Elementary Progress Report Handbook

A Parent/Guardian’s Guide to Reporting Student Progress

Regional School District #14
Towns of Bethlehem and Woodbury

Bethlehem Elementary School
Mitchell Elementary School
2014
REGION 14 MISSION

The Region 14 community is dedicated to ensuring an engaging and positive learning environment where every student becomes a respected contributing member of society, who graduates prepared to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

REGION 14 CORE BELIEFS

We believe:

✓ All students can learn, have unique gifts, and deserve the opportunity to pursue their individual learning potential.
✓ Our community benefits when all have a sense of ownership and responsibility in our schools.
✓ Learning and decision-making are built upon collaborative and supportive relationships.
✓ We must provide appropriate technologies and instruction that prepare students for the 21st century.

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The committee recognizes the contribution and feedback of many others to the development of the progress reports and handbook.
Introduction

During the Spring of 2014, teachers, administrators, and specialists worked cooperatively to develop a standards-based progress report for the elementary level. Staff have studied the research related to best practices in reporting student progress to parents, identified the guiding principles that frame the reporting document, and drafted descriptors that are closely aligned to the Connecticut Core Standards for instruction in each content area.

The elementary progress report is one part of the Region 14 School’s commitment to fostering effective communication between home and school. The expanded version of the elementary progress report is designed to communicate a comprehensive picture of how your child is performing in school. This report card has been organized to more clearly reflect the standards that are developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education that guide district curriculum, assessment and daily instruction.

What are standards?

Every state has adopted its own list of the skills that students should learn at each grade level from Kindergarten through high school. These lists are the state content and learning standards. Teachers are responsible for teaching the skills for their students' grade level, although standards do not say how teachers should teach.

What is a standards-based progress report?

A standards-based progress report lists the most important skills students should learn in each subject at a particular grade level. Instead of letter grades, students receive marks that show the extent to which they have mastered the expected skills that are being taught in class during the grading period. Students usually get separate marks for academic mastery and for effort and work habits.

A standards-based progress report breaks out what students do well and where they need to grow. All teachers in a grade level measure student learning against set criteria. A standards-based progress report puts the emphasis on learning, rather than on comparisons among students.
Why do we need a new reporting system?
- The new report will be aligned to current state standards
- The new report has been designed to reflect student progress towards grade level standards
- The new report is unique to the grade and standards of that grade
- The new report provides more specific information on each student’s learning since it separates academic progress and learner behaviors
- With the new standards-based reporting system, students are evaluated more objectively according to consistent grade-level standards

How does the progress report fit into the overall communication plan between the school and parents?
Research indicates that a student’s chance of success in school improves when there is regular and meaningful two-way communication between the parent and school staff. The progress report is one component in a more comprehensive communication system.
These are some of the key communication milestones that are scheduled into the calendar every year:

Before the start of school (August):
Informal drop-ins or “meet-and-greet” events at the school

September:
Open House/Back-to-School Night

December:
Progress reports issued
Parent-Teacher Conferences

March:
Progress reports issued
Parent-Teacher Conferences

May:
Kindergarten Information Evening

June:
Progress reports issued

Schools offer additional on-going avenues for communication throughout the year:
- Phone calls
- Email
- As-needed conference appointments
- Samples of student work (homework, tests, quizzes, projects)
- Student assessment reports (Measures of Academic Progress, Degrees of Reading Power, etc.)
- District website
- School website
- Principal newsletters
• Principal coffees
• Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings
• Alert Now
• Special curriculum nights

Parents should contact the teacher or principal in advance of meeting to assure that the parties are available to meet and have time to collect student work and other evidence of performance. These planned conversations are richer and more specific to the student’s needs.
How are standards-based progress reports different from traditional report cards?

The achievement marks on a progress report indicate a child’s progress toward meeting specific grade-level standards. On a standards-based progress report, each of these subject areas is divided into a list of skills and knowledge that students are responsible for learning. Students receive a separate mark for each standard.

Traditional report cards usually assign one grade for reading, one for math, one for science and so on. They often use letter grades that are familiar to parents from their own experience as students to give an overall evaluation of a student’s performance. Letter grades combine a student’s academic performance with other factors such as how well the student met his/her particular teacher's expectations, and how much effort the teacher believes s/he put in. Letter grades do not tell parents which skills their children have mastered or whether they are working at grade level.

The numbers on a progress report cannot and should not be matched to letter grades. A “4” is not the same as an “A”; a “1” is not the same as a “D” or “F”. The number grade gives a more detailed description of how your child is moving towards meeting a standard set for all students at a particular grade. The numbers will also indicate that the teaching and learning of the standard is ongoing. Standards based progress reports are not about failing and passing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Standards-based</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are these reporting formats different?</td>
<td>Subject areas such as reading and math are sub-divided into standards sets which identify what a child needs to master at that grade level.</td>
<td>Grades are given for each subject area such as reading or math or for an isolated skill such as “computes accurately.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>How is performance communicated?</td>
<td>A number or term which correlates to the degree of mastery is used to describe performance</td>
<td>A letter grade which combines various academic achievement and learner behaviors into one composite grade is used.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How are grades determined?</td>
<td>Ratings describe the level of mastery for each standard listed.</td>
<td>Grades typically reflect an average of scores to determine a number, percentage, or letter grade.</td>
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<td>This level is based on teacher observation, performance assessments, summative assessments (tests and quizzes), grade level rubrics, and anchor sets that illustrate expected performance at each level.</td>
<td>Student scores are derived from combining graded assignments and tests and other factors such as participation, effort, and work habits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are the benefits of each system?</td>
<td>Academic achievement and content mastery are separated out from learner behaviors and work habits so that students and parents have a clear picture of strengths, areas in need of improvement and overall progress.</td>
<td>A single letter grade is a compact, convenient and familiar code for communicating about how is student is doing overall.</td>
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The Performance Level Rating Scale

The progress report uses the same rating scale for both the academic standards descriptors and for the learner behaviors.

Each number is designed to reflect a student’s level of mastery of standards at various points in the year.

**Academic performance levels**

4: Student has an **in-depth** understanding of grade level standards and is **excelling or meeting with distinction**; Performance on the learner behavior is exceptional for grade level.

3: Student has a **solid** understanding of grade level standards and can **independently** demonstrate mastery of standards; Performance on learner behavior is typical/expected for grade level.

2: Student has a **basic** understanding of grade level standards and is **making progress** to master standards; Performance on learner behavior is inconsistent: student needs reminders to maintain expected behavior.

1: Student is able to demonstrate **understanding of standards with assistance** and is making **incremental or limited progress**; Performance on learner behavior not apparent: student needs frequent reminders or redirection.

Teachers will use a variety of information (tests, quizzes, rubrics, observation) to consistently evaluate performance for each performance level. In this reporting system, many students will likely fit into the “2” or “3” category, as these levels describe what a typical student in each grade should know and be able to do. Students who are able to demonstrate a high level of mastery of standards at a rapid pace and who excel will be rated in the “4” category. Students who are having difficulty with grade level content and need assistance to master standards will be rated in the “1” category.

Students may demonstrate a wide range of performance levels in different skills or content areas based on their learning styles and preferences. These performance levels do not include other factors such as behavior, effort, homework or other learner behaviors; they focus on academic achievement only. This way, students, parents, and teachers can see the student’s strengths and weaknesses clearly and know where to focus intervention, support, and enrichment efforts.

**Learner Behavior Performance Levels**

4: Consistently demonstrates **exemplary** behavior

3: Consistently demonstrates **appropriate** behavior, self-regulates

2: Usually demonstrates appropriate behavior but **needs reminders**
1: Seldom or does not demonstrate appropriate behavior

This set of performance levels is designed to provide information about a student’s performance in school and in the classroom that is related to behaviors, work habits, effort and other factors that are separate from the student’s academic mastery but also important in the development and performance of the student as a learner and member of the school community.

In Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2, students have a single performance rating for overall effort. In Grades 3, 4, and 5, students have an effort grade in each core content area since instruction is more specialized and segmented in the intermediate grades. By assigning an effort grade in each core area, teachers can communicate more precisely about the student’s interests, strengths, and challenge areas.

Many of the descriptors are self-explanatory. Some may seem similar, but have subtle differences that have led to their inclusion as separate items.

Follows class rules: understands expectations for behaviors, routines, transitions in the class setting and takes direction from teacher

Follows school rules: understands expectations and routines for functioning in the school environment including hallways, cafeteria, playground, buses, assemblies, and other school-wide settings. Takes direction from the responsible adults including the principal, teachers, and support staff

Respects the rights of others to work independently: manages his/her own materials and does not use the materials of other without permission. Does not interrupt or disrupt the work of classmates and respects processes and procedures during group interactions and independent work time

Shows kindness, consideration and respect: interacts with appropriate empathy and expected manners. Demonstrates tolerance and patience with others

Exhibits self-control of behavior and language: respects process established for participating in class activities, raises hand when appropriate, does not call out, uses materials appropriately

Listens attentively: pays attention when teacher or other students are speaking

Organizes personal space and belongings: keeps a clean work space, puts away personal belongings in designated place, cleans up after activities, assembles necessary materials promptly

Follows directions: cooperates and is compliant with the directions from teachers or other adults

Takes pride in written work: work is neat, legible and complete, student reviews or proofreads as appropriate before submitting assignments

Completes class assignments in allotted time: uses established routines to complete classroom work according to teacher expectations and directions

Returns completed homework on time: uses established routines to submit assignments completed independently or at home within the timeframe established by the teacher
What does it mean if the numbers don’t change?
As the year goes on, the expectations of what a child should know and be able to do increase. Your child will be evaluated on these increasing expectations. A “3” in the first grading period means that the child has a solid understanding and can independently demonstrate mastery of standards for the beginning of the year. The same mark in the second grading period means the child is growing and is now meeting the expectations for the middle part of the year. The same mark in the third grading period means that your child has continued to grow and is meeting end-of-year expectations.

Why are some areas not graded?
In order to assign a grade, teachers need to have enough information to be able to give an accurate appraisal of the student’s level of mastery. They also need to have a variety of developmentally appropriate pieces of information to determine each performance level. Some content, skills, and knowledge are on-going throughout the year, but some may be unique to a particular grading period. Teachers will report only on those areas for which there has been instruction and adequate evidence to make a determination of performance level.

How is special education programming handled on a progress report?
We know all children can learn and succeed, but some students have special learning needs and disabilities that impact their instructional program. The standards-based reports make it easier for students and parents to see what the grade level expectations are and to accurately report on the progress that students are making towards those targets.

Areas where a student’s instructional program is not aligned to the grade level standards will be indicated on the progress report, and the student’s progress towards meeting the goals and objectives determined to be appropriate will be reported separately. Students will continue to be exposed to and access grade-level material in the regular classroom setting so that students and parents are aware of grade level expectations while the student receives the most appropriate level of instruction for continued growth. Based on the decision of the Pupil Planning and Placement team or 504 plan, students will either:

- Receive modifications and accommodations that allow him/her to access grade level standards. The student’s progress will be reported on the grade level progress report.

- Receive a modified instructional program with goals and objectives informed by the grade level standards. These areas will be noted on the progress report and students will receive a supplemental report that details progress towards agreed upon goals and objectives.

In addition to the progress reports, teachers and administrators will be collecting data on student performance through the use of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) which will be given to students in the Fall, Winter, and Spring to measure student mastery of content in Math, Reading, and Language. This test will generate a score that locates students on a learning continuum that is independent, but referenced to, the student’s grade level. This score identifies what students are ready to learn and helps teachers to make instructional choices.
Students also participate in the state assessment program, the **Smarter Balanced** assessment, which provides information about students’ performance level on grade level standards. Students with documented special learning needs have access to a variety of accommodations and modifications. An alternate assessment based on grade level standards known as the **Skills Checklist** is designated for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
Mathematics

The CT Core Standards in Math are adopted from the Common Core Standards. For a complete listing of all the standards and mathematical practices, visit: http://www.corestandards.org/Math/

The Standards are organized by domains. Most domains appear at each grade level in a developmentally appropriate way. The K-5 content standards form the foundation for further study and more complex topics at the upper grades. These domains are:

- Counting and Cardinality
- Operations and Algebraic Thinking
- Number and Operations in Base 10
- Number and Operations-Fractions
- Measurement and Data
- Geometry

The upper grades (6-12) also include:

- Ratios and Proportional Relationships
- Expressions and Equations
- The Number System
- Functions
- Statistics and Probability

There are also Standards for Mathematical Practice that are integrated into math instruction, and not assessed separately from the content standards. These include:

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Model with mathematics.
- Use appropriate tools strategically.
- Attend to precision.
- Look for and make use of structure.
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

Because the standards are built around focus, coherence, and rigor, fewer topics are taught and learned in greater depth. Standards are divided into:

- Major clusters
- Supporting clusters
- Additional clusters

Topics are arranged in Learning Progressions that build on the expected knowledge and skills for each grade as students advance from grade to grade.
Math instruction typically occurs daily for 60 minutes.

Some of the academic terminology may be unfamiliar and confusing. This glossary addresses many of the terms referenced on the progress report or that your child’s teacher may use when discussing skills and progress in Mathematics:

**Algebraic Thinking:** Recognizing and analyzing number patterns and developing generalizations about these patterns. For example, any number plus zero equals that number.

**Base Ten:** Base Ten refers to the numbering system in common use. For a number like 75, base ten refers to the position, the 5 is in the one’s place, the 7 is in the ten’s place.

**Cardinality:** The number of elements in a set.

**Composes Shapes:** To form by putting together. For example, we can compose a square and triangle to make a pentagon.

**Fluently:** To recall the answers to basic math facts automatically and without hesitation.

**Geometry:** The study of points, lines, shapes, and space.

**Metric Measurement:** A system of measurement based on the meter for length, the kilogram for mass, and the second for time.

**Partitions Shapes:** Divides shapes into a given number of parts, an important concept that lies at the heart of understanding fractions, percentages and decimals.

**Patterns:** A set of numbers or objects that follow a certain sequence or rule. For example, given the rule "Add 3" and the starting number 1, create a sequence of numbers (1, 4, 7, 10, etc.) and observe that the numbers alternate between odd and even numbers.

**Place Value:** The value of the place of a digit in a number such as units, tens, hundreds. For example, in the number 352, the place value of the 5 is "tens."

**Standard Measurement:** A system of measurement commonly use in the United States. For example, we measure in inches, feet, yards, miles, cups, ounces, pounds, and tons.
English Language Arts

The CT Core Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) are adopted from the Common Core Standards. For a complete listing of all the standards, visit: http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/

The Standards are organized by domains. Most domains appear at each grade level in a developmentally appropriate way. The K-5 content standards form the foundation for further study and more complex topics at the upper grades. These domains are:

- Reading: Literature
- Reading: Informational Text
- Reading: Foundational Skills
- Writing
- Listening and Speaking
- Language

Anchor Standards are also identified for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. These include:

Reading Anchor Standards:
- Key ideas and details
- Craft and structure
- Integration of knowledge and ideas
- Range of reading and level of text complexity

Writing Anchor Standards:
- Text types and purposes
- Production and distribution of writing
- Research to build and present knowledge
- Range of writing

Speaking and Listening Standards:
- Comprehension and collaboration
- Presentation of knowledge and ideas

Language Standards:
- Conventions of standard English
- Knowledge of language
- Vocabulary acquisition and use
Some of the academic terminology may be unfamiliar and confusing. This glossary addresses many of the terms referenced on the progress report or that your child’s teacher may use when discussing skills and progress in the English Language Arts area:

**English Language Arts Overview**

The Common Core asks students to read increasingly complex stories and informational texts, including those that provide facts and background knowledge in areas such as science and social studies. Students will be challenged and asked questions that push them to refer back to what they’ve read. This stresses critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills that are required for success in college, career, and life.

Each grade level progress report has five main strands that are assessed:

**Reading Foundational Skills** -- These basic skills are necessary for students to become proficient readers. They are not an end in and of themselves; rather, they are an important component of an effective reading program.

**Reading Literature and Informational Texts** – These skills ensure that students gain adequate exposure to a variety of literature and informational texts which increase in complexity through the grades.

**Speaking and Listening** -- These skills require students to process and share information.

**Writing** – Writing encompasses a variety of skills including organization, development of ideas, and word choice.

**Language** – These skills are infused in all reading and writing tasks. They reflect a student’s command of the English language.

Each of these areas is broken down into specific grade-level skills.

Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.

Terms in alphabetical order:

**Blending Syllables**: Listening to separate parts of a word and putting them together. (Ex. ti+ger=tiger)

**C-V-C words**: A word that begins and ends with a consonant and has one vowel in the middle. (cat)

**Collaborative Conversation**: Discussions about texts which can take place in large groups, small groups or partnerships.
Common Prefixes and Suffixes: A prefix is placed at the beginning of a word to modify or change its meaning. (Examples: un-, re-) A suffix is placed at the end of a word to modify or change its meaning. (Examples: -s, -ing)

Conventions of English Grammar: These may include using complete sentences when writing, as well as appropriate capitalization and punctuation.

High Frequency Words: Words that occur repeatedly in text. (Ex. the, and, is, etc.)

Informational Text Features: Examples: Headings, Tables of Contents and Glossaries.

Long Vowel Pattern Words: Examples: rain, boat, beak, play, blame, chose, etc.

Print concepts: Early reading behaviors such as tracking print from left to right and from top to bottom of the page and recognizing that words are separated by spaces.

One Syllable Short Vowel Words: Examples: big, that, shop, stand, block, strip, etc.

Onsets and Rimes: The onset is all of the letters up to the vowel (a, e, i, o, u); the rime is the vowel and everything after it. (In the word cat the onset = c and rime = at)

Phonemes: the smallest unit of sound in a word. (Ex. there are 3 phonemes in the word fish: f-i-sh.)

Phonetic Spelling: Attempting to spell an unknown by stretching out the individual sounds and matching those sounds with letters. (Ex. kat for cat)

Regularly spelled words: words which follow phonics rules, i.e., run

Revise Writing: Adding information to a writing piece after a draft has been written.

Segmenting Syllables: Separating a word into its parts. (Ex. tiger = ti+ger)

Transitional Words: Words that show an order of events such as and, then, next, so.

Two Syllable Words with Basic Patterns: Examples: apple, children, began, snowman, etc.

English Language Arts instruction typically takes place daily for a 90 minute block of time. This pattern may vary from classroom to classroom based on scheduling considerations.
Science

The CT Science Frameworks are organized in four content standards:

- Physical Science
- Life Science
- Earth and Space Science
- Science and Technology in Society

Each grade level typically has one unit of study in each of the four areas. In addition to these content standards, Scientific Inquiry, Literacy, and Numeracy Standards are woven in throughout the year. The CT Framework defines each of these:

- Scientific inquiry is a thoughtful and coordinated attempt to search out, describe, explain and predict natural phenomena.
- Scientific literacy includes speaking, listening, presenting, interpreting, reading and writing about science.
- Mathematics provides useful tools for the description, analysis and presentation of scientific data and ideas.

The CT State Department of Education is considering adopting the national Next Generation Science Standards that were developed by a lead group of 26 states. These standards cover the same four basic areas of science, but also include Practices, Core Ideas and Crosscutting Concepts.

Science instruction may occur separately or be integrated into the Language Arts block. Students have opportunities for a variety of hands-on activities to enhance the learning and inquiry process. Instruction is delivered on a flexible basis. Experiences are often enhanced with field trips, programs, guest speakers or activities.
Social Studies

The CT Social Studies Frameworks are organized by four major themes:

- History
- Geography
- Civics
- Economics

The Social Studies curriculum is also expected to incorporate the Language Arts literacy standards including:

- Writing and research
- Listening and Speaking
- Reading: Informational texts

The CT State Department of Education is expected to approve a new CT Framework based on the national C3 (College, Career, and Civic Life) framework developed by the National Council for Social Studies. This framework is organized by four dimensions:

- Developing questions and planning inquiries
- Applying disciplinary tools and concepts
- Evaluating sources and using evidence
- Communicating conclusions and taking informed action

Social Studies instruction may occur separately or be integrated into the Language Arts block. Experiences are often enhanced with field trips, programs, guest speakers or activities.
Art, Music, Information Literacy, Physical Education/Health

The state of CT has content standards for each of the Unified Arts areas. These content areas are organized to address the major areas noted below:

**Visual Arts**
- Media
- Elements and principles
- Content
- History and cultures
- Analysis, interpretation, and evaluation
- Connections

**Music**
- Vocal
- Instrumental
- Improvisation
- Composition
- Notation
- Analysis
- Evaluation
- Connections
- History and culture

**Information Literacy/Library Media**
- Definition and Identification of Information Needs
- Information strategies
- Information processing
- Application
- Technology use
- Responsible use
- Assessment

**Physical Education**
- Motor skill performance
- Applying concepts and strategies
- Engaging in physical activity
- Physical fitness
- Responsible behavior
- Benefits of physical activity

**Other Options for PE/Health**
- Skills
- Concepts and Plans
- Literacy
- Advocacy

**Health**
- Core concepts
- Accessing health information
Self-management of healthy behaviors
Analyzing internal and external influences
Communication skills
Decision-making skills
Goal setting-skills
Advocacy

Student receive instruction in these content areas either once or twice a week.
Resources for Parents

The following links may be useful to learn more about standards and standards-based reporting:

Connecticut State Department of Education: CT Core Standards-Family and Community page
http://ctcorestandards.org/?page_id=32

Common Core State Standards Initiative: Home page
http://www.corestandards.org/

National PTA: Parent Guides to Student Success
http://pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583&navItemNumber=3363

The C3 (College, Career, and Civic Life) Social Studies Framework:
http://www.socialstudies.org/system/files/C3flyerF.pdf

The Next Generation Science Standards:
http://www.nextgenscience.org/next-generation-science-standards

Standards and Special Education:
http://www.redorbit.com/news/education/1141679/standardsbased_grading_and_reporting_a_model_for_special_education/?print=true

Why standards-based reporting- Great Schools:
http://www.greatschools.org/students/academic-skills/350-rethinking-report-cards.gs?page=all

Background on standards-based reporting-Ken O’Connor
http://www.cea-ace.ca/sites/default/files/EdCan-2010-v50-n2-O%27Connor.pdf

Background on standards-based reporting-ASCD/Educational Leadership, “Seven Reasons for Standards-Based Grading.”
http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/oct08/vol66/num02/Seven_Reasons_for_Standards-Based_Grading.aspx