



# Elementary Report Card Handbook

Avondale School District  
Auburn Hills, Michigan



Dear Parents/Guardians,

As the Avondale School District continues to improve teaching and learning for all students, parents and families are our most valuable partner on the journey. This is especially true as the District adopts new, more rigorous standards for what every child should know and be able to do in each subject area and grade level. The Common Core State Standards ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)) set high expectations for students, staff and schools. Achieving these career- and college-ready standards requires continuous progress monitoring and targeted support as needed.

Like teachers, parents need accurate and meaningful information, particularly information about student strengths and challenges in performing to high expectations, to better understand and support student learning. Standards describe what a student should know and be able to do at each grade level in all subjects. For several years, the Avondale staffs have researched the benefits of a standards-based report card for elementary school students and have now determined such a report card is a positive step in better communicating grade-level expectations for student learning. Accordingly, a standards-based report card will be introduced this marking period at all of the elementary schools. When you view the report card, you will see it provides valuable information on your elementary student's performance to the standards, from basic to advanced levels. The report card also provides information on your child's work habits, behavior and effort.

The standards-based report card clarifies and reinforces consistent, high expectations for all Avondale elementary students and schools and helps teachers, students and families focus on the standards throughout the year. Equally important, the new report card provides specific feedback on progress toward the standards so students, families and teachers can work together to set meaningful goals for improvement. Information shared on "big ideas" and concepts each child has learned, and an understanding of what work is still needed for success in the next grade level, help ensure that the child receives additional support when needed, whether at school or home.

The attached handbook provides information about the new standards-based report card. It includes frequently asked questions and additional background information, a description of proficiency levels, and a sample report card. Grade level curriculum frameworks are also available to provide detailed information on the content standards, as well as an elementary parent resource guide. We hope that this additional information will be of assistance to you as you support your child's academic achievement and progress.

I trust that you will find the standards-based report card system helpful and meaningful to your child's educational development. Please feel free to contact your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James V. Schwarz".

James V. Schwarz  
Superintendent

## Components of a Standards-Based System

There are four essential components of a standards-based teaching, learning, assessment, and reporting system:

1. **Content Standards** describe what a student should know and be able to do at a given grade level.
2. The standard-based **curriculum** is a roadmap a teacher uses to ensure that instruction targets the content standards.
3. Teachers use **assessments** to measure learning and the extent to which a student has met the grade level content standards.
4. The standards-based **report card** allows a teacher to accurately communicate a student's progress toward meeting content standards at specific points in the school year.

## Key Terms Related to Standards-Based Grading

**Assessment:** The ongoing process of gathering data or giving feedback about a student's performance to determine a student's strengths or weaknesses, improve instruction & document student progress.

**Benchmark:** A reachable target for student learning at various points in the year, as defined by samples of student work. Typically, benchmarks link the child's performance to an age-or grade-appropriate point of reference.

**Evaluation:** The measurement, comparison & judgment of the value, quality, or worth of children's work and/or their schools, teachers, or specific educational program based upon valid evidence gathered through assessment.

**Evidence:** The data teachers collect to measure student proficiency. Assignments are one form of evidence.

**Formative Assessment:** Refers to assessment for learning. Occurs when teachers observe, listen & record personal needs and growth. Students self-evaluate, receive teacher feedback & have the opportunity to revise and resubmit their work. Formative assessment informs as the teacher instructs.

**Performance Levels:** In Grades 1-5, the proficiency level numbers 1-3 will be used on some student work and on the Standards-Based Report Card to indicate a student's level of understanding and performance.

**Rubric:** Identifies specific characteristics used to determine the degree to which a standard has been met. Rubrics promote learning by giving clear performance targets based upon agreed-upon learning goals.

**Standard:** Identifies what students should know and be able to do. Learning Standards for each subject and grade span are identified in the National Common Core State Standards ([corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org)) and can be also viewed online at the Avondale School District website. The federal No Child Left behind Act of 2001 uses the term "academic content standards" to mean content standards.

**Summative Assessment:** The assessment of learning at the end of a learning sequence. These assessments are usually not revised by students but are evidence for teachers to judge students' overall level of understanding at that point in time. Students are often aware of the criteria by which they will be evaluated so they can work towards meeting specific goals.

## Academic Proficiency Descriptors

Grading and reporting are integral parts of the instructional process. They provide vital information to students, parents, and other interested persons that can be used to enhance both teaching and learning. Grading and reporting certify attainment of learning goals, identify where additional work is needed, and provide a basis for improvement efforts. The report card is just one component of our reporting system.

Learning is a process that develops and strengthens over time. We encourage a strong home-school connection to keep you informed of your child's progress.

### Kindergarten

Children's early learning experiences have a profound effect on their development. In Kindergarten, children's receptivity to new influences and capacities to learn are at their peak. During this time, they acquire a variety of important skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will affect their ability to learn, their personal development, their relationship with others, and their future participation in society.

The expectations for kindergartners change from trimester to trimester. Children are expected to acquire skills and knowledge in areas that become more complex as the year progresses.

NOTE: The Fall Checklist is the only set of benchmarks assessed during the first trimester.

#### Evaluation Key:

(P) Progressing successfully

(D) Developing

(N) Needs more time, help, and practice.

### Grades 1-5

In Grades 1-3, students continue to learn to independently and collaboratively process and apply information. The student's proficiency levels will be reported for each standard that has been taught and assessed during that trimester marking period.

In Grades 4-5, students practice and expand their capacity to independently and collaboratively process and apply information. The student's proficiency levels will be reported for each standard with both traditional letter grades (A, B, C, D, and E) and proficiency levels (1, 2, and 3) for standards within each academic area.

The academic proficiency scale is:

(1) Meeting Standard

(2) Adequate progress towards Standards

(3) Limited progress towards Standards

(4) Inadequate progress towards Standards

(5) Curriculum modified

Proficiency levels are defined as follows:

#### (1) Meeting Standards

The student consistently meets or exceeds expectations of grade-level standards. The student shows depth of understanding and flexible application of grade level concepts, consistently producing quality work and requiring minimal support. Students at this level apply learning to new situations and independently use strategies and skills.

### (2) Adequate progress towards Standards

The student demonstrates a moderate understanding or application of grade level standards. The student is approaching the grade level standards, and requires occasional guidance from teachers and parents. Work is completed at an acceptable but rarely optimal level. Understanding of skills and content is displayed, but deeper understandings are not pursued or conveyed. Due to the developmental nature of learning, marks of "Progressing toward Standards" are reasonable and should be interpreted as on-target and acceptable.

### (3) Limited progress towards Standards

The student demonstrates an inconsistent understanding of the knowledge and skills expected at this grade level. The student requires consistent instructional attention and is not consistently independent with the concepts. Classroom work is attempted but oftentimes requires review and remediation. The student may work diligently but is not able to work independently and requires regular guidance from teachers and parents.

### (4) Inadequate progress towards Standards

Skills require considerable growth and refinement. The student exhibits limited understanding of concepts and learning material. The student requires constant support and struggles even with assistance. Classroom work is attempted but is rarely completed without extensive assistance and correction. The student is working below grade level, and significant intervention is needed from teachers and parents.

### (5) Curriculum Modified

**Students with Special Needs:** Students are graded according to grade level standards on the report card. Proficiency levels given on the new Standards-based Report Card must be based on expectations for that grade level. This means that any student performing below grade level in a specific content area CANNOT receive a 1 or "Meeting Standards" in that content area. For students with special needs, the IEP progress toward goal updates informs parents about their child's progress toward their IEP goals and is included with the delivery of every report card. Students whose IEP includes modified standards will receive additional assessment information from the special education department, and modified content areas will be marked on the report card as well.

**English Language Learners (EL):** The Avondale School district recognizes the continuum of language development within the four areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Proficiency levels given on the new Standards-based Report card must be based on expectations for that grade level. Language skills will be taken into consideration when assessing an EL student in relationship to grade level standards. Consideration is given to alternative means of assessment for the ELs. Portfolio assessments that may include a broad range of student work, teacher observations, or audio and videotapes of the student's work, offer a rich description of student's progress over time. For an EL student, every test is a language test. This means that the student may understand content but be unable to decipher a multiple-choice test. Therefore, the ESL staff will collaborate with teachers in identifying ways of allowing the student to demonstrate what he/she has learned without using complex English.

**Grade specific (K-5) Curriculum Guides are available on the Avondale School District website - [avondaleschools.org](http://avondaleschools.org).**

## Applying the Academic Standards Across the Curriculum

When community members and employers consider what they want citizens and employees to know and do, they often speak of broad areas of applied knowledge such as communication, thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. These areas connect or go beyond the mastery of individual subject areas. As students apply their knowledge both within and across the various curricular areas, they develop the concepts and complex thinking of educated persons.

Community members need these skills to function as responsible citizens. Employers prize those employees who demonstrate these skills because they are people who can continue learning and connect what they have learned to the requirements of a job. College and university faculty recognize the need for these skills as the means of developing the level of understanding that separates the expert from the beginner.

Teachers in every class expect and encourage the development of these shared applications, both to promote learning of the subject content and to extend learning across the curriculum.

These applications fall into five general categories:

1. Application of the Basic Skills
  - Reading, Mathematics, Writing, Social Studies, and Science
2. Ability to Think
  - Problem-solving
  - Informed decision-making
  - Systems thinking
  - Critical, creative, and analytical thinking
  - Imagining places, times, and situations different from one's own
  - Developing and testing a hypothesis
  - Transferring learning to new situations
3. Skill in Communication
  - Constructing and defending an argument
  - Working effectively in groups
  - Communicating plans and processes for reaching goals
  - Receiving and acting on instructions, plans, and models
  - Communicating with a variety of tools and skills
4. Production of Quality of Work
  - Acquiring and using information
  - Creating quality products and performances
  - Revising products and performances
  - Developing and pursuing positive goals
5. Connections with Community
  - Recognizing and acting on responsibilities as a citizen
  - Preparing for work and lifelong learning
  - Contributing to the aesthetic and cultural life of the community
  - Seeing oneself and one's community within the state, nation, and world
  - Contributing and adapting to scientific and technological change

## Frequently Asked Questions about Standards-Based Report Cards

### **Why is Avondale using the Standards-Based Report Card?**

Aligning classroom instruction, assessment, and feedback with rigorous standards is essential to improving teaching and learning. This is particularly true as we begin to roll out the new, more challenging Common Core State Standards. The revised K-5 Elementary report card is only one component of this effort. Other efforts include classroom assessments based on standards, student and parent conferences, and benchmark assessments to support more differentiated instruction and to identify students for targeted supports. Each of these creates an opportunity for individuals and groups of teachers to reflect on student learning and their own practice, and use meaningful, standards-specific feedback to empower students and engage families in monitoring student progress and improving learning.

This report card allows the Avondale Public School System to communicate with parents and students about grade level standards. Parents will be able to see whether students have mastered new skills, need extra assistance in areas need to be challenged even more. By using these clearly defined standards, teachers and parents can work together to ensure that students stay engaged in learning.

### **How did Avondale School District include parent & teacher feedback in the process of creating the new report card?**

Focus groups of parents and teachers were used to collect data in 2011-2012 and these responses informed revisions of the report card before it was presented to the Avondale School Board in June 2012. Report cards are designed to communicate with parents; they should be helpful and easy to understand.

### **How will social, behavioral, and learning attitudes be addressed on the new report card?**

Along with academic growth, teachers help to guide the social and emotional learning of their students. Emotionally competent children are happier and more productive. Schools provide wonderful opportunities for students to learn lifelong skills, including responsibility, problem-solving strategies, communication skills, perseverance, and putting forth a consistent effort to produce a quality product. These learning attitudes will also be addressed on the report card under "Social, Behave, Learn."

### **Why did the district choose to adopt a trimester reporting calendar?**

A trimester reporting calendar provides more time for students to demonstrate proficiency. Grading students in late autumn allows times for our students to make developmental jumps, and time to grow physically, socially, and academically. Students will be assessed in multiple ways every day, allowing for careful and precise monitoring of student achievement.

Students have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities, and teachers have additional time to tailor instruction to these demonstrated abilities. It also provides teachers more flexibility in the pacing of the curriculum.

This process provides increased opportunities for well-informed parent/teacher communication before the end of the first trimester; and promotes more detailed and meaningful conversation at parent/teacher conferences. In order to have rich, specific, and high quality information to share, teachers need more time to appropriately instruct and assess students.

If you have additional questions or concerns about your school's report card or suggestions for making the report easier to understand, please share them with us, we appreciate your feedback! To do so, visit [avondaleschools.org](http://avondaleschools.org). Feedback forms are also available in your elementary school office.