

Caldwell-West Caldwell Schools
Elementary School Report Cards
Parent Information and FAQ Sheet

Overview:

A standards-based report card communicates student progress toward meeting end-of-the year learning standards. Teachers assess student performance against these learning standards, which are specific and observable grade-level skills articulated in The Common Core Standards and Caldwell-West Caldwell Elementary curricula. Teachers do this by measuring individual student performance against the identified learning standards, rather than in relation to the performance of other students.

This new report card is helpful in multiple ways. First, it will ensure that there is more consistency of expectations from teacher to teacher and between core disciplines. Second, it will help teachers and students focus on key learning outcomes. This allows teachers to plan instruction and interventions, including acceleration, based on specific data gathered around learning goals and targets from the CCSS, State Standards, and Grade Level Indicators.

Finally, parents will learn exactly how their students are doing based on the standards—they'll learn which big ideas and concepts their children have learned and what they need to work on to ensure they are ready for the next grade level. Caldwell-West Caldwell Schools has always placed a premium on building a community of support for each individual learner. From the very beginning of the year, the standards-based report card keeps teachers, parents, and students focused on the desired outcomes for year-end goals. A standards-based report card is viewed as an effective tool to further our shared understanding about student growth. The revised report card, intends to provide meaningful feedback about student growth in both an academic and social-emotional context.

FAQ:

What is a Standards-Based Report Card?

On a Standards-Based Report Card, teachers grade students based on their progress toward meeting important end of year skills. The purpose of the report card is to describe students' current progress toward end of year standards to parents/guardians. This type of report card gives much more specific information about what students are doing in class and how quickly they are making progress toward meeting the goals for the end of the year.

What are the "Standards?"

The state of New Jersey has "standards" in each of the core subject areas taught in our elementary schools and teachers use these standards to determine what to teach over the course of the school year. A

standard tells teachers and parents what we want students to know by the time they have completed a school year. In each subject area (for example, reading or math), there are several standards that describe exactly what a student will know and be able to do as a result of learning. These standards are specific to the grade level that students are in. Children in kindergarten who are learning to read have very different reading standards than 5th grade students.

Why is Caldwell-West Caldwell School District changing to a Standards Based Report Card?

Our new report card is aligned with changes undergone throughout the district. For several years, our teachers have been using standards to organize their teaching. Now, they will be able to assess students using these same standards. The report cards will provide parents and teachers with clear information about what we want students to learn (standards) and what students should be able to do as a result of what they have learned (proficiency).

The “Academic Marks” used on the new report card are “Descriptors of Proficiency.” What does this mean?

Teachers will assess students based on how consistently they are able to demonstrate end of grade level expectations for each standard reported on the report card. At the beginning of the school year, or when a standard is just being taught, most students in a classroom will not be “proficient” on the skill or concept. As they are taught, students will more easily and more often show what they know. Our goal is that by the end of the school year, students will be proficient at their grade level

What does each academic mark, or Descriptor of Proficiency Mean?

Performance levels are used to classify student performances into categories that describe the knowledge, skills and practices students in the category typically are able to demonstrate, including the consistency with which they can demonstrate these traits. Performance levels, sometimes referred to as “achievement levels”, are the broad, categorical levels used to report student performance at a point of time on a standard.

My child got an “NA” for a grade. What does that mean?

Teachers will use the NA grade, meaning, “Not Addressed or Assessed” when there is a standard on the report card that has not been taught yet. Some subjects and standards are taught only during certain times of the school year.

It looks like there are different grades for behaviors. How does my child's teacher grade behaviors like working well with others and completing tasks?

On our new report card, teachers will be providing different marks for "characteristics of successful learners" than for academic subjects. These characteristics include managing personal responsibilities, working well with others, exhibiting curiosity, and respecting differences.. Teachers will use Progress Indicators; Meets the Expectation, Approaches the Expectation, and Does not meet the Expectation to communicate with parents how often their child shows the characteristics of successful learners while in the classroom. We decided to use a different scale for these characteristics, because we expect students to show these positive behaviors throughout the entire school year.

Will our secondary schools (middle/high school) be the same as elementary?

All Caldwell-West Caldwell schools are standards-based. All K-12 teachers will teach the standards and assess the essential standards. Elementary will use a 4-1 rubric scale for mastery and Secondary will continue to use grades A-F to report mastery of the standards.

Isn't a "3" just another way of saying the student earned a "B"?

One of the biggest differences between a traditional report card and a standards-based report card is assessing what students have "learned" not "earned" based on very clear and specific expectations defined by the Common Core and other state standards. A traditional "B" is an average of the points earned on tests, quizzes, assignments and homework along with effort and participation points, but does not tell us clearly state what the student has really learned and achieved in terms of standards-based expectations for a specific grade level.

My child is academically strong. How will standards-based teaching, learning and grading challenge my child?

Through standards-based instructional methods of pre-assessment, teachers will know if students have already mastered concepts prior to a lesson or unit. It will give teachers an early opportunity to provide meaningful and challenging work for these students. Teachers individualize instruction so that students continue to grow and progress. This will be no different with the new reporting tool. In fact, more than ever, teachers will be able to see who really has mastered the standard and who needs additional instruction or intervention.

How will English Language Learners or students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) be graded on a standards-based report card? □

The learning outcome standards for all students are the same; however, students with IEPs have specific accommodations and/or modifications that enable a student to meet the standards. An accommodation does not change the standard, but provides the scaffolding and support necessary for that student to access and demonstrate knowledge of a standard.

What is a trimester marking period?

Our new standards-based report card is based on three marking periods (Months). The move to Trimesters is seen as providing teachers with sufficient time to collect meaningful data about student growth. Through formative assessments and the strategic placement of grade-wide benchmarks, teachers will consistently accrue and analyze key performance data.