

Standards-Based Report Card Grading Terms

Accommodations

Adaptations in assessment tools and standards to permit children with disabilities or English language learners to show what they know and can do. Adjustments may be made, for example, in the way a test is administered or presented, in the timing, in the language, or in how the child responds. The nature of the adjustment determines whether or not what is being measured or the comparability of scores is affected.

Accountability

An organization's or individual's responsibility for developing and implementing a process or procedure to justify decisions made and to demonstrate the results or outcomes produced (e.g., what progress children are making).

Achievement Test

A testing instrument, typically standardized and norm referenced, used to measure how much a child has learned in relation to educational objectives.

Alignment

The horizontal (coordination within an age/grade level), vertical (what came before and what will follow), and temporal (across a period of time) relationships among early learning standards, curriculum, teaching practices, and assessment.

Assessment

A systematic procedure for obtaining information from observation, interviews, portfolios, projects, tests, and other sources that can be used to make judgments about characteristics of children or programs.

Benchmarks

Clear, specific descriptions of knowledge or skill that can be supported through observations, descriptions, and documentations of a child's performance or behavior and by samples of child's work often used as points of reference in connection with more broadly stated content standards.

- Typically, *benchmarks* link the child's performance to an age- or grade-appropriate point of reference.
- *Benchmarks* are *performance standards* (e.g., data from previous years) against which other performances (e.g., data from the current year) are judged.
- *Performance standards* and *benchmarks* are similar to *indicators*, but different in that indicators typically are used to show either incline or decline in an item under study and are often expressed as a statistic. *Performance standards* or *benchmarks* usually express upward growth in a child's knowledge or skill.

Content standards

Statements that provide a clear description of what a child should know and be able to do in a content area at a particular level.

- *Content standards* organize the learning expectations into a manageable number of general statements for a particular age level.
- *Content standards* are intended to inform teachers, schools, parents and the community what children are expected to learn and what teachers are expected to teach.
- The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 uses the term “academic content standards” to mean *content standards*.

Criterion Referenced

Criterion-referenced standards and assessments compare individual student performance to specific, stated objectives, learning goals or expectations. Criterion-referenced assessment systems do not compare student performance to other students.

Criterion-Based Test

A testing instrument in which the test-taker's performance (i.e., score) is interpreted by comparing it with a pre-specified standard or specific content and/or skills.

- *Criterion-referenced tests* are distinguished from *norm-referenced tests*, the scores of which are derived by comparing the performance of the test-taker to the composite of scores of a group (the "norming" group).
- On a *criterion-referenced test*, it is possible that none, or all, of those being tested will reach a particular goal or performance standard.
- The distinction between *norm-referenced tests* and *criterion-referenced tests* is especially important in light of federal requirements for standards-based assessment.
- Although these criterion-referenced tests are almost always referred to as *criterion-referenced tests*, they are really criterion-referenced interpretations of a score of a given test.
- Understanding the meaning of scores resulting from *criterion-referenced tests* requires some understanding of statistics.

Evaluation

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

- Sources emphasize that the purpose of an evaluation must be clearly articulated and the evaluation methods used should be consistent with the purpose.
- The evidence or data collected should be relevant to the purpose of the evaluation and be used in a manner consistent with the purpose and method for collecting the data.
- Evaluations can be conducted on several levels-evaluations of: children's learning and development, particular teaching strategies or curricula, a teacher's effectiveness in implementing the program, the quality of the learning environment, and/or the system or community within which the services are delivered. The “level” that is examined and the methods for collecting data must be consistent with the purpose of the evaluation.
- Examples of inappropriate evaluation practices:

- Using test scores as a measure of the success of a program when the test, itself, is designed for use with children who are older.
- Using children's attendance as a measure of program effectiveness.
- In special education, the term evaluation often refers to the process used to determine a child's eligibility for services.

Evidence

Evidence is student data teachers collect to measure student proficiency. Assignments are one form of assessment used to collect the evidence.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment refers to assessment for learning. It occurs when teachers observe, listen, and record personal needs and growth. Students self-evaluate, receive teacher feedback, and have the opportunity to revise and resubmit their work. Formative assessment inform as teacher instruction.

Indicators

Various statistical values, data, or other reported information that, when aggregated, provide an indication of the condition or direction of movement relative to a standard or issue under study.

- Indicators can measure an array of things...inputs, outputs, processes, and outcomes.
- Indicators must measure movement (progress or decline) relative to a given target or standard.
- In some documents describing learning standards, the term indicators is sometimes used as a subhead describing more specific and measurable aspects of the standards.

Norm Referenced

Normative-referenced standards and assessment data compares achievement of a particular student to the achievement of other students. Norms are used appropriately in competitions when ranking is necessary.

Rubric

A set of guidelines for assessment that includes clear performance standards and a rating scale. Performance standards define how well the students are expected to demonstrate learning and rubrics align the performance standards to a specific performance level.

- The term is typically defined as it applies to a system used to judge the quality of a child's work rather than general characteristics of learners.
- Rubrics promote learning by giving clear performance targets based upon agreed-upon learning goals.
- Rubrics are used to make subjective judgments about a child's work or developmental status more objective through clearly articulated criteria for performance or expected knowledge. The scoring values show gradation in quality, with descriptions or illustrations of examples of performances at each of the score

point values, for each of the levels of performance (from poor or weak through a strong response).

Rubrics can be used by primary-age children to understand next steps in their learning or how to improve their work.

Standards-Based Assessment

A process through which the criteria for assessment are derived directly from content and/or performance standards.

A standards-based test is one based on the outcome-based education or performance-based education philosophy. Assessment is a key part of the standards reform movement. The first part is to set new, higher standards to be expected of every student. Then the curriculum must be aligned to the new standards. Finally, the student must be assessed if they meet these standards of what every student “must know and be able to do.”

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is 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 aware of the criteria by which they will be evaluated (throughout the course) and they can work towards meeting specific goals.