

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the New Standards-Based Report Card

1. Will the new report card be implemented at middle school or high school? If so, how will it impact my child's college applications?

At this time, there are no plans to change the grading scales in middle school or high school. Beginning in 2005, secondary schools implemented some grading changes related to topics such as the academic meaning of the grade, homework for practice, and the use of zeros.

2. Why did the elementary grading scale change?

MCPS has determined that using a standards-based report card is the best tool for reflecting student achievement on the standards-based curriculum. Many districts throughout the United States are moving to a similar standards-based report card. Here in Montgomery County, we have piloted the standards-based report cards with 25 elementary schools since 2003 and have made a number of upgrades and revisions based on feedback from parents, teachers, and administrators.

3. Why aren't there comments anymore?

This report card provides a great deal of specific information related to an individual child's progress. Due to this specificity, the decision was made not to require additional comments.

4. How are grades determined?

Data is collected on student's understanding of the content within a Measurement Topic in a variety of ways. Data is collected in multiple and varied ways, including anecdotal notes, discussions, and demonstrations, as well as written products.

5. How are the grades calculated?

The report card grade for a Measurement Topic is determined by averaging the assignment and assessment scores that have been entered for that Measurement Topic. If a student does not have adequate data to determine an overall grade, the student may receive a score of an M for missing assignments.

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/info/grading/GradingReportingRecommendations.pdf>

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6. What happens if I can't remember all of this when I get home and have to explain the report card to my spouse?

The *How to Read My Child's Report Card* document is a resource to explain the components of the new report card. Both the report card and the *How to Read* document have also been translated into five additional languages. The Curriculum 2.0 website (<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/2.0/>) includes a variety of sources of information about the curriculum, including a link to additional information about the report card. Using that link, you will find the report cards and the *How to Read My Child's Report Card* documents (available in six languages), as well as a short video (available in English and in Spanish) explaining the new report card.

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/grading/report-cards.aspx>

7. How do I know what is being taught in each Measurement Topic?

The *A Parent's Guide to Grade* booklet (<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/elementary/guides.aspx>) is a great resource to help you get a general sense of the content being taught each marking period for the Measurement Topics within a content area. In addition, each grade-level distributes a monthly newsletter highlighting the key measurement topics for each subject. Monthly newsletters are available at: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/2.0/parent-newsletters.aspx>

8. Where can I go for more information?

One great source of information is the Curriculum 2.0 website. You can access it by searching "Curriculum 2.0" from the MCPS homepage. The Curriculum 2.0 website includes a variety of sources of information about the curriculum, including a link to additional information about the report card. Using that link, you will find the report cards and the *How to Read My Child's Report Card* documents (available in six languages), as well as a short video explaining the new report card (available in English and in Spanish). <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/2.0/> or <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/grading/report-cards.aspx>

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9. How do you know if my child's work is proficient?

Instruction is based on the curriculum. The curriculum is based on standards, which are consistent from class to class and school to school, hence making it a standards-based system. Teachers use the curriculum to determine exactly what instruction their students need on the content for a particular day. The teachers then use the standards in the curriculum to define proficiency. For example, in grade 3 social studies, students are expected to “identify and describe the location of major cities in Maryland.” A teacher would assess whether or not the student was proficient with this, based on the student response.

10. How does my child earn an ES?

ES means “exceptional at the grade level standard.” Students do not need to be working “above grade level” to earn an ES. During both instruction and assessment, the teacher provides opportunities for students to demonstrate this exceptional understanding. As the teacher is assessing whether or not a student is proficient with a given concept, the teacher often asks the student to explain his/her thinking. Being able to do this is expected for a student to be proficient (or score a P). However, it is through these explanations that students may demonstrate an exceptional understanding (or score a ES). In other words, though a student may do something unexpected to score an ES, the teacher is also providing opportunities during instruction. Often, these opportunities are when the students explain their thinking, either verbally or in writing.

11. How do I work with my child at home to earn an ES score?

The rigorous instruction that is provided involves many opportunities for students to think critically about what they have learned. Answering critical thinking questions (whether orally or in writing) is expected of all students to demonstrate proficiency, but they also provide great opportunities for students to demonstrate exceptional understanding. Asking students critical thinking questions (such as to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, or justify), in relation to books they read as well as to any conversations you have with them, will help them to be more skilled at that kind of thinking as they work on it during instruction in various content areas.

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12. How do I interpret the reading graph?

The reading graph shows the level at which a student is reading on a regular basis in their small group guided reading. The shaded areas on the graph above indicate the expected reading ranges by book level at the end of each marking period for Grades K-3. A dot indicates your child's reading level at the end of a marking period. If your child's dot is within the shaded box, your child is reading at the marking period target. If your child's dot is above the shaded box, your child is reading above the marking period target. If your child's dot is below the shaded box, your child is reading below the marking period target. <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/info/grading/EndOfYearReading-ParentGuide.pdf>

13. What does the reading chart (on my 3rd grader's report card) mean?

The reading chart provides information about a student's instruction reading level, or the level of text that a student is working with on a daily basis during reading instruction. There are targets for students' reading level for each marking period. If your child is reading below the target, there will be an X in the "approaching target" box. If your child is reading at the target level, there will be an X in the "meeting target" box. If your child is reading above the target, there will be an X in the "exceeding target" box.

14. Why didn't my child get an ES if he/she is above the marking period target in reading?

A student who is reading above the marking period target is evaluated on his/her understanding of the grade-level reading content taught in the lesson. However, since the student is using higher level text, it may still be challenging to demonstrate grade level content understanding. While it is possible that your child would score an ES, it is not automatic. In fact, your child might score an ES, P, I, or N using above level text.

15. Why is my child marked below-grade-level if he/she is earning Ps?

A student who is reading below the marking period target is evaluated on his/her understanding of the grade-level reading content taught in the lesson. The student may be proficient with demonstrating his/her understanding using text at that their level. However, that level of text is still below the target for the marking period.

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16. What does the math statement mean? I thought that there was no more acceleration.

The statement was created as a way to communicate to parents whether their child was regularly receiving enrichment and/or acceleration with the grade-level curriculum. If your child receives acceleration or enrichment, his/her Measurement Topic scores reflect that instruction.

17. Why didn't my child receive the statement saying that he/she received acceleration?

The statement indicates that a student consistently received enrichment or acceleration throughout the marking period.

18. How do you determine the grades for the Thinking and Academic Success Skills?

Through the marking period, I collect data on how the students are demonstrating the two Thinking and Academic Success Skills that are the focus for that marking period. This data is collected in authentic situations as students are working on the content in that subject. Student progress with the Thinking and Academic Success Skills is reported using the terms Demonstrating (DEM), Progressing (PRG), and Not Yet Evident (N) to convey how the students are progressing with demonstrating the skills.

19. How do you expect my kindergartener to show metacognition?

Each Thinking and Academic Success Skill has specific indicators that are used as teachers instruct and evaluate it at a particular grade level. For example, at kindergarten, the two indicators are "Examine one's own thoughts and ideas to identify background knowledge" and "Explain thinking processes". The curriculum that marking period is integrated around the skill of metacognition, and there is specific instruction for students in this area. Teachers are given support with how to instruct and evaluate metacognition with the various subject areas.