“Why...would anyone want to change current grading practices?

The answer is quite simple: grades are so imprecise that they are almost meaningless.”

-Robert Marzano

Part I Standards-Based Reporting Overview
Part II Standards-Based Reporting Research
Part III Standards-Based Reporting System
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PART I - Standards-Based Reporting Overview

What is a Standard?

A standard is a statement identifying what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Learning Standards for each content area subject and grade level are identified through the Pennsylvania Core Standards and the Saucon Valley School District Curriculum. The standards describe a continuum of skill levels throughout each grade. Pennsylvania Common Core Standards can be viewed at: www.pdesas.org/Standard/PACore

What is Standards-Based Instruction?

In a standards-based classroom, student focus is on true mastery of skills and content. Teachers plan and implement lessons based on standards that every student must learn. Instruction is aligned to the standards in all content areas. Teachers will present “learning targets” leading students to the goals they must meet for mastery. Learning targets are clear and students must be aware of the targeted outcomes for lessons. Based upon student need for differentiation, teachers will provide multiple opportunities for students to meet learning targets over the course of instructional time.

What is the purpose of Standards-Based Reporting?

The purpose of a Standards-Based Reporting system is to provide detailed feedback to parents, students, and teachers regarding the progress being made toward specific learning standards at a given grade level. A standards-based report provides parents and students with a clearer understanding of what is expected in school and how to partner with them to achieve maximum success.

“Students can hit any target that they can see and doesn’t move.”

--Rick Stiggins
How does a standards-based system differ from a letter grade system?

Traditional letter grades typically include a combination of three elements: academic achievement based upon student work exhibits or products, the process or development of work habits, and the level of progress. The combination of these three elements makes letter grades subjective and less accurate in conveying students’ achievement in the elementary grades.

The standards-based system measures how well individual students are doing solely in relation to identified standards. This information provides parents, teachers, and students an understanding of what an individual student has mastered and what they need to continue to work toward learning. Standards identify students’ specific strengths and weaknesses providing information to help generate a plan for continued growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards-Based Grading</th>
<th>Traditional Grading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Only achievement or learning evidence related to the standards is assessed</td>
<td>• Grades are a combination of achievement, attitude, effort, and behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual performance in comparison to the standard is assessed</td>
<td>• Grades may include a combination of individual performance and group grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Uses assessments aligned to standards-based learning targets that are specific to a grade level</td>
<td>• Variation in assessment quality; assessments do not align directly to the Common Core standards for the grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning expectations, targets, objectives are communicated to students prior to instruction and evaluation</td>
<td>• Students are unfamiliar with the learning targets to be assessed or what mastery looks like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment methods are concrete and reflect student performance toward the standard</td>
<td>• Students are unsure about grading measures. Rubrics are not provided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are the benefits of a standards-based system?

1. Based upon recognized standards for learning (PA Common Core).
2. Defines the knowledge and skills students should master at each grade level.
3. Establishes clear learning goals for each school year.
4. Promotes consistent communication among teachers.
5. Uses a common language for instruction across all grade levels.
6. Identifies learning patterns and trends over the course of a student’s elementary school career.
7. Supports current educational and learning-based research.

“If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort and keep on learning.”

--Carol Dweck
Why should the Saucon Valley School District move to a standards-based reporting system?

The change to a Standards-Based reporting system comes from the belief that our previous report card and reporting system did not fully communicate what students are expected to know and be able to do as set forth in the state and national standards. This new reporting system will benefit students, teachers and families. It will allow students to be more aware of what is expected of them. It will provide families with a more detailed outline of the expectations in each of the major academic areas. We believe that your understanding of what is expected of your child and how well he or she is progressing towards the goals at his or her grade level is very important and that the standards-based reporting system will assist in this endeavor.

What Principles guide Standards-Based Progress Reporting?

- The Pennsylvania Common Core State Standards describe what a student should know and be able to do at a given grade level.
- Quality assessments and learning tasks are aligned to the standards.
- Clearly designed teacher rubrics are presented in advance of evaluation to ensure that students understand what is expected to perform at a proficient level.
- Student progress is reported to both students and parents regularly to communicate movement towards achieving the standards. The Progress Report document is not the single method of reporting student progress.
- Standards-based instruction, grading, and reporting should be clear and meaningful to all stakeholders involved---including student and parents.
- Grading should reflect academic standards. Grades should be a direct reflection of what students know and are able to do based upon a given standard.
- Learning behaviors are essential to understanding the progress of the whole student. These behaviors should be reported separately from academic grades. Effort, compliance to school or classroom rules, social interactions, etc. should be reported within the Learning Behaviors segment of the Progress Report.
- Progress reporting in the related arts provides a continued view to whole student development and focus on content, affinity and effort.
How will teachers evaluate student achievement over the course of an academic quarter?

Within standards based classrooms, student performance is evaluated on a continual basis. Progress is monitored through observation, work products, and assessments including, but not limited to, portfolios, unit tests, discussions, projects, district assessments, presentations, and daily work. Teachers measure learning against standards and then use these measures to guide and direct subsequent instruction. This on-going cycle of teaching and assessing allows students to move along a natural continuum of learning including challenges or additional supports.

Are neighboring school districts successfully using a standards-based model?

Yes. Many school districts in our area, as well as across the country, have made the switch to a standards-based grading system. This movement is well documented within years of nationwide research.

How will a standards-based reporting system motivate my student?

Standards-based reporting systems provide students with opportunities to take personal responsibility and satisfaction in their learning. As a student becomes involved in the learning process, knowing their own strengths and needs, the students can work with teachers and parents to set and meet meaningful goals and ultimately experience success.

As students continue to gain understanding of a standards-based reporting process, they will gain a clearer insight into their learning style and needs. This insight will set them up for future success as they move to middle school and beyond.
PART III - Standards-Based Reporting System

What can I expect to see on my student’s progress report?

Standards-based progress reports provide a level of proficiency on specific standards for each subject area. Each subject is further broken down into a list of competencies that students need to master. Scores are derived from student work products. Each listed competency receives its own score. Student mastery is based upon multiple sources of evidence. Reporting will be based upon clearly specified learning goals and performance standards identified in rubric statements. Rubric statements will be provided in each content area per competency statement per quarter. Rubric statements will accompany student work samples throughout the quarters supporting knowledge of expectations for proficiency levels.

How frequently will the Progress Report be shared?

Quarterly

What will student grades look like on the new Standards-Based Progress Report?

Three Categories:

1. Academic Success Standards-Noted academic progress and development
2. Characteristics of a Successful Learner-Observable conduct, effort and skills
3. Competency in the Related Arts

Category 1

Progress Report grades for academic subject areas will reflect a student’s performance toward standards not a numerical comparison to other students. There will be four levels defining movement toward mastery:

- 4---Student work demonstrates **consistent, accurate and independent** achievement **above and beyond** grade level standards, (Including Concepts, Thinking Skills, Processes); students are able to apply their learning across content areas and in new and creative ways. The student challenges him or herself to think deeply and make connections. Student work consistently exceeds standard expectations.
- 3---Student work demonstrates **consistent** achievement **with minimal support on or at** grade level standards, (Including Concepts, Thinking Skills, Processes); proficient or meets standard and grade level expectations. A student receiving a 3 is right on track with our academic standards.
• 2---Student work is not demonstrating the minimum standard level with additional support expected for the grade level, (Including Concepts, Thinking Skills, Processes); approaching the standard.
• 1---Student work demonstrates little evidence of knowledge and skill requiring additional teacher time and support for the grade level, (Including Concepts, Thinking Skills, Processes); below standard expectations.
• “X” Areas-Skills are not assessed at this time. While some learning standards will be assessed throughout the school year, others will be phased in as the year progresses.

Student grades for academic achievement in all subject areas will reflect an accurate evaluation of what knowledge a student demonstrates over the course of a marking period using a variety of measures. Standards-based evaluation focuses on what a student knows - not how long it may have taken to them to get there.

Students are evaluated on the development of the skills and knowledge needed to show mastery of the standard. Mastery is measured by what they know and can do, rather than their completion of tasks. (Task completion will be rated within the Characteristics of a Successful Learner portion of the Progress Report.)

Example of A Standards-Based Quarterly Report in English Language Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Language Arts</th>
<th>MP1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundational Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands Concepts of Print</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates Phonological Awareness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applies Phonics and Word Recognition Skills</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads with Fluency to Support Comprehension of Grade Level Texts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Informational Text</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies Key Ideas and Details</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzes Author’s Craft and Structure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrates Knowledge and Ideas from Text</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquires and uses Vocabulary to Support Comprehension of Grade Level Text</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the goal area of Foundational Skills, this student clearly demonstrates standards achievement in the competencies relating to the identification of key features of a text and sounds. An area for continued concentration would be the application of sounds in grade level reading materials to support student understanding of written text. Within the goal area of Reading Informational Text, the student can identify key points in a text but needs to develop additional strategies to support reading comprehension.
**Category 2**

How will student Learning Behaviors be reported?

We understand students vary in their interest and focus of a particular subject. To provide specific information, student effort will be rated in each content and related arts area per quarter. This information may prove very helpful to pinpoint strengths and needs and support student growth.

Student Learning Behaviors and skills will be rated quarterly within three (3) categories: **Responsibility, Respect** and **Safety**. Students will be rated as either **Proficient (P)** or **Improvement Needed (N)**.

**Category 3**

Will my student be evaluated in the Encore Areas?

Yes. The study of the related arts is key in the development of the whole child allowing for the acquisition of technical and artistic knowledge and skills necessary for creative, expressive and artistic production. Student progress in the related arts of Art, Health and Physical Education, Library and Music will be reported quarterly as **Meeting (√)** or **Approaching (-)**.
How do teachers assess student mastery?

Standards require students to understand more than just identified facts. Students must understand the concepts and demonstrate that understanding using the skills while learning the content. Teachers determine when a student achieves mastery by that student’s performance on multiple, varied assignments and assessments using concrete indicators known as ‘Rubrics’.

There are so many standards in the competency statements on the Standards-based Progress Report. Does my student need to meet them all?

Many of the competency statements combine several instructional standards. For example, a Standards-Based Progress Report competency statement may represent multiple instructional standards. Before the student can receive a “3”, all of the instructional standards within the competency statement need to be met with proficiency. Think of it this way---picture a student seeking to become an airline pilot. This student may pass assessments for taking-off, flying and navigation, but if the student pilot has not been taught and/or has not yet mastered landing, that student pilot would not be considered proficient and would not receive his/her license.

Is the Standards-Based grading-4, 3, 2, 1 equivalent to traditional letter grading?

The 4, 3, 2, 1 Standards-Based scale is not synonymous with the A, B, C, D traditional grading scale. A “4” is not equal to an A. Grades and proficiency levels do not correlate with each other. Traditional grading systems average academic and non-academic factors over a marking period. Standards-Based grading measures student knowledge over time by reporting the most recent, consistent level of performance. Many times a student may struggle when a new concept is first introduced, but then after practice, the student is able to demonstrate a proficient level of performance by the end of the marking period or school year.

Is student behavioral progress assessed with achievement progress?

Effort and work habits are equally as important as academic learning. Within this document, achievement is reported through the Characteristics of a Successful Learner Tool. Observable behaviors, such as effort, attitude, collegiality, organization, and perseverance are documented separately. Student work habits may also be communicated separately by your student’s teachers as needed.
How do parents explain to their student why he/she has not received a 4?

Learning is a lifelong process. Many skills are at varying difficulty levels for mastery. This being said, given time, guidance, and motivation students can continually challenge themselves. While learning a new concept, a score of “2” (Approaching the Standard) is appropriate. A score of “3” (Meeting the Standard) is to be celebrated. A score of “4” (Exceeding the Standard) indicates a student skill set that has gone beyond the grade level expectations at the time of score reporting.

Is “Exceeding “ the standard equivalent to receiving an “A”?

Exceeding the standard is not the equivalent of an “A” on a traditional report card. For example, if a student in a traditional grading system received A’s on every math test during the marking period; he or she would probably receive an A on a traditional report card. If those math tests measured only the concepts that student is expected to master for that grade level, those A’s would be the equivalent of meeting the standard and a “3” on a Standards-Based report card; the student is doing what he or she should be doing very well, but not necessarily able to create new learning above their current grade level across content areas.

While measuring progress toward a grade level standard, can a score ever “go down”?

Yes. Student skills are expected to develop in sophistication and depth over the course of a school year. As concepts grow in complexity, expectations and evaluations also increase in complexity.

Consider this hypothetical example: In First Grade Mathematics, students might be assessed on their ability to “Count by 2s”. During the first marking period, they are expected to count by 2s to 20 to meet proficiency, but by the end of the school year, they are expected to count by 2s to 100. After the first quarter, the student is “Meeting the Standard”. As the school year continues and skill demands increase, the student’s abilities must consistently improve to maintain that “Meeting the Standard” mark.

If a “3” is the target for proficiency, is it possible for my student to achieve a grade of “4”?

Yes. However, a score of “4” indicates performance that is consistently above what is expected for mastery at that point in the school year/marking period. Level 4 work would indicate a much deeper understanding of a standard, the ability to apply that knowledge in different content areas, make connections and extend learning beyond the targeted goal independently of teacher instruction.
How will standards-based teaching, learning and assessing continue to challenge a student who is academically strong and in need of continued challenge?

In the classroom, our teachers have always been and will always continue to be focused on challenging students who are achieving grade level standards. Differentiation of instruction is routinely used by teachers to meet and extend student learning strengths and needs. In addition to differentiation, ongoing assessment of student achievement will continue to provide current input of student strengths and needs for teachers to modify instruction. To this end, these tools will further support teacher ability to identify who has mastered the standards and who needs additional instruction and interventions.

If a student is being accelerated in any grade level/subject area with above grade level standards or materials, is that student required to get a “4” on his/her report card?

By definition, level “4” work reflects higher order thinking, application, synthesis, connection and extension of targeted goals. While being instructed above grade level is not required in order to achieve a “4”, students who are taught above grade level have consistently shown mastery of a subject at their current grade level. Achieving a “4” does not preclude a teacher from suggesting areas for improvement. Receiving a “4” does not guarantee that a student’s performance would remain at that level across all marking periods, or for all course standards.

How will a standards-based reporting system affect a student with an IEP?

Learning standards for all students remains consistent. However, students with Individualized Education Plans may have specific goals, accommodations and modifications that enable them to meet the standards. Students with IEPs will receive quarterly feedback on their own specific learning goals through the IEP document. All other reporting will be conveyed through the standards-based progress report.

How will a standards-based reporting system affect a student with a GIEP?

Students identified as gifted learners will continue to receive services through their GIEPs in accordance with Chapter 16 regulations. Students with GIEPS will continue to receive quarterly feedback on their identified learning goals and objectives through their designated case manager. The case manager and classroom teachers may collaborate regarding student progress and progress reporting in relation to grade and content area standards as needed.

How will a standards-based reporting system affect English Language Learners?

English Language Learners come to our community with a variety of educational backgrounds and require a variety of supports to access the curriculum standards. At
times, the educational program for an ELL student may be adjusted to enable the student to acquire more academic vocabulary and if the standards are modified, this is described on the supplemental progress report that accompanies the progress report.

Why are areas marked “X” during a particular marking period of the school year?

Shaded or non-graded areas on the Standards Based Progress Report indicate that the concept/skill set identified within that competency area is not being formally assessed during this marking period.

Why are there multiple competency statements under each subject?

By providing more specific descriptions of the learning expectations within each content area, students and parents can see where performance is proficient and where additional practice may be needed.

Since the standards are end-of-year expectation, how can my child get a 3 (meets the standard) in the first, second or third quarter?

The standards are end of year expectations but we have broken each standard down into quarters, the expectation at the end of the first quarter (i.e., quarter one rubrics), the expectation at the end of the second quarter (i.e., quarter two rubrics), the expectation at the end of the third quarter (i.e., third quarter rubrics) and the end-of-year expectations (i.e., standard).

What if students meet the standard before the end of the year?

If a student shows early mastery of fundamental skills and concepts in a particular standard, the teaching and learning does not stop. The students who have met the standard can concentrate on more challenging work.

“If we always do what we’ve always done, we will get what we’ve always got.”

--Adam Urbanski
PART V - The Implementation Process of Standards-Based Reporting

Who will use the SVSD standards-based reporting system and when will it be used?

The Saucon Valley School District Standards-Based Reporting System is designed for the elementary school, grades K-4 only. This system will be employed beginning fall of 2016.

PART VI - The Development Process of a Standards-Based Reporting System

After presentation to the Superintendent and Saucon Valley Board of School Directors, a Core Team worked together beginning in the summer of 2015, to research and draft our new reporting system. Parents, Teachers, administrators and pilot families conducted a pilot of the document during the second semester of the 2015-2016 school year. Constructive feedback during multiple phases of document development. Proposed recommendations were incorporated throughout this process. As full implementation begins in the Fall of 2016, feedback will continually be welcomed as we strive to create the most functional and effective communication tool for the Saucon Valley learning community.

What are grade level standards based upon?

The following standards documents provided the basis for Progress Report language:

www.corestandards.org

www.pdesas.org/Standard/PACore

National Standards for Arts Education

National Standards for Music Education

National Association of Sport and Physical Education

National Health Education Standards

American Association of School Librarians
How were the rating scales developed?

The rating scales/rubrics were developed by Saucon Valley teachers and administrators after considering classroom practice, examples from other school districts, phases of child development and beliefs about communicating student progress. Academic Standards, Behavioral Standards and Achievement in Related Arts classes comprise our rating scales. Academic standards rate student achievement, behavioral standards rate learning behaviors and standards in the Encore areas.

How were the Encore Subject sections developed?

Encore subject teachers from across the district in Music, Art, Health and Physical Education and Library worked to develop specific sections of the progress report. In each case, they based the language of the progress report on nationally recognized standards documents from their professional associations.