. In their efforts to provide parents with rich information, educators can go overboard and describe learning goals in unnecessary detail. As a result, reporting forms become cumbersome and time-consuming for teachers to complete and difficult for parents to understand. We must seek a crucial balance in identifying standards that are specific enough to provide parents with useful, prescriptive information, but broad enough to allow for efficient communication between educators and parents.

A third shortcoming is that the report may not communicate the appropriateness of students' progress. Simply reporting a student's level of proficiency with regard to a particular standard communicates nothing about the adequacy of that level of achievement or performance. To make sense of the information, parents need to know how that level of achievement or performance compares to the established learning expectations for that particular grade level.

Finally, although teachers can use standards-based grading at any grade level and in any course of study, most current applications are restricted to the elementary level where there is little curriculum differentiation. In the middle grades and at the secondary level, students usually pursue more diverse courses of study. Because of these curricular differences, standards-based reporting forms at the middle and secondary levels must vary from student to student. The marks need to relate to each student's achievement and performance in his or her particular courses or academic program. Although advances in technology, such as computerized reporting forms, allow educators to provide such individualized reports, relatively few middle and high school educators have taken up the challenge.

Why SBRC?

NEW STANDARDS FOR GRADING

As educators clarify student learning goals and standards, the advantages of standards-based grading become increasingly evident. Although it makes reporting forms more detailed and complex, most parents value the richness of the information when the reports are expressed in terms that they can understand and use. Reporting forms that use a two-part marking system show particular promise--but such a system may require additional explanation to parents. Teachers must also set expectations for learning progress not just at the grade level, but also for each marking period.

Successfully implementing standards-based grading and reporting demands a close working relationship among teachers, parents, and school and district leaders. To accurately interpret the reporting form, parents need to know precisely what the standards mean and how to make sense of the various levels of achievement or performance in relation to those standards. Educators must ensure, therefore, that parents are familiar with the language and terminology. Only when all groups understand what grades mean and how they are used to improve student learning will we realize the true value of a standards-based approach to education.

ADDED MATERIAL

Thomas R. Guskey is Professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation, College of

Example of a Double-Mark, Standards-Based Reporting Form Elementary Progress Report

<u>Reading</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>
<u>3rd</u> <u>4th</u>		
Understands and uses different skills and strategies	1+	2++
Understands the meaning of what is read	1++	2+
Reads different materials for a variety of purposes	1-	2-
Reading level	1++	2+
Work habits	S	S

<u>Writing</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>
<u>3rd</u> <u>4th</u>		
Writes clearly and effectively 2++	1+	
Understands and uses the steps in the writing process 2++	1++	
Writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes	1+	2-
Analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work	N	1+
Understands and uses the conventions of writing: punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and legibility	1-	2-
Work habits	S	S

<u>Communication</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>
<u>3rd</u> <u>4th</u>		
Uses listening and observational skills to gain understanding	1+	2-
Communicates ideas clearly and effectively (formal communication)	1-	2+
Uses communication strategies and skills to work effectively with others (informal communication)	N	1+
Work habits	U	S

This report is based on grade-level standards established for each subject area. The ratings indicate your student's progress in relation to the year-end standard. (see below)

EVALUATION MARKS

- 4 = Exceptional
- 3 = Meets standard
- 2 = Approaches standard
- 1 = Beginning standard
- N = Not applicable

LEVEL EXPECTATION MARKS

- ++ = Advanced
- + = On level
- = Below level

SOCIAL LEARNING SKILLS & EFFORT MARKS

- E = Exceptional
- S = Satisfactory
- U = Unsatisfactory

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Standards-Based Report Cards

Standards-based Report Card Development Levels

1. Defining the purpose.
2. Developing the reporting standards and the corresponding additional information.
3. Addressing essential steps in development (crucial questions) – see below
4. Establishing performance criteria.
5. Developing the reporting form.
6. Pilot testing and revision.

Essential/Crucial Questions

1. What is the purpose of the report card?
2. How often will the report cards be completed and sent home? (quarterly, trimester)
3. Will a specific report card be developed for each grade level or will a more general one be used across grade levels?
4. How many reporting standards will be included for each subject area or course?
5. What specific reporting standards will be included at each grade level or in each course?
6. Will standards (proficiency) be set for each grade level or each marking/reporting period?

7. What specific process and progress standards will be reported?
8. How many levels of performance will be reported for each standard?
9. How will the levels be labeled?
10. Will teachers' comments be included and encouraged?
11. How will information be arranged on the report card?
12. What are parents expected to do with the information?
13. What are students expected to do with the information?
14. What policies need to accompany the new reporting procedures?
15. When should input of parents and/or students be sought?
16. Other?

Guskey, T., Bailey, J. *Developing Standards-Based Report Cards*. (2010). Corwin Press: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Purpose of Standard-Based Report Card – Examples

1. The purpose of this report card is to describe students' learning progress to their parents and others, based on our school's learning expectations for each grade level. It is intended to inform parents and guardians about learning successes and to guide improvements when needed.
2. The purpose of this report card is to communicate with parents and students about the achievement of specific learning goals. It identifies students' levels of progress with regard to those goals, areas of strength, and areas where additional time and effort are needed.
3. These report cards give teachers, parents, and students clear and specific information about what skills and knowledge should be learned at each grade level. Teachers will assess student progress throughout the year
4. The purpose of this report card is to communicate with parents and others about the student's levels of progress based on our school and state's learning expectations. It identifies the student's progress with regard to those expectations, areas of strength and areas where additional time and effort are needed.
5. This report card allows MPS to communicate with parents and students about grade level standards. It identifies students' levels of progress with regard to those standards, areas of strength, and areas where additional time and effort are needed to meet expectations at this particular point in the school year. The new report card helps the MPS community transition to the Common Core State Standards language and supports student learning.
6. This report is designed to inform you about the student's progress towards achieving the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards and/or the Common Core State Standards. The Standards establish high and challenging expectations for all students; describe what students should know, be able to do, and care about; and serve as the basis for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in Hawaii's public schools. The curriculum for each content area is based on the standards relevant to the area.
7. This report card will provide feedback to students, parents and administrators about academic achievement.
8. The purpose of the Standards-Based Report Card is to provide more detailed feedback to parents regarding the progress their children are making toward specific learning standards at their grade level. The new report card will allow parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected of students and how to help them be successful in a rigorous academic program.
9. The purpose of this standards-based report card is to communicate clear and specific information regarding the student's progress toward learning goals, based on state requirements and school expectations. This report card identifies strengths and needs of the student who is developing personal and academic excellence in the Catholic tradition.

Adapted from Guskey, T., Bailey, J. *Developing Standards-Based Report Cards* (2010)

Indicators of Student Performance

Levels of Understanding/Quality

Modest	Beginning	Novice	Unsatisfactory
Intermediate	Progressing	Apprentice	Needs Improvement
Proficient	Adequate	Proficient	Satisfactory
Superior	Exemplary	Distinguished	Outstanding

Levels of Mastery/Proficiency

Below Basic	Below Standard	Pre-emergent	Incomplete
Basic	Approaching Standard	Emerging	Limited
Proficient	Meets Standard	Acquiring	Partial
Advanced	Exceeds Standard	Extending	Thorough

Frequency of Display

Rarely	Never
Occasionally	Seldom
Frequently	Usually
Consistently	Always

Degree of Effectiveness

Ineffective	Poor
Moderately Effective	Acceptable
Highly Effective	Excellent

Evidence of Accomplishment

Little or No Evidence
Partial Evidence
Sufficient Evidence
Extensive Evidence

South Dakota Performance Descriptors (CAMPUS)

The following performance descriptors are examples of those provided to Infinite Campus and should be used as a model for this work.

FIRST GRADE Standard-Based Report Card

1st Grade Operations & Algebraic Thinking

Represent/ solve addition & subtraction problems

1.OA.1 Solve addition/subtraction word problems up to 20 using various strategies

1.OA.2 Solve addition story problems with 3 numbers up to 20 with an unknown

Understand properties relationships between + & -

1.OA.3 Use strategies to solve add/sub problems using properties

1.OA.4 Use addition facts to solve subtraction problems

Add & subtract within 20

1.OA.5 Relate counting to addition & subtraction

1.OA.6 Fluently add & subtract up to 10

Work with addition & subtraction equations

1.OA.7 Use the equal sign to determine if equations are true or false

1.OA.8 Find the missing number in an addition or subtraction problem

1st Grade Numbers & Operations

Extend the counting sequence

1.NBT.1 Count to 120 starting from any given number

1.NBT.1 Read, write & represent a number of objects with a written numeral

1.NBT.2 Identify tens & ones in any two-digit number

1.NBT.3 Compare two two-digit numbers using symbols $>$, $<$, $=$

1.NBT.4 Use concrete models to add within 100

1.NBT.5 Mentally find 10 more/less than any two-digit number & explain reasoning

1.NBT.6 Use objects/drawings to explain strategies used to subtract multiples of 10

1.MD.1 Order & compare the length of 3 objects

1.MD.2 Accurately measure objects using a variety of units

1.MD.3 Tell & write time in hours & half-hours using analog/digital clocks

1.MD.4 Organize, represent, interpret & ask/answer questions about data

1.G.1 Recognize defining attributes to build, draw, sort & compare shapes

1.G.2 Compose & break apart 2D or 3D shapes to create new shapes

1.G.3 Divide & describe two & four equal shares of circles & rectangles

1.G.3 Identify how many halves & fourths make up the whole

1.G.3 Identify that more pieces creates smaller shares

Standards-Based Report Cards Reflection

Report Cards		Proficiency Level Rubrics	
Items that work well.	Items that need revising.	Items that work well.	Items that need revising.

