



**STANDARDS BASED GRADING
PARENT HANDBOOK**

OXFORD COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

September 2015

Standards and Curriculum Materials

For the 2015-2016 school year, the Oxford Community Schools has aligned its curriculum to the Michigan standards for English Language Arts and math (Common Core). In addition, our curriculum is aligned to the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCE's) for social studies and science. Exploratory classes such as music, art, world language, and PE are aligned to the Michigan standards for these subjects. All standards are adopted by the State of Michigan Board of Education and are mandated to be taught in public schools. The standards can be found at http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_64839_65510---,00.html.

To teach these standards the District purchases support materials for teachers to use. For English Language Arts, writing is taught using Lucy Calkins' Units of Study for Teaching Writing, reading is currently taught with teacher created resources , and word study (spelling) is taught using the Words Their Way Program. Reading will be taught using Lucy Calkins' Units of Study for Teaching Reading in 2016-2017. Math is taught using the Houghton Mifflin Math Expressions Program. For science, teachers use Battle Creek Science Kits that focus on the different disciplines (life, physical, and earth) and science processes that are taught at each grade level. Lastly, social studies is taught using teacher created materials as well as support materials from various publishers.

The Purpose of the Report Card

The purpose of the report card is to report:

- Student achievement based on content standards
- Student social development and work habits

It is important that grades are accurate in describing what students know and are able to do in terms of academic standards. When we include area such as effort, participation, or adherence to school rules in grades, grades are essentially broken. To accurately communicate to students and parents specific information about achievement, grades must be a pure measure of student academic achievement. Other behaviors that promote learning like social development and work habits are important, but they need to be reported in a separate section.

Guiding Principles:

For standards-based grading and reporting to fully impact student achievement, the following principles should be applied:

- Standards-based grading and reporting should be clear and meaningful to all stakeholders.
- All students, no matter their school, should be taught and graded using the same standards or learning targets.
- Grades/marks should reflect academic standards or learning targets that demonstrate what students know and are able to do.
- Evidence used for grading should be valid and consistent across the district.
- Grading should be based on established criteria and not on arbitrary or individual teacher created norms.
- Students should not be graded during the learning process; but instead, receive

feedback or coaching that helps the student learn.

- Grading is done based on mastery of a concept or skill and not an average or mean of work done in a subject.
- Non-academic indicators are essential in understanding the whole child and should be reported on separately from academic grades and marks.
- The teaching of essential standards and providing multiple opportunities/methods to determine proficiency are necessary.
- Quality assessments and rubrics are key to the process.
- Professional development, including the work of grade level teachers, is essential to successful implementation of standards-based grading and reporting.

Standards Based Instruction and Learning

Teachers have created daily lessons structured around the Michigan standards. All coursework objectives are tied to standards, which are meant to prepare students for success in their future secondary school and post-high school education and work. These objectives are found in the form of “I can” statements that teachers developed from the standards in kid-friendly language. This allows students to understand the skills and concepts they are expected to master. In addition, teachers concentrate on teaching essential standards in the different content areas that every student must learn for success at the next level. These standards are identified by teachers through analysis of the standards, curriculum resources, and assessments. Although most of the science and social studies curriculum is taught through IB units for the Primary Years Program, this curriculum is also taught and assessed through standards based instruction. The ultimate goal of standards based instruction is to insure that students learn specific content and skills.

Standards Based Assessment

While each lesson taught is connected to a standard, student learning is assessed through assessments that are tied to specific standards. Each question, performance task, observational record, and other forms of assessment are tied to specific learning targets. These different assessments mark progress toward meeting the standard expectation. Learning goals are clear and opportunities to meet them are varied. By providing rigorous learning goals with performance standards, students know in advance what they will need to learn, students concentrate on true mastery of a topic or skill.

Teachers will assess student learning through two different forms of assessment: formative and summative. Formative assessments are those assessments that are used before a student is expected to master the standard and the teacher has finished teaching the standard. The goal of formative assessment is to *monitor student learning* to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. Many times there may be no point value attached or little point value attached to the work (homework and other examples) as the teacher does not want to punish the student for his or her learning. The goal of summative assessment is to *evaluate student learning* at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark. Summative assessments can include projects, quizzes, tests and other performance tasks. Students will

have multiple assessment opportunities –and different assessment options – to demonstrate their understanding of the standards.

The best example we can give is to liken these assessments to practice and games for a sports team. During practice, score is not kept and players are given repeated opportunities to repeat a skill or concept. The coach gives constructive feedback through coaching (feedback on assessments) during this formative phase. After a set amount of time, the team is expected to demonstrate their progress in the form of a game. The game is a formal summative exercise where officials keep score and the result is recorded.

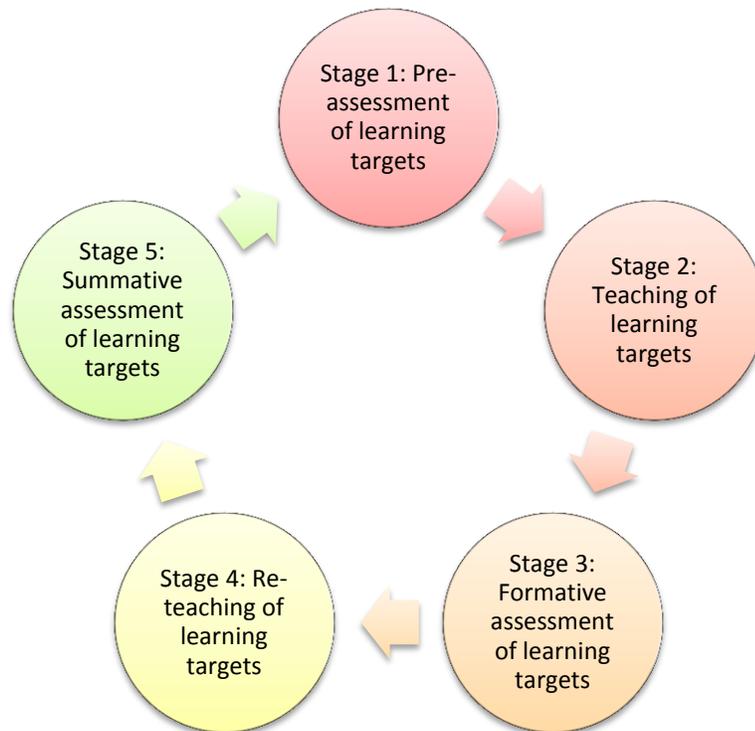
Standards Based Reporting

Teachers are measuring student progress on the learning target or standard against the end of the year expectation for mastery. Standards-Based Education focuses on what a student knows, not how long it took to get there. It gives students the practice they need and more than one opportunity to demonstrate success—if they need it. Students are graded on the development of skills and knowledge, what they know and can do, rather than their completion of tasks. In addition, each student’s work is measured against the standard, not other students’ performance. In assessing the whole child, two separate categories will be reported:

- **Academic achievement** which is an accurate evaluation of what a student knows and is able to demonstrate as it relates to the expected content attainment at that point in the term/year.
- **Nonacademic indicators** which describe the actions and behaviors that support achievement.

Standards Based Reporting and PowerSchool

When school districts utilize a standards based approach to grading, it takes time for everyone (teachers, students, and parents) to make adjustments. One area parents will notice a difference is in PowerSchool grade reporting. Summative assessments will be used for the determination of report card grades. As indicated earlier, summative assessments are quizzes, tests, and performance assessments. They are done at the end of a learning cycle. These types of assessments do not occur frequently. Summative assessments are important for informing the report card, but summative assessments are not the only type of assessment that teachers will utilize as they help your child learn. To view your child’s progress on the standards in PowerSchool, log into the parent portal at <https://powerschool.oxford.k12.mi.us/guardian/home.html> using your parent username and password. After logging into the parent portal, click on your elementary child’s name if you have more than one child in the Oxford school system. After clicking on your elementary child’s name, click on the “Grades and Attendance” tab on the left of the page (usually this is set as the default page and shows after logging in). Then, click on the “Standards Grades” tab that is in the center of the screen under your child’s name. This will show you the standards that your child’s teacher has graded to that point in the year and your child’s overall grade on the standard. If it has not been graded by the teacher, it will not show in the parent portal.



Typical Teaching and Learning Cycle

Pre-assessment and formative assessment as Feedback

Pre-assessment and formative assessment will make up the majority of the assessment your child encounters while learning. Teachers will also use pre-assessments (assessments given before teaching occurs) and formative assessments (given during the teaching and learning cycle). Both of these assessments help to guide the learning process as teachers use the data from these assessments to guide instruction and prepare students for success on the summative assessments. Because these assessments are used to prepare students for success on summative assessments, they are not used to mark the report card. These pre-assessments and formative assessments will be corrected and students will receive feedback. This feedback is important for students and parents. The feedback may be received by parents in one of two forms: one, marked on your child’s paper and returned to the student, and two, recorded in PowerSchool, but the teacher will indicate that it has not been used to calculate a final grade. For the teacher, these assessments are used to modify and plan lessons, group students, address strengths and deficiencies as a class and as individual students, and adjust time spent on the different learning targets. This list is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

Determination of Report Card Grades

Since teachers are using summative assessments to determine final grades for the report card, the number of grades used to determine the final report card marks are few. For example, the writing learning targets will be assessed two-three times in a trimester to determine final report card marks for a trimester. The Lucy Calkins writing rubric will be used for these assessments. The reading learning targets will be assessed through Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Assessment at the end of each trimester. In addition, teachers will also use conferring notes to inform the reading section of report card two or three times a trimester. The Language Conventions

learning targets will be assessed with two to three assessments on grammar and usage. Math learning targets will be marked on a report card using unit quizzes and the unit assessments from Math Expressions. Science will utilize the quizzes and summative assessments from the Battle Creek Science Kits. Lastly, social studies will be marked as an aggregate of the student's work for this year.

Standards Based Rubric

Our report card marking system is:

4 = Mastery of grade level standard

3= On track to mastery of grade level standard

2= Partial mastery of grade level standard

1= Limited mastery of grade level standard

Important Concept: Even though we have 4 numbers in our scale, we really only have a three point scale.

Why? We are using the above scale to measure student achievement against grade level expectations for the end of the year. A "3" will be converted to a "4" by the teacher for the report card when the student has repeatedly demonstrated mastery (received numerous "3's" on summative assessments. This concept of grading affects the subject areas differently. English Language Arts and math differ from one another. In English Language Arts, the same standards are taught in increasing complexity through all three trimesters. While in math, teachers will introduce a learning target in one trimester and may revisit the learning target later in the year for math or it may be taught only one trimester. Because we are measuring academic progress against the end of the year expected level of mastery, we cannot utilize the "3" at these specific times because either the child has met the expected level of mastery for the standard or they have not. In a sense, and please forgive me another sports analogy, the race is done and now it is time to report the results. In this way, parents have an accurate picture of the progress made during the academic year.

How this concept of grading affects the different subject areas:

English Language Arts:

The "4" on our scale is only marked **on the report card** by the teacher after the student has repeatedly demonstrated mastery of a learning target. During the third trimester, teachers will utilize only the "1," "2," and "4" on the report card to indicate student learning. A teacher may indicate that a student has achieved end of the year mastery prior to third trimester but this may not occur frequently.

Math:

The teacher only marks a "4" **on a rubric or on the report card** after the student has repeatedly demonstrated mastery of a learning target **during the trimester that the learning target is last taught for that grade level.** Depending on when the learning target is introduced and if it is repeated in a later trimester, the "4" could be used first, second, or third trimester for a particular learning target. During this trimester, teachers will utilize "1," "2," and "4" on the report card that marking period.

Science:

Teachers will assess students in the area of science processes all three trimesters and they will assess the science disciplines of life, earth, and physical only during the trimester that the specific discipline is taught, which will vary by grade level. These areas of science section of the report card will be graded using the Standards Based Rubric against the end of year expectation for the standards in each area. Teachers will use the “1,” “2,” and “3” during the first and second trimesters for science processes section of the report card. During the third trimester, teachers will use the “4” in place of the “3” to indicate whether the student has met the end of the year expectation for the standards being assessed under science processes. For the science discipline section of the report card, teachers will utilize only the “1,” “2,” and “4” on the report card because these disciplines are only assessed once.

Social Studies:

Teachers will assess social studies using the “1,” “2,” and “3” during the first and second trimester. During the third trimester, teachers will substitute the “4” for the “3” to indicate whether a student has met the end of the year expectation for the social studies standards.

Exploratory Subjects (Art, Music, World Language, and Physical Education)

These subjects will be graded using the Standards Based Rubric. Teachers will assess student learning against the end of year expectation. Teachers will use the “1,” “2,” and “3” during the first and second trimesters. During the third trimester, teachers will use the “4” in place of the “3” to indicate whether the student has mastered the standard being assessed.

Formative Assessment and Standards Based Rubric

Teachers will utilize a three point scale with formative assessment or daily work to measure student learning. This three point scale will consist of the descriptors for “1,” “2,” and “3” from our Standards Based Rubric.

Important Academic Behaviors that Indicate Student Progress

Student academic behaviors such as work completion, study skills, cooperative learning skills, responsibility, and other such skills are removed from academic marks with standards based grading. Only student academic achievement or learning is to be considered when grading the different learning targets. Due to their value and association with academic achievement, these important indicators are graded in a separate section of the report card titled “Skills for Successful Learners” and are graded each trimester. Teachers use a different rubric to measure student progress on these skills than the rubric used to measure student achievement on the standards. The different indicators are “C” for consistently applies skill, “A” for acquiring skill, and “N” for needs support.

Student Motivation

So how do we motivate students in a standards based system? Rick Stiggins, a noted authority

on assessment, believes student involvement is the key, which involves the following:

- Identifying for students the learning targets they are expected to learn
- Build relevancy for why they need to learn them
- Have student set their own reasonable goals for improvement
- Have students keep track of their own achievement
- Have students communicate their achievement through self-reflection

According to Rick Stiggins, the benefits of student involvement are the following:

- An enhanced conceptual understanding
- A shared vocabulary
- Students stay in touch with their own progress and growth
- Students are more motivated to learn

Future Plans for the Report Card

A standards based report card is one that undergoes improvements as it is used. Rarely, are standards based report cards created and adopted without future modifications. Students, teachers, parents, and administrators will contribute suggestions and improvements as they become familiar with the report card. A committee of teachers will then discuss and consider the improvements. This committee will then make suggestions on the different aspects of the report card. Although all areas of the report card will be reviewed for possible improvements each year, there are certain sections of the report card that we know we will be addressing over the next couple of years.

Reading: Although this area was improved for this year, we will address it again at the end of this year so it will align to our adopted curriculum: Lucy Calkins' Units of Study for Teaching Reading. These changes will be put in place for the 2016-2017 school year.

Science: The State Department of Education is in the process of rewriting state standards for science, which the State Board of Education will then have to adopt before they become the official state standards for science. Once this process has been completed, we will unpack the new standards and identify learning targets. The teachers will then create "I Can" statements for the new standards. In addition new curriculum resources will then be considered or existing resources will be modified to allow teachers to effectively teach the new standards. Once this process is completed, the science section of the report card will be modified. More than likely, this process will be completed for the 2017-2018 school year.

Social Studies: The State Department of Education is presently considering adopting new social studies content standards. These standards would then have to be adopted by the State Board of Education. Once this process has been completed, we will unpack the new standards and identify learning targets. The teachers will then create "I Can" statements for the new standards. In addition new curriculum resources will then be considered or existing resources will be modified to allow teachers to effectively teach to the new standards. Once this process

is completed, the science section of the report card will be modified. More than likely, this process will be completed for the 2017-2018 school year.

Skills for Successful Learners: This section of the report card will be modified to make it a more effective and efficient measure of important non-academic factors. Teachers will be working on this section of the report card at the end of the year for implementation for the 2016-2017 school year.