For many years, we have used standards based report cards in grades K-8. This fall we are rolling out a revision to our existing standards based report card. This revised report card will better reflect the common core state standards for ELA and mathematics. It will also improve the synchronization with our adopted curriculum in ELA, math, science and social studies. Finally, we will change the marking scale to reflect a 5 point performance level descriptor instead of the existing 4 point scale. This will be done to align with the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) performance level descriptors that were released last summer. (PARCC is a consortium of states that are developing our new K-12 state common assessments.) We see this work as a positive step in better communicating grade-level expectations for student learning.

As we continue to improve teaching and learning for all students, we know that parents and families are our most valuable partner. This is especially true as the District adopts new, more rigorous standards for what every child should know and be able to do in each subject area and grade level. The Common Core State Standards [www.corestandards.org] set high expectations for students, staff, and schools. Achieving these career and college ready standards requires continuous progress monitoring and providing targeted support as needed. Like teachers, parents need accurate and meaningful information--particularly information about student strengths and challenges in performing to high expectations--to better understand and support student learning.

**Components of a Standards-Based System**

- **Standards Based Report Card**
  - allows a teacher to communicate accurately a student’s progress towards meeting content standards at specific points in the school year

- **Content Standards**
  - what a student should know and be able to do at a given grade level

- **Assessments**
  - measure learning and the extent to which a student has met the grade level content standards

- **Standards Based Curriculum**
  - is a roadmap a teacher uses to ensure that instruction targets the content standards
Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are we updating our Standards-based Report Card?
   • Aligning classroom instruction, assessment, and feedback to students and families to rigorous standards is essential to improving teaching and learning. This is particularly true as we begin to roll out new, more challenging Common Core State Standards. The revised, K-8 standards-based report card is only one component in this effort. Other efforts include classroom assessments based on standards, student and parent conferences, and MAP universal screener/benchmark assessments to support more differentiated instruction and identify students for targeted supports. Each of these creates an opportunity for individual and groups of teachers to reflect on student learning and their own practice, and use meaningful, standards-specific feedback to empower students and engage families in monitoring student progress and improving learning.
   • This report card allows Middletown Public Schools 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 updated report card helps our community transition to the Common Core State Standards language and supports student learning.

2. What is a standards based report card and why does Middletown Public Schools use them?
Middletown Public Schools provides grade reports in grades K – 8 each trimester. These grade reports are standards-based report cards. A standards-based report card lists the most important content and skills students should learn in each subject at a particular grade level. These lists were based upon the Rhode Island grade level expectations but have now been updated to reflect the Common Core State Standards.

Instead of letter grades, students receive performance level marks that show how well they have mastered the content and skills. The marks might show whether the student is demonstrating distinguished, strong, moderate, partial or little to no performance at the time of the report card. Students usually get separate marks for effort and work habits, also called learner qualities. These are important for parents to keep tabs on, even if these characteristics aren’t included in the assessment of the student’s academic skills.

On many traditional report cards, students receive one grade for reading, one for math, one for science and so on. On a standards-based report card, each of these subject areas is divided into a list of content and skills that students are responsible for learning. Students receive a separate mark for each standard. The marks on a standards-based report card are different from traditional letter grades. Letter grades are often calculated by combining how well the student met his particular teacher’s expectations, how he performed on assignments and tests, and how much effort the teacher believes he put in. Letter grades do not tell parents which content and skills their children have mastered or whether they are working at grade level. Because one fourth grade teacher might be reviewing reading out loud accurately, while another is teaching reading for comprehension, getting an A in each of these classes would mean very different things. The parent of a child in these classes would not know if the child were learning what he should be to meet the common core state standards.

Standards-based report cards are meant to provide more consistency between teachers than traditional report cards, because all students are evaluated on the same grade-appropriate skills. Parents can see exactly which skills and knowledge their children have learned.

3. Will some groups of students be graded differently on this report card?
Our commitment is to help all children achieve the same high standards, so proficiency levels given on our standards based report card must be based on expectations for that grade level for ALL students (including students with special needs and English Language Learners).

4. Are students with disabilities held to “grade-level” standards on the Report Card?
Yes. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) federal legislation require each state, school district, and school to hold ALL students to grade-level standards. IDEA also dictates that students with disabilities must be taught the grade-level curriculum.

5. How will students receiving special education services be graded?
Each special education student receives a standards-based report card that reflects his or her progress toward meeting each of the Common Core State Standards. Additionally, and in compliance with the law, documentation of progress specific to IEP goals and objectives will be reported to parents on IEP progress reports.

6. What are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?
The CCSS are a set of internationally benchmarked K-12 educational standards to ensure every students’ college and career readiness in English language arts and mathematics. These standards increase rigor in every school, and provide clarity and consistency for what all students need to know once they graduate from high school. To date, 45 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, American Samoan Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands and the Anchorage, AK School District have voluntarily adopted CCSS. Additional information can be found online www.corestandards.org.

7. Where can I learn more about the CCSS?
The National PTA website has parent guidance on the Common Core State Standards (www.pta.org). Information on the CCSS by grade level can be downloaded here: http://pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583 We also provide information on our website http://www.mpsri.net/sbreportcard
8. What is PARCC?
The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a consortium of 18 states plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands working together to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English and math anchored in what it takes to be ready for college and careers. These new K-12 assessments will build a pathway to college and career readiness by the end of high school, mark students’ progress toward this goal from elementary school up, and provide teachers with timely information to inform instruction and provide student support. The PARCC assessments will be ready for states to administer during the 2014-15 school year. In Rhode Island, PARCC will replace our NECAP state assessment. www.parcconline.org

9. What are performance levels?
Performance levels, sometimes referred to as “achievement levels”, are the broad, categorical levels used to report student performance. 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.

10. Why were five performance levels chosen?
PARCC (Partnership for Readiness of College and Careers) adopted five performance levels for reporting results on the assessments for a number of reasons:
• PARCC assessments will include a sufficient number of score points to support the accurate classification of student performance into five levels;
• Five levels will help provide better information across the full range of student performance, particularly for low-performing and high-performing students;
• Five levels will help schools better target assistance to students;
• Five levels will provide states with options for using performance levels with greater precision in various accountability mechanisms and decisions; and
• Five levels will provide increased opportunities for students, schools and districts to demonstrate growth.

Students who perform at Level 4 will have earned the College and Career-Ready Determination.

11. How will teachers determine each student’s performance level?
Teachers will use a variety of measures to determine performance levels, including criterion-referenced tests, norm-referenced tests, progress monitoring probes, common assessments, rubrics, class work, homework, tests, and participation in class. These same measures will be used to show progress when additional interventions have taken place.

12. Will teachers still “give” numerical grades?
Teachers will use a variety of methods to provide feedback to students. Some teachers will still give students numerical or letter grades on some of the work students complete. Teachers will also use pre-determined scoring guides to measure student performance. In addition, teachers and students will review performance rubrics before beginning certain tasks, especially projects. Feedback to students can and should be in many forms.

Standards-based report cards are meant to provide more consistency between teachers than traditional report cards, because all students are evaluated on the same grade-appropriate skills. Parents can see exactly which skills and knowledge their children have learned.

13. What is the difference between distinguished(5) and strong(4)?
in reading and writing:
A student that is distinguished would demonstrate full comprehension of the range of literature and informational text, highly effective writing and command of conventions, consistently solving problems, have a highly effective ability to build and present knowledge through integration, comparison and synthesis of ideas.

A student is strong would demonstrate extensive comprehension of the range of complex text of literature and informational text, effective writing and command of conventions, and an effective ability to build and present knowledge through integration, comparison and synthesis of complex ideas.

In mathematics:
A student that is distinguished would consistently solve problems correctly, almost always express mathematical reasoning by constructing viable arguments, critiquing the reasoning of others and/or attending to the precision when making mathematical statements, consistently solve real world problems correctly, and show strong fluency.

A student that is strong would frequently solve problems correctly, almost always express mathematical reasoning by constructing viable arguments, critiquing the reasoning of others and/or attending to the precision when making mathematical statements, frequently solve real world problems correctly, and show frequent fluency.


14. How frequently will report cards be distributed?
The timeline for receiving report cards follows a trimester timeline. The standards based report card will be distributed three times a year. Each marking period is approximately 13 weeks long. The dates of the marking periods are indicated on the district calendar.

15. How can I learn more about the Middletown Standards Based Curriculum?
All curriculum information is available on our website. Please visit www.mpsri.net/mpscurriculum. You can also contact your child’s principal and/or teacher.
More About Our New PERFORMANCE LEVELS

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.

- **Level 5 - Distinguished Command**
  - Students at this level demonstrate a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of rigorous subject matter and provide sophisticated solutions to complex problems.
  - Student performance demonstrates a thorough understanding of the knowledge and skills expected at this grade level.
  - Student demonstrates a deeper understanding of grade level standards.
  - Student consistently and comprehensively applies knowledge with purpose and control.
  - Student may perform beyond the grade level standard.

- **Level 4 - Strong Command (Secure)**
  - Students at this level demonstrate a solid understanding of challenging subject matter and solve a wide variety of problems.
  - Student performance demonstrates a strong understanding of the knowledge and skills expected at this grade level.
  - Student demonstrates effective application of skills.

- **Level 3 - Moderate Command (Developing)**
  - Students at this level are progressing towards mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work.
  - Student performance demonstrates a moderate understanding of the knowledge and skills expected at this grade level.
  - Student is progressing in understanding, however, the grade level skills and concepts are not yet mastered.

- **Level 2 - Partial Command (Beginning)**
  - Students at this level demonstrate limited knowledge and skills in the subject matter and limited ability to apply knowledge and skills effectively.
  - Student performance demonstrates partial understanding of the knowledge or skills expected at this grade level.
  - Student needs continued support; struggles even with assistance.
  - Student needs intervention.

- **Level 1 - Little to No Command**

Important Links

- [www.mpsri.net/sbreportcard](http://www.mpsri.net/sbreportcard)
- [www.mpsri.net/mpscurriculum](http://www.mpsri.net/mpscurriculum)
- [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)
- [www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org)
- [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)