



## Lincoln Public Schools

Mary L. Sterling, Ph.D.  
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

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To: School Committee  
From: Mary Sterling  
Re: Report on plans for a Standards-Based Reporting System  
Date: November 15, 2010

One of our district goals this year addresses our practice of reporting on student learning progress:

In order to improve reporting on student progress, the district will design and pilot a standards-based reporting system.

This report describes the background for this goal, some of the fundamental principles and practices of standards-based assessment, the work underway for the piloting of a new report card, a draft of the new report card, and a timeline for ongoing efforts to implement a standards-based reporting system.

### **Background**

Standards-based reporting depends on an agreed-upon set of standards, common practices of teaching to the standards, and assessments that measure progress related to those standards. More than five years ago, this district began an initiative to articulate the curriculum in every subject area in terms of standards. Our current Lincoln Learning Expectations are the result of that initiative and they are fully aligned with Massachusetts Standards. A curriculum based on standards focuses on learning targets for students, rather than on topics for teachers to cover. We place the focus on student learning at the core of every subject area by describing three dimensions: Big Ideas, Key Outcomes, and Essential Knowledge and Skills. The Lincoln Learning Expectations are the "agreed-upon standards," and our teachers' units of instruction are aligned with those standards.

Of the three dimensions in the Lincoln Learning Expectations, the Key Outcomes are the learning targets that we assess to determine whether students can demonstrate what they know and are able to do. In the past three years, teachers have been engaged in developing and selecting common assessments based on Key Outcomes in our curriculum. For example the K-8 writing prompts, which are common assessments connected to Key Outcomes in the composition standards, were given this past September to all students. Such consistent, district-based assessment provides us with evidence of how well students are achieving in writing compared to standards. This type of September writing prompt provides a baseline of performance, against which we can gauge progress. We re-assess student writing at the end of May and score the work with similar criteria to gather data on growth. Other subject areas have common assessments and teacher-developed classroom assessments that focus on particular skill development related to Key Outcomes. The basic foundation for standards-based reporting of student progress has now been established through the development of our Lincoln Learning Expectations, our consistent instructional practices, and our common assessments.

The purpose of standards-based reporting is to communicate to students and families what the student knows and is able to do relative to grade level standards. Such communication occurs through ongoing feedback to students, scores on student assignments, conversation during parent conferences, and report cards. To reach our district goal about reporting on student progress, we are working on all these dimensions of communication. In particular,

we are designing and piloting a new report card at grades four and five this year. We believe that this pilot will provide a learning opportunity to then refine the K-3 report card and create a new design for middle school grades. The development of this report card involves the fourth and fifth grade classroom and special education teachers, along with specialist teachers, curriculum leaders, and principals. Parent communication and feedback are essential to this initiative and are included in the timeline for the pilot this year.

### **Developing a System of Standards-Based Assessment and Reporting**

A standards-based assessment system takes time to develop and to use effectively. Last year, a Steering Committee was formed to guide the process; its members are: Randy Davis, Sharon Hobbs, Judy Merra, Ellen Metzger, and Mary Sterling. In the spring, Steering Committee members met with K-5 faculty in both schools to discuss the initiative and to get a first round of input to the proposed report card. In all the work we are doing, some key principles guide our efforts. We know from experiences of other communities and the professional literature that a standards-based assessment and reporting system is informative, coherent, and equitable when it has the following characteristics:

1. Describes what students know and are able to do relative to clear standards & expectations.
2. Separates subject-area achievement from non-academic factors.
3. Uses clear categories and consistent scoring/grading symbols.
4. Bases summative scores on achievement toward the end of a learning period.
5. Connects the parent conference, progress report, and report card in a common set of categories and information about progress.

Our pilot report card at grades four and five (see sample in Appendix) is designed according to these principles:

1. The report card is formatted so that in the categories for each subject area, the learning descriptors state what students should know and be able to do. They are aligned with the Lincoln Learning Expectations for each grade level.
2. Scores for Social Development, Work Habits, and Effort are clearly separate from achievement scores for the subject area learning targets.
3. Reporting on student achievement utilizes a scoring guide that is consistent across classrooms and grades; the same 4 point scoring system is used for many individual student assignments.
4. The scores for each trimester reflect the level of achievement for that descriptor to date, based on the most recent assessment evidence gathered by the teacher.
5. The grade four and five teams began to use these report card categories to prepare information to share at fall parent conferences and again in the spring conferences.

The assessment practices used by the grade four and five teams of teachers are informed by the five key characteristics of a standards-based system. Teachers are articulating the grade level standards as learning targets for their students so that students know what is expected. Through class discussions, examples, and feedback, students are coming to understand the distinction between the effort they make and level of achievement they are able to reach. Increasingly, teachers are scoring student work with a four point scale and students are learning what that scale means so that the scores on the report card will be familiar to them. Teachers are using formative assessment measures early in a learning period and summative measures towards the end. They plan to evaluate student progress on each descriptor using summative measures. Finally, teachers are keeping records and examples of student work in each subject area to support the conversations in parent conferences.

Good development of a new assessment system depends on plenty of teacher input, trying out approaches, time for reflection, and opportunities for revision. Our pilot teams of fourth and fifth grade teachers have worked hard to refine their approach to assessing, record-keeping, giving ongoing feedback to students, and evaluating progress towards grade level expectations. They are preparing for the first trimester report card and they expect to continue developing strategies and skills in standards-based assessment as the year progresses.

Recently, the pilot teams met to work with Lynn Stuart<sup>1</sup>, an experienced leader in standards-based assessment. During the course of their work with Lynn, teachers voiced some of the promises and challenges of standards-based assessment and reporting. The following representative comments capture a few of the promising aspects of moving towards standards-based teaching, learning and assessment:

- Grade level team collaboration has been strong; we are talking about practice in a deeper way as we make sure we align our teaching to the expectations.
- Using descriptors of standards helps me pinpoint where my students struggle and where they are able to do the work.
- The grade level descriptors can provide clarity for parents about what we are teaching and what their children are learning. The scoring system helps students see their strengths and gives them direction for improvement.

Although the advantages are compelling, the challenges can be daunting:

- It has been a challenge to choose the right descriptors for the report card to convey the most important information about learning.
- It is difficult to manage the time and the organization needed to gather data the course of the trimester so I can keep track of progress, give feedback, and score a report card.
- I am concerned about how to communicate with parents about this new system and how they will understand their child's progress with the four point scoring system through the year.

Steering Committee members and pilot teachers welcome feedback and ideas along the way as we work toward meeting challenges and making the promise of standards-based assessment a reality.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Implementation Timeline**

### **Draft Report Card**

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<sup>1</sup> See: Lynn Stuart, Assessment in Practice : Creating a School Culture of Learning and Assessment, Newton Lower Falls, MA: Teachers 21, 2003.

## **2010-2011 Timeline and Process for Development of a Standards-Based Reporting System**

### Summer 2010

- ✓ Meet with Steering Committee to review progress; plan 2010-11 timeline & process
- ✓ Complete drafts of all student descriptors K-5 in ELA, Math, Social Studies, Science based on Learning Expectations/ Key Outcomes
- ✓ Draft guidelines for parent open house and fall conferences fall
- ✓ Draft information for parents re SB reporting to be used in September meetings; coffees
- ✓ Develop first round of information about SB assessment and scoring for gr. 4/5
- ✓ Develop new draft of K-5 Report card based on Steering Committee meeting and June teacher input – ready for review in Sept/Oct
- ✓ 8/30 Opening Day: Update faculty on this goal, reiterate why important & what value will be gained, reference timeline and teacher involvement.

### Fall 2010

- ✓ Ensure Specialist drafts complete for K-5 descriptors; esp. gr. 4/5
- ✓ Pilot team review of report card draft; submit revisions
- ✓ Begin pilot team conversation about SB assessment, scoring, and record keeping
- ✓ Complete guidelines for Parent open house and conference for pilot teams
- ✓ Get pilot feedback on parent conferences and connection to SB reporting. Nov.
- ✓ Carolyn Cullinane develops pilot report card 10/1 – 10/31
- Pilot team; specialists for gr. 4/5 work with report card --November
- Present initial report on SB assessment to School Committee
- Report card distributed in December with parent info sheet and survey attached;
- Gr 4 & 5 gives Steering Committee feedback on using new report card – Nov/ Dec.

### Winter/Spring 2011

- Share feedback and results from pilot with faculty
- Begin faculty conversations re: revising grade K-3 and grade 6 report card
- Develop report card versions for K-3 based on revisions from pilot; revise 4 & 5
- Develop report card draft for grade 6; review process with 6-8 teachers & specialists
- Continue work on SB assessment and scoring
- Refocus on March conferences K-5 and connection to SB reporting; get feedback
- Finalize K-6 report card drafts in X2 format. Complete parent info sheet

### **Parent Information and Involvement Timeline**

- ✓ September Open House: pilot teams explain plans to parents
- PTO/ A and School Council: give information about plans; get questions and feedback – Nov/Dec
- General parent info meeting at parent coffees – Nov/Dec
- Grade 4 & 5 pilot parent survey sheets – Dec.
- Middle school parent meeting – coffee and possibly evening – Spring
- Article re SB reporting system by Assist. Super in school newsletters -- Spring
- Parent Handbook description – Summer 2011
- Parent info sheet re reporting plans K-6 -- Sept. 2011



# LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## REPORT CARD

Term: 1 December 13, 2010

**Lincoln School**  
 6 Ballfield Road  
 Lincoln, Massachusetts 01773  
 781.259.9400

**ATTENDANCE RECORD**

	Present	Tardy	Absent
Term 1			
Term 2			
Term 3			
Year to Date			

*To the Parent/Guardian of:*

[First Name] [Last Name]

Street Home Address

C/S/Z Home Address

Grade:      YOG:              Homeroom:

Teacher: [Title Mr./Mrs./Ms] [Last Name]

**Scoring Guide**

4 = Exceeding the grade level standard at this time  
 3 = Achieving the grade level standard at this time  
 2 = Progressing toward the grade level standard at this time  
 1 = Not achieving the grade level standard at this time  
 NA = Not assessed at this time  
 \* = Score based on modified curriculum

### Growth as a Learner

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT		Dec	March	June
<b>Cooperation</b>	Works and plays cooperatively with peers			
	Works cooperatively with adults			
<b>Assertion</b>	Demonstrates initiative			
	Uses positive strategies to resolve conflict			
	Perseveres when faced with challenges			
<b>Responsibility</b>	Respects rules of the school and classroom community			
	Accepts responsibility for own actions			
	Respects rights, diversity, and feelings of others			
<b>Empathy</b>	Respects self and demonstrates empathy towards others			
<b>Self Control</b>	Displays self control			

WORK HABITS				
	Takes responsibility for organizing personal and school belongings			
	Follows directions, routines and procedures			
	Manages time well			
	Transitions in a timely manner			
	Works well independently			
	Seeks help as needed			
	Completes home assignments			

<b>CLASSROOM TEACHER COMMENTS:</b> Growth As a Learner	
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## Academic Achievement

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS		Dec	March	June
<b>Language</b>	Contributes thoughtfully to large group and/or small group discussions			
	Expresses thoughts clearly in oral presentation			
	Identifies new vocabulary and uses it correctly			
	Identifies the terms: antonym, synonym and homophone			
	Identifies correct grammar and word usage conventions in written context (noun, verb, adjective and adverb)			
<b>Reading and Literature</b>	Reads grade-level text fluently			
	Reads grade-level texts with comprehension			
	Exhibits active reading behaviors (makes predictions, draws conclusions, visualizes, makes connections, infers, reads for answers)			
	Describes basic elements of fictional text (plot, character and setting)			
	Explains the use of common textural features of nonfiction text (glossary, index, headings)			
	Categorizes characteristics of different genres among common forms of literature			
<b>Composition Craft</b>	Organizes written text to match forms of writing (stories, letters, directions, expository writing, and accounts of personal experiences)			
	Includes sensory information in written stories and poems which allow the reader to visualize			
	Shows attention to audience and purpose in writing			
	Revises writing for craft (idea development, word choice, voice, sentence fluency)			
<b>Conventions</b>	Uses conventions expected at grade-level (mechanics, grammar, punctuation)			
	Spells grade-level words correctly in writing			
	Applies knowledge of spelling patterns to unfamiliar words			
	Writes legibly			
<b>Effort</b>	Participates, ask for clarification, attends to work, and perseveres when challenged			

MATHEMATICS		Dec	March	June
<b>Number and Numeration</b>	Reads, writes and compares whole numbers up to 1,000,000			
	Reads, writes and compares whole numbers and decimals to the 100ths place			
	Represents fractions as equal parts of a region or set and solves problems involving fractional parts			
<b>Operations and Computation</b>	Efficiently recalls basic addition and subtraction facts and extensions			
	Solves problems involving addition and subtraction of whole numbers, decimals and simple fractions			
	Efficiently recalls multiplication facts through 10 x 10 and related division facts			
	Solves problems involving multiplication and division of whole numbers			
<b>Patterns, Functions and Algebra</b>	Finds multiples of whole numbers less than ten and factors of numbers up to 100			
	Describes rules for number patterns and uses these rules to solve problems			

<b>Data and Chance</b>	Writes expressions and number sentences to model number stories			
	Collects, organizes, displays and uses data to ask and answer questions			
	Finds the maximum, minimum, range, median and mode of a data set and uses them to draw conclusion			
	Expresses the probability of an event using a fraction			
<b>Measurement</b>	Uses appropriate techniques, tools, and units in making measurements of length, weight, area, perimeter, volume, capacity and time			
<b>Geometry</b>	Identifies, draws and describes points, line segments, rays, lines and angles			
	Describes, compares and classifies triangles, quadrangles and solid figures			
<b>Problem Solving</b>	Applies effective strategies to read and solve story problems			
	Represents mathematical ideas in a variety of ways			
	Communicates mathematical ideas through discussion and/or writing			
<b>Effort</b>	Participates, asks for clarification, attends to work, and perseveres when challenged			

SCIENCE		Dec	March	June
<b>Science Inquiry</b>	Able to plan and carry out science investigations using process skills			
<b>Life Science</b>	Explains and gives examples of the parts, functions and life cycles of plants			
<b>Earth and Space Science</b>	Describes the relationships between the movements of earth, moon and sun			
<b>Physical Science</b>	Explains how sound is produced and how pitch and volume are regulated			
<b>Effort</b>	Participates, asks for clarification, attends to work, and perseveres when challenged			

SOCIAL STUDIES		Dec	March	June
<b>Geography</b>	Explains the interaction between the physical and human characteristics of North America			
	Identifies regions, boundaries, geographic features of North America and explains significance			
<b>History</b>	Describes the influence of indigenous and immigrant groups in the development of North America history			
<b>Civics</b>	Explain the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship			
<b>Economics</b>	Describe the impact of supply and demand related to limited and unlimited natural resources of North America			
<b>Effort</b>	Participates, asks for clarification, attends to work, and perseveres when challenged			

<b>CLASSROOM TEACHER COMMENTS:</b> Academic Achievement	
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ART		Mr./Mrs./Ms. Last Name	Dec	March	June
<b>Media, Materials and Techniques</b>	Uses materials and techniques in conjunction with taught concepts				
<b>Elements and Principles of Design</b>	Uses elements and principles within their body of work				
<b>Observation and Expression</b>	Demonstrates the abilities and skills of observation, abstraction, invention and expression				
<b>Discussion and Exploration of Art</b>	Uses visual arts vocabulary in discussions and descriptions of artworks and processes				
<b>Effort</b>	Participates, asks for clarification, attends to work, and perseveres when challenged				
<b>TEACHER COMMENTS</b>					

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY		Mr./Mrs./Ms. Last Name	Dec	March	June
<b>Basic Operations</b>	Uses intermediate features of word processing and/or presentation software				
	Locates, opens and saves files to specific locations on the network				
<b>Research</b>	Uses online sources to locate information and cites information accurately				
<b>Ethics and Safety</b>	Explains and follows ethical and safety guidelines for using technology resources				
<b>Effort</b>	Participates, asks for clarification, attends to work, and perseveres when challenged				
<b>TEACHER COMMENTS</b>					

FOREIGN LANGUAGE		Mr./Mrs./Ms. Last Name	Dec	March	June
<b>Communication</b>	Engages in simple conversation in Spanish				
	Understands and interprets simple ideas in Spanish through listening				
	Expresses simple ideas in Spanish orally				
<b>Culture</b>	Describes cultural perspectives, practices and products of Spanish-speaking countries				
<b>Comparisons</b>	Identifies linguistic similarities and differences between Spanish and English				
<b>Effort</b>	Participates, asks for clarification, attends to work, and perseveres when challenged				
<b>TEACHER COMMENTS</b>					



MUSIC		Mr./Mrs./Ms. Last Name	Dec	March	June
<b>Singing</b>	Sings with melodic accuracy both in unison and with contrasting parts				
<b>Instrument Playing</b>	Uses appropriate hand/mallet technique while playing simple repeated patterns (ostinati) and/or melodic/improvised patterns				
<b>Music Literacy</b>	Reads and writes music including both simple and complex rhythms				
<b>Critical Response</b>	Uses terminology and/or movement to respond to music				
<b>Effort</b>	Participates, asks for clarification, attends to work, and perseveres when challenged				
<b>TEACHER COMMENTS</b>					

WELLNESS		Mr./Mrs./Ms. Last Name	Dec	March	June
<b>Physical Activity and Fitness</b>	Demonstrates competence in manipulative and locomotor skills				
	Meets physical fitness benchmarks				
<b>Growth and Development</b>	Explains function of selected body systems and the role of nutrition in personal health				
	Explains guidelines and rationale to protect personal safety in school, on the bus and outdoors				
<b>Social Interaction</b>	Demonstrates cooperative and safe behavior in physical activity as an individual and in groups				
<b>Effort</b>	Participates, asks for clarification, attends to work, and perseveres when challenged				
<b>TEACHER COMMENTS</b>					

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**Parent Acknowledgement**

[Student First Name] [Student Last Name]  
 Street Home Address  
 C/S/Z Home Address

**Please sign, date, and return this slip to acknowledge that you have received this report card. Thank you.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

**Comments: (optional)**