

Standards Based Report Card: Reading Sheet

A standards based report card gives each learning standard its own mark and reports work habits on a separate scale. Use this sheet the first time one comes home, and again before every conference.

1. Fill in your district's scale key

Every district words its levels differently, and the words carry the meaning. Copy yours here before you read a single mark.

Level	Your district's label	What it means in plain words
4		
3		
2		
1		

The most common misread: a 3 is not a B. On most cards the third level means the student met the grade-level standard, which is the target the course was built around.

2. The five-minute read

1. **Find the scale key first.** Usually on the back or the bottom.
2. **Read down the standards, not across the subjects.** Look for the one or two lines marked lowest. That is the conversation.
3. **Read the work-habits section separately.** Strong academic marks beside weak habits marks is a completely different problem from the reverse.
4. **Ask what evidence produced the mark.** Which assignment, which attempt, how recent.
5. **Ask what a 3 would take.** Make the answer a specific next piece of work, not a target number.

3. Write down the two lowest standards

Standard	Mark	Evidence behind it	What would move it

Before the First Card Goes Home

Checklist

□	Item
	Read your district's grading policy first. Some of this is a local policy decision, not a classroom one.
	Send the scale key before the card, not with it — and in the languages your families read.
	Say “a 3 means your student met the standard” in writing, early, more than once.
	Check that nothing in the academic marks is behavior. Late penalties, participation, completion points.
	Be able to name two or three pieces of recent evidence per standard.
	Decide what a reassessment costs and say it out loud in advance.
	Report a short list of priority standards. A card listing forty marks is unreadable.
	Ask to see the school profile that goes to colleges. If nobody has written it, that is the job that is late.

What the research says, in four lines

- Grades correlate with standardized achievement tests at about .5 — roughly a quarter of the variation is shared with the tested skill (Brookhart et al., 2016, *Review of Educational Research*).
- In one high school math study of 795 students, including homework and employability points moved 43.2% of semester grades by 5% or more and 12.6% by a full letter grade (Griffin & Townsley, 2021).
- Parents who received both forms for two marking periods overwhelmingly preferred the standards based one; the 383 teachers surveyed were positive but significantly less so (Swan, Guskey & Jung, 2014).
- Many parents read standards based labels as letter grades anyway — a 4 as an A, a 2 as a D. The scale does not fix that. The key and the first conference do.

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