



TO: Parents/Families of K-5 Students  
FROM: Daryl Campbell, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
RE: The 2019-2020 K-5 Report Card  
DATE: November 4, 2019

Dear Parents/Families,

The purpose of this document is two-fold: 1) to provide an overview of standards-based grading and 2) to answer frequently asked questions related to report cards – our formal, district-wide structure to communicate information about your child’s progress as a learner.

As students, most, if not all, of us likely experienced assessment-based grading. Throughout the grading period, we completed work (i.e., homework, assignments, quizzes, tests, and projects) that was graded, and at the end of the grading period, the teacher averaged all of the scores to report a single grade for the term/quarter/semester/course. Perhaps the grade was raised or lowered based on effort. An assessment-based grading system like this, however, does not accurately communicate a learner’s progress toward mastering a standard\* or a set of standards because the grade does not clearly indicate areas of strength and growth areas for specific standards. In addition, if effort is used to raise or lower a grade, the grade reported as academic achievement does not only reflect academic achievement because learner behaviors (e.g., effort) are part of the grade.

Unlike an assessment-based grading system, the standards-based grading system we use in City Schools of Decatur is designed to provide information about a student’s progress toward a set of standards in specific academic domains (e.g., “Operations and Algebraic Thinking” in mathematics) at a particular point in the school year.\*\* By reporting progress in this way, the student, family, and teacher can identify the students’ areas of strength and the growth areas that need more attention. Because we also recognize the importance of learner behaviors, we identify them (*Habits of Scholarship* for grades K-2 and the *International Baccalaureate Learner Profile* for grades 3 - 5) and report progress on the learner behaviors separately from the academic domains.

With this overview of our standards-based grading system in CSD and with an explanation of why we use this system, please explore the frequently asked questions below. If additional questions surface for you, please connect with your child’s teacher.

I wish everyone a year of meaningful learning and growth!

Sincerely,

Daryl Campbell  
Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
City Schools of Decatur

\* A standard defines what a student should know and be able to do by the end of the grade. The complete set of the Georgia Standards of Excellence can be found at [georgiastandards.org](http://georgiastandards.org) and is organized by subject/content area.

\*\*All academic domains are not assessed for each report card. Items that are left blank or that have an N/A reflect that they were not assessed during that grading period.

### Frequently Asked Questions for the K-5 Report Card

**1. Which sections of the report card give a number and which sections give a letter?**

- Performance levels for academic domains are indicated numerically with a 1-4 scale (Please see question #3 below for a detailed explanation of the numbers.)
- Performance levels for Specials (Spanish, Art, Music, and Physical Education) and Behaviors Promoting Learning are scored with letters: Emerging (E), Developing (D), Meeting (M), or Strength (S). (Please see questions #4 and #5 for a detailed explanation of the letters.)

**2. What is an academic domain?**

An academic domain refers to the content focus under a specific subject (i.e., mathematics, reading, science, etc.). For example, mathematics contains the following academic domains: Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Numbers and Operations in Base Ten, Measurement and Data, and Geometry. Rather than your child receiving an overall score in mathematics, teachers provide a score for the domain focus for that grading period -- a score that reflects the student's level of mastery for the standards in that academic domain.

**3. What does the number my child receives in an academic domain indicate about their learning?**

| Score | 4  | 3  | 2   | 1   | N/A  |
|-------|--|--|---|---|--|
|       | <b>Exceeds standards</b>   | <b>Meets standards</b>   | <b>Approaching standards</b>  | <b>Does not yet meet standards</b>  | <b>Not assessed</b>  |
|       | The student is able to work beyond what the grade-level standards require. | The student is consistently able to independently show understanding of the grade-level standards.<br><br><b>Scoring a 3 reflects that the student has met grade-level expectations.</b> | The student can show understanding of grade-level standards with support and/or inconsistently is able to show understanding independently. | With support, the student is not yet able to show understanding of grade-level standards. | The domain/standards are not assessed in the current period but will be assessed in other grading periods throughout the year. |

Scores for each academic domain are based upon student performance on formative and summative assessments within the grading period. Rubrics, student conferences, and performance tasks\* are used to assess students throughout each grading period. The grade on the report card is not an average of scores, rather an indicator of where your child is performing at that point in time given the expectation at that time. The goal of standards-based grading is to show growth throughout the year. A student performing at a level 3 indicates the student has mastered the grade-level standard *independently*. Students performing at a level 4 indicates the student has *exceeded grade-level standards*. Scoring a 4 is not the expectation; scoring a 3 is the expectation.

*\*A performance task is a learning activity or assessment that asks students to perform in order to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and proficiency on a standard.*

**4. What is the meaning of Performance Levels for Behaviors Promoting Learning and Specials for grades K-2?**

S(trength): The student is consistently able to *independently model* behavior expectations.

M(eeting): The student is consistently able to *independently follow* behavior expectations.

D(eveloping): The student *inconsistently follows* behavior expectations *with support*.

E(merging): The student *does not yet follow* behavior expectations *with support*.

**5. What is the meaning of Performance Levels for Behaviors Promoting Learning and Specials for grades 3-5?**

S(trength): The student is *consistently* able to *independently follow* behavior expectations.

D(eveloping) The student *inconsistently follows* behavior expectations *with support*.

E(merging): The student *does not yet follow* behavior expectations *with support*.