
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. 16. This is the fourth 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. In 2005, 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"	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

Pre-School Registration

Returning pre-school students and their siblings can register for the 2007-2008 school year beginning on Monday, February 26th. A \$25.00 non-refundable deposit and a signed contract will be required.

Other community members who are interested in registering their pre-school students, can do this on March 12, 2007. Again, a \$25.00 non-refundable deposit and a signed contract will be required at the time of registration along with a copy of the child's birth certificate and current immunization records. This registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. For information on the program, please contact Mrs. Edwards at 253-945-3203.

Reminder: Jump Rope for Heart

On Wednesday, February 14th through Friday, February 16th, 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.

Give Kids a Smile

The Seattle-King County Dental Society will celebrate National Children's Dental Access Day with free children's dental screenings on Saturday, February 10. The screenings will be held at a new location, the Rainier Valley Community Center gym, at 4600 38th Avenue South, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Community Health Partners will be on hand to arrange follow-up dental care and financial assistance. For additional information call 206-443-7607.

February Calendar

- 8- Talent Show Auditions 3:30 pm
- 9- PTA Family Bingo w/
Honor Choir Concert
5:30-8:00
- 13- Math Parent Night
7:00 - 8:00 pm
Pre-School Cookie Decorating 6:30
- 14- 16 Jump Rope for Heart
- 16- Report Cards Go Home
- 19- 21 Mid-Winter Break
NO SCHOOL
- 22- 23 Snow Make-up Days
SCHOOL IN SESSION
PRE-SCHOOL IN SESSION

March Calendar

- 7- Cookie Day
- 8- Music Concert Grades 2 and 3
Dress Rehearsal 2:20 pm
Performance 7:00 pm
- 9- PTA Talent Showcase
- 16- Snow Make-up Day
SCHOOL IN SESSION
- 21- Cookie Day
PTA General Meeting 6:30 pm
- 29- 30 Conferences
NO SCHOOL

Math Parent Night - Feb. 13

Tuesday, February 13th, a parent night will be held in the Meredith Hill library from 7:00-8:00 p.m. This will be a very interactive presentation of some methods our teachers use to teach problem solving in math. See how children are prepared in the classroom to be successful in class and on the district and state assessments. Childcare will be provided.

The focus of this workshop will be for parents of 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students. Hope you will join us!