

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Elementary Report Cards

Q. What is a standards-based report card?

A standards-based report card measures a student's progress according to how he or she is performing on expected grade-level standards. It provides more detailed information about what a student is learning and can demonstrate in each content area than a traditional report card. It is one form of communication from teachers to parents.

Q. Why is Gloucester County Public Schools (GCPS) changing to a standards-based report card?

GCPS teachers teach a standards-based curriculum and assess students on the standards the students are learning. The traditional elementary report card does not allow teachers to report on how students are meeting expected standards. The move toward a standards-based reporting system is happening throughout the United States and aligns the information provided to parents on the report with how we are currently teaching and assessing students.

Q. Do other school systems use a standards-based progress report?

Many districts use a standards-based progress report or standards-based report card. Several area school systems have already implemented or are preparing to use a standards-based progress report. These systems include Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Prince William County, and Montgomery County.

How does the new Elementary report card report compare to the previous Elementary report card?

Previous Report Card	New Standards-based Report Card
Students receive grades by subject area and/or strand	Students receive ratings by standard (K-5) in all subject areas using a standards-based rating scale (S/P/N) Students in Grades 2-5 will continue to receive an overall letter grade for core subject areas
Students' marks are cumulative.	Students' ratings represent the students' progress at the time of the report card
Teachers can select comments	No written comments will be

from a list of prewritten choices.	provided; specific comments about a student will be through direct communication with a teacher and/or at a parent/teacher conference.
Students receive ratings on Social & Behavioral Skills and Work Habits.	Students will continue to receive ratings on the same Social & Behavioral Skills and Work Habits.
Students receive ratings in all core content areas and music, physical education, and art.	Students will continue to receive ratings in all these areas. Ratings in resource classes such as Art, Music, and Physical Education will reflect content knowledge and skills specific to those subject areas.

Q. How will the new standards-based report card make grading and reporting more consistent within and between schools?

One of the goals of a standards-based report card is to provide more grading consistency both within schools and between schools because teachers use expected standards to grade performance. This eliminates the potential for comparisons within a class to determine a grade or rating. Teachers will grade only on the standards he or she teaches during a given grading period and whether or not a student has demonstrated that he or she has learned the standard.

Q. What are the standards on the report card?

These standards are the standards contained in the Commonwealth’s Standard of Learning. Many of the standards have multiple sub-standards and objectives. If GCPS included all standards on the report card, it would be quite lengthy and not user-friendly for parents. Instead, GCPS will report only on the primary standards for each core content area (Mathematics, Science, English, Social Studies) at each grade level.

Q. How will parents know what standards their child is studying during the reporting period?

Teachers communicate what students in their classroom are studying through classroom newsletters, homework lines/emails, websites, and notes to parents. This information may be sent home weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or quarterly.

Q. How much will the change in report cards cost?

GCPS has been upgrading an outdated technology to a new student information system,

PowerSchool, to meet our school system's needs. The elementary report cards will be part of this new system, so there are no direct costs associated with the technology needed for the new report card. There will be some costs for professional development and communication with parents and the community associated with the new report card.

Q. How was GCPS able to fund a change in progress reports during a difficult budget year?

GCPS had already purchased the student information system; the costs associated with this software have already been incurred. The additional implementation costs are necessary to conduct business.

Q. How will elementary schools outside of GCPS know what marking levels mean?

The new report card contains a legend with a definition for each rating. Also, the Reading Assessment Information includes universal reading assessments and terminology that would be helpful to your child's new teacher should they transfer between or out of Gloucester County Schools.

Q. What happens when students go to middle schools?

The transcript of the new report card will be sent to middle schools when students move from elementary to middle. Middle schools are not revising their report cards at this time.

Q. When might my school start using the standards-based progress report?

All schools will begin using the new report card in fall 2011.

Q. Will there be future changes to the elementary report card format?

Changes have been made to the report card based on feedback from teachers and administrators.