



GLEN HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

50 GLEN HILLS DRIVE

CRANSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CRANSTON, RHODE ISLAND 02920

JAY

DECRISTOFARO

SCHOOL HOURS: 8:55 AM TO 3:10 PM

PRINCIPAL

November 14, 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you know, Cranston Public Schools is implementing a standards-based report card on a trimester basis at the elementary level, the first of which will be distributed on or about December 8th. The goal is twofold: We want the report card to reflect the learning strategies we are teaching at each grade level as well as provide parents with detailed information about their child as a learner. As such, our learning targets (the Common Core and Next-Generation Science standards), instruction, and assessments have been changing to reflect what is happening in the classroom on a daily basis.

The purpose of standards-based grading is to identify what a student knows or is able to do. Instead of receiving a letter grade, each content area will reflect a number from 1 to 4, which defines the student's proficiency with the concept or skill (**Please see the explanation of each of the proficiency levels on the back of this letter**).

In a traditional grading system a student's performance for the entire quarter is averaged together. This can be misleading when considering the student's actual, consistent, performance level at the end of each quarter. For example let's say a student receives a "C" in mathematics for the first quarter. During the second quarter, the student's performance level rises to an "A" level, which means that the student's learning and performance has begun to really "click". However, when averaged with the "C" from the first quarter, the student would receive a "B" on the second quarter report card. Clearly, this can be quite misleading. Standards-based grading reveals the student's growth and progress toward a given standard.

Consider a novice golfer, who is striving to meet a standard that involves striking a drive at least 150 yards and within 25 yards of a given target on the fairway. Clearly, in the beginning, this fledgling golfer would likely receive a "1" or "2" on a proficiency scale early on. That's because this golfer is *working toward* the given standard, but just hasn't reached it yet. The celebration ensues six months later when the golfer meets the standard during all of his/her practice shots and receives a "3" grade. Months later, the golfer is able to achieve a "4" proficiency rating because he/she is able to meet or exceed that standard while *applying* the newly acquired skill while playing competitive rounds of golf (unless the golfer is me, in which case the "3" might be the ceiling!)

The same holds true for students in the classroom. At the beginning of their exposure to new skills or concepts students would typically have difficulty meeting the standard. This does not mean that they are not doing well in the classroom; they just need more time, more instruction, and more practice to be able to reach higher proficiency levels in that skill or concept. Going back to my explanation in the third paragraph, the student that had truly improved their grasp of the new mathematics skills and concepts would find themselves jumping to a "3" or "4", meaning that they were able to meet or exceed the targeted standard at that point in time.

It is important that parents not equate a standards-based 4,3,2,1 system to a traditional A,B,C, D scoring system.

Again, the latter utilizes an averaging system based on 100%, while the former measures student proficiency on grade level learning targets using the most recent, consistent level of performance. It provides parents with an opportunity to understand those skills the child has mastered and whether they are working at grade level. Frankly, a “4” will be more difficult to achieve than an “A”, simply because the student must be able to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the content by being able to *apply* their learning to other situations such as their writing, conversations, and discussion of related content. For example, a student may receive a 100 on a spelling test, but to what degree can that student spell those same words properly while writing an essay? Again, *application* of the skill or concept is a key feature in determining whether a student has met a standard or exceeded the standard.

The change to a standards-based report card system also requires that teachers change the way in which they assess proficiency levels on any given assignment or task. They must determine the level to which a student’s response to a given task demonstrates proficiency in understanding and applying the skill or concept expected within the grade level standard. As such, you will see more student work samples and assessments that are graded on the 1,2,3,4 scale. As we go forward, virtually all assessments will be graded on this basis.

I plan to discuss the new report card and grading system at the PT GH meeting on Thursday, November 16th at 7:00 PM. I will use that time to also answer any questions you may have. If you cannot attend I would encourage you to email me at jdecrisofaro@cpsed.net and I will get back to you within 24 hours.

Explanation of Proficiency Levels

4 - Exceeding (Consistently Evident) - consistently applies concepts to new situations; extends ideas/draws connections to real-world situations; thoroughly explains concepts; demonstrates deep understanding of concept/skill; solves problems in multiple ways; describes/analyzes topics with detailed/insightful supporting evidence; poses new questions; consistently reflective/solution oriented...

3 - Meeting (Usually Evident) - applies concepts to new situations with increasing confidence; explains concepts with details; usually demonstrates an understanding of concept/skill; demonstrates an understanding/interconnected details by drawing connections; needs few refinements; asks strong questions; submits original and well-thought-out work after feedback; analyzes relevant information; conveys thoughts and connections to the concept...

2 - Progressing (Sometimes Evident) - demonstrates increased understanding of concept but needs more practice to apply it; leaves out key elements of the concept; attempting to examine, describe and explain the concept or skill; needs to continue to explore topics to learn more; starts to ask questions and support analysis; needs assistance to meet goals; looks for answers to general questions...

1 - Emerging (Rarely Evident) - inconsistently identifies key elements of concept/skills; demonstrates limited or basic understanding of the topic; needs to revisit a topic to develop an understanding; demonstrates an emerging skill set; needs multiple exposure and re-teaching to gain understanding of concept/skill...

Sincerely,

Jay DeCristofaro
Principal