



## A Guide for Families: Understanding the Elementary Report Cards

At Forest Hills Public Schools, it is our vision for all learners to achieve individual potential. As such, we strive to provide families with regular updates of learning progress so that together we can support the learning of each child. This occurs through a variety of means including anecdotal stories shared by teachers at conference time, daily work samples, projects, and unit assessments, as well as results of state and national tests. The primary purpose of our elementary report card is to provide families with information about each child’s progress toward end-of-year grade level expectations. This guide provides families with additional information about the structure of the elementary report card.

### Successful Learning Behaviors

Because we believe in educating the whole child, we know that in order for students to achieve academically, we must support the development of each child as a learner. As such, our report cards contain the behavior standards identified by our report card committee that are considered to be critical to successful learning. The separation of these learning behaviors from academic reporting standards allows teachers to provide families and students with more specific feedback. Each indicator of successful learning behavior is marked either: C = Consistently, U = Usually, S = Sometimes, or R = Rarely, in regard to the frequency the learning behaviors are observed by the teacher. Although learning behaviors are marked separately from the academic reporting standards, the relationship between the two is an important one.



### Understanding the Academic Scale

Learning is a process, and therefore, it is expected that repeated opportunities to learn are necessary to master new skills and understand new concepts. The academic scale on our report card is designed to show where a child is on the learning trajectory from initial learning to mastery. The time frame in which each child learns and demonstrates mastery is very individual and can take place at any time during the school year. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, the academic scale has been revised from previous years. Based on feedback we received from teachers and families, the key printed on the report card has been refined for clarity and simplicity. A more extended explanation of each proficiency level is provided in the chart below.

<i>Code</i>	<i>Proficiency Level Descriptor</i>	<i>Additional Information About Proficiency Levels</i>
X =	Exceeds proficiency	Exceeds proficiency by demonstrating in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond the grade level expectation. Student is able to make insightful connections and extend concepts and skills.
M =	Meets proficiency	Meets the grade level expectation correctly and independently applies the skill or concept. Demonstrates accuracy, appropriateness, and quality.
P =	Partial proficiency	Partial progress toward mastery of the grade level expectation is evident. Some errors or misunderstandings remain, but learning is progressing.
L =	Limited progress toward proficiency	Demonstrates initial understanding of grade level expectation, but little progress is indicated. Additional time and learning experiences are needed to promote progress.



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## Report Card Frequently Asked Questions

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### *How are the format and content of the K-6 report card determined?*

The format and content of our K-6 report cards undergo frequent revisions in order to keep up with changing curriculum standards and best reporting practices. Since 2010, many updates have been made through the work of the report card committee, curriculum committees, and most recently as a result of a teacher and parent survey. Our goal is to provide families with more information about their child's progress on grade level expectations than would be found in a traditional report card format. With a traditional report card, a single letter grade is typically given for each content area (reading, math, science, social studies, etc.). Our K-6 report cards provide more detailed information regarding each student's progress on an expanded list of skills and knowledge in each content area. This allows families and students to understand more clearly what learning is expected at each grade level. With this understanding, families will be able to guide and support their children's learning on more specific target learning areas.

### *What is the difference between a curriculum standard and an academic reporting standard?*

It is important to note that the academic reporting standards are based on grade level curriculum standards. Academic reporting standards are written to be clear and more succinct than curriculum standards which are utilized for designing units of study. Periodically, academic reporting standards in the content areas may need to be updated as a result of curriculum changes. For more information on Michigan's kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum standards, please visit [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov) and click on the link for Education.

### *Can the report card scale be compared or translated into letter grades?*

The proficiency levels should not be compared to letter grades. Letter grades are often determined through calculation of assignments and tests, comparison with classmates, and sometimes include behavior and effort. Letter grading policies can vary from teacher to teacher and do not necessarily reflect a student's mastery of each fundamental skill within the subject area. Our use of a proficiency scale measures the achievement and learning of individual students in relation to end-of-year grade level expectations for each of these skills. A student's proficiency level with these skills is determined through repeated opportunities to practice and demonstrate learning. This encourages all students to do their best.

### *How does a child exceed proficiency?*

Examples of exceeding proficiency are indicated when a student is able to apply in-depth understanding of extended conceptual knowledge that goes beyond the target learning goal. This occurs when a student is able to make connections using higher level thinking skills such as critiquing, analyzing, synthesizing, etc. This can also occur when a student demonstrates in-depth inferences or applications that go beyond what was taught.

### *How do I talk with my child about his/her report card?*

It's important that conversations about school reflect the fact that learning is a process. Some concepts, understandings, and skills are easier or more difficult to grasp than others. Providing students multiple opportunities to learn and practice under the direction of expert teaching, in combination with support at home, will ensure progress. Receiving a level P (Partial proficiency) while learning a new skill or concept is appropriate. A level M (Meets proficiency) demonstrating mastery should be celebrated. Earning a level X (Exceeds proficiency) indicates a strength that is recognized to be above and beyond the standard. Attitudes are contagious. It is important that adults help children recognize and celebrate their efforts and progress toward specific learning goals. Families are encouraged to collaborate with their child's teacher for specific strategies to support learning.



### ***What if my child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?***

Most students receiving special education services are taught the general education curriculum using accommodations and modifications when necessary. Specific and consistently used accommodations will be noted with “AC” and the name(s) of the teacher(s) providing the instruction will be given. A copy of the student’s IEP Goals and Objectives will be attached to the report card each marking period, in addition to the quarterly IEP Progress Report.

### ***Is this format of report card widely used?***

Report cards that are based on grade level expectations (also known as “standards-based”) are considered a best practice in education. There is a rapidly growing body of research that this type of feedback and grading has a positive effect on student achievement. This reporting method is widely known and used in established, rigorous academic programs in elementary schools and beyond. For example, high school Advanced Placement courses use a five-point rubric for scoring national assessments (5= Extremely well qualified, 4= Well qualified, 3= Qualified, 2= Possibly qualified, 1= No recommendations). Similarly, the International Baccalaureate Program uses a seven-point rubric for scoring, as well as a matrix of performance. Elementary report cards are *not* a determining factor in the college entrance process. However, it should be noted that colleges and universities are becoming more and more interested in the rigor of the curriculum that students have experienced, than the grading system (Guskey, 2009).

### ***Will it be difficult for my child to transition to a letter grade report card after elementary school?***

The elementary report card in Forest Hills focuses on the learning process by articulating successful learning behaviors in addition to academic skills and content. Students who understand the learning process from initial learning to proficiency will develop an awareness of their own strengths and learning preferences. Success in middle school and beyond is largely influenced by a student's understanding of this process. When students transition to the middle school, the teaching staff will help them understand how learning behaviors and academic achievement are reflected in secondary grading policies and practices.

*For specific questions related to your child’s report card or progress, please contact your child’s teacher.*