
MEREDITH HILL MESSENGER

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A, B, C Redefined: Parents' Report Card Questions Answered

First semester report cards will be sent home with students in grades K-5 on Feb. 7. This is the third year that Federal Way's elementary schools have used this updated standards-based report card. Following are eight questions and answers that parents need to know in order to understand their child's report card. As you will see, grades don't carry the same meaning today that they did when we were in school!

Q: What is the main purpose of the report card?

A: Its main job is to inform parents of their children's progress toward meeting state standards for their grade level. This is a big change from report cards of 10 or 20 years ago. More often than not, former report cards showed a child's achievement compared with other students in the class, and grades were strongly influenced by a student's efforts. The current report card shows progress toward meeting "grade level expectations," which are the standards for every child in the state.

Q: Who created the standards for the State of Washington?

A: Washington is one of 49 states in the country to adopt a standards-based K-12 education system. In 1993, the Washington State Legislature outlined a process for setting achievement standards for K-12 students, and for measuring students' success in meeting them. The grade level expectations (GLEs) describe what students should know and be able to do. They also form the basis of what teachers teach at each grade level. (For a complete list of the GLEs for your child's grade level, contact the school office, or visit this website www.k12.wa.us and look under "Curriculum and Instruction.")

Q: How can parents know if their children are meeting the standards?

A: First, they can look at results of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), given each spring. Last year the test was expanded to cover grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and high school. Beginning in 2008, students must pass the high school WASL in order to graduate. Second, parents should look at their child's report card. The report card grades for K-2 and 3-5 describe each child's progress toward meeting the state standards:

Two Models:	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Below Standard
K-2 Report Card "Scale Model"	E	M	A	B
3-5 Report Card "Grade Model" (Or schools may adopt the "Scale Model" for Gr. 3-5)	A, A-, B+	B, B-, C+, C, C-	D+, D, D-	F+, F

Q: Isn't it confusing for kids and parents that "A" and "B" report "approaching" and "below" standard for students in grades K-2, but when you get to grades 3-5, these same grades stand for "exceeding" and "meeting" standard?

A: Yes. This is a possible area of confusion with the current reporting system. Pay close attention to the "key" for your child's report card, so you can understand each mark.

Q: Aren't D's and F's a harsh way to report progress that is "approaching" or "below" the standard for students in gr. 3-5 if they are doing their best?

A: Yes, this is a big change in the current reporting system. When we were in school, D's and F's were often associated with poor effort or poor work habits. Now for students in grades 3-5, they simply attempt to communicate how far a student is from meeting the grade level standard. Two groups of students are not graded in this format. Students who qualify for help through special education receive individualized reports on their specific learning goals. And students in our English Second Language (ESL) program receive a separate report in reading and writing which does not involve letter grades. Also, a number of schools have adopted the "scale version" of the report card for their 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students.

Q: What if I prefer the "scale model" or the "grade model?"

A. That's not a problem. Parents can request that their student's report card is printed in either the "Scale Model" (E, M, A, B) or the "Grade Model" (A, B, C, D, F). If you prefer a different model than the one used by your school, just phone the child's teacher and state your request. With the click of a button, the printer will take the same information entered by the teacher and print it in either "grade" or "scale" model. It's your choice.

Q: What is the school doing to help my child be successful?

A: The state has provided detailed "grade level expectations" for teachers in reading, math and writing. The teachers' year-long plans and daily lessons are carefully selected in order to give students plenty of practice on each important skill. In addition, we have a number of teacher specialists and paraeducators who work with students both during the school day and outside the school day to improve specific skills. We carefully track each child's progress through regular assessments, student-led conferences and other parent contacts, and through the semester report cards.

Q: What can I do if my child is "approaching" or "below" the standards for his/her grade level?

A: First, make sure that your child is completing all assigned work, and reading at home each day for 20-25 minutes. Next, ask the teacher for specific information: (1) Which skills need to be mastered? (2) What activities can we do with our child at home to help him/her gain these skills? Finally, check in often with the teacher through a weekly note or phone call to monitor your child's progress. Students who are meeting or approaching their grade level reading and math standard by the end of the year will qualify for promotion to the next grade. Students who are below the standard in reading or math may need summer school, or may need another whole year to acquire the necessary skills.

Standards provide clear targets, and parents and teachers working together provide the strongest possible team for helping our students reach them. We will work closely with you to clearly communicate the standards, and to provide multiple opportunities at school and at home for your children to practice and master each one! Parents are encouraged to contact your child's teacher if you have questions about the report card, or about your child's progress in school.

Sincerely,
Cindy Kelsey, Principal

From Mrs. EagleCruz

Here are two websites that may be helpful to families. Check them out for some great ideas!

A Family Guide to Keeping Youth Mentally Healthy and Drug Free
<http://family.samhsa.gov/>

This public education web site was developed to support the efforts of parents and other caring adults to promote mental health and prevent the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs among 7- to 18-year-olds.

Too Smart to Start
<http://www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov/>

This website is an underage alcohol use prevention initiative for parents, caregivers and their 9-13 year old children. In addition to having information for parents and caregivers, it has a youth section with games and puzzles.

Elementary Choice Enrollment Open March 21 - May 10

Application for the regular elementary choice program will be available at all elementary schools and the Educational Service Center between March 21, 2006 and May 10, 2006.

Jump Rope for Heart

On Monday, February 6th through Friday, February 10th, our school is holding a Jump Rope for Heart event to promote wellness and raise funds for the American Heart Association. Every class will participate in the event during their regularly scheduled P.E. class. However, if you would like your child to take part in the fundraising portion of this event, fill out the permission slip on the flap of the Participant Collection Envelope, which was sent home, and send it back to school.

February Calendar

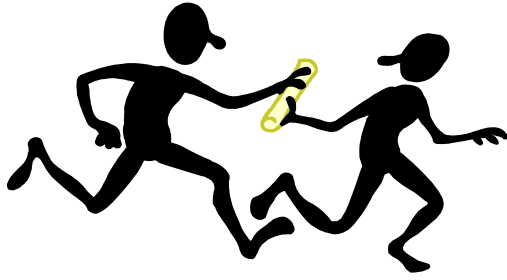
- 2- Kilo Music Tour
- 3- PTA Karaoke Family Night
5:30-7:30
- 7- Report Cards Go Home
- 9- Cookie Day
- 16- PTA Board Meeting 6:30
Board Nominations
- 20- 24 Mid-Winter Break
NO SCHOOL
- Feb 28- March 6
Scholastic Book Fair
9:00-3:00 daily

March Calendar

- 1- Nelson, Gillick, Tweedie, Carson
State Capital in Olympia
9:15-2:15
Burgi, Blanchard, Rushton
Seattle Symphony
9:10-12:30
- 2- Scholastic Book Fair
Open until 7:30
- 6- Last Day Scholastic Book Fair
9:00-3:00
- 9- Music Concert Grades 2 and 3
Cookie Day
- 10- PTA Family Dance (Time TBA)

Federal Way Public Academy Information Night

Families interested in the FWPA are enthusiastically encouraged to come to the school's "Information Night" to be held 6:30-8:00, Thursday, March 2, 2006 on campus at 34620 9th Ave. S. Presentations, as well as a question and answer session, should help families determine if this school is a good match for their child. Families who wish to have their student(s) attend FWPA can apply for Fall 2006 placement through the CHOICE Enrollment lottery. Forms are now available, and must be returned to the Education Service Center by March 10th.



Track News

Mrs. Gillick and one of Meredith Hill's parents, Sandi Yula, will be running our track program this spring. Look for more information to come out soon about practices, which are due to begin in March. Log on to the Elementary Track website for more information about this year's program: <http://www.fwps.org/etrack>.

The meets will be held at the Federal Way High School Memorial Stadium, as follows:

Practice Meets (K through 5th Grade)

Saturday April 1st

8:30 am Schools A-N

(Adelaide - Nautilus)

1:30 pm Schools O-W

(Olympic View - Woodmont)

Qualifying Meets (3rd through 5th Grade)

Saturday April 22nd

8:30 am Schools A-N

Saturday April 29th

8:30 pm Schools O-W

K through 2nd Grade Meets

Saturday April 22nd

2:00 pm Schools A-N

Saturday April 29th

2:00 pm Schools O-W

Championship Meet

Saturday May 6th

8:30 am All athletes advancing from Qualifying Meets on April 22nd and April 29th.

Ron Mattila Classic (Open to all comers)

Monday May 15th - 5:00 pm

All schools will compete on April 1st at the practice meets. Meredith Hill will have one full Saturday, April 22nd, with the qualifying meet in the morning and the practice meet in the afternoon. The Championship meet is on May 6th and is only open to those students who qualified at the "qualifying" meet. The Mattila Classic is on Monday, May 15th, and is open to all students who want to compete at an all-comers meet.

The Scholastic Book Fair: February 28th – March 6th

Parents, we know that every student will visit the fair, and we hope you'll also stop by to see the complete selection of books for every member of the family. The week before the fair there will be an order form coming home listing just a few of the many books that will be available at the fair.

Students can make their purchases with cash or checks made out to Meredith Hill Elementary. Adults can also pay by credit card. Please include 8.8% tax with all purchases.

Money raised from the book fair is used to improve and expand our library resources.

Did you know?

- It costs an average of \$500 in books to fill one foot of space on our library's shelves.
- If every student at Meredith Hill had one book checked out, the cost of the books would equal approximately \$12,000.
- Books purchased for school libraries are often more expensive than the same books purchased at the local bookstore. Library books have special or reinforced binding and covers made to withstand frequent use.

Meredith Hill has a wonderful library and we appreciate your support in helping to keep it that way. See you at the fair!