



Lincoln Public Schools Lincoln, Massachusetts

To: School Committee
From: Mary Sterling
Re: Progress Report on Standards-based Assessment and Reporting
Date: March 23, 2011

On November 15, 2010 a report was presented to School Committee about the district goal to develop a standards-based assessment and reporting system. This report provides an update with specific reference to the grade 4/5 pilot report card, the development of standards-based reporting at grades K-3 and 6, and next steps to be taken this spring and summer.

The district commitment to a standards-based report card means more than just reporting. It advances our progress in being standards-based in our teaching and assessment practices. The development of a new standards-based report card rests on the foundation of the Lincoln Learning Expectations and grows out of the work we have done with common assessments and using data to inform instruction. Most importantly, we are developing greater depth in our use of formative assessments which are clearly aligned to agreed-upon standards at each grade level.

Grade 4/5 Pilot Report Card

Teachers in grades 4 and 5 prepared carefully during the first trimester to assess progress of students according to each descriptor in the new report card. Through the process, they worked on refining the learning targets for students, aligning assessment strategies, and developing methods of organizing data about student performance. Teachers also worked with students to help them understand the 4-3-2-1 scoring scale so they could interpret their own progress. On December 13, the new report card was sent out to 216 fourth and fifth graders, with a cover letter to parents. (See cover letter at the end of this report.)

To understand the parent perspective about this new report card, we provided a survey and encouraged parents to respond. (See survey questions at the end of this report.) Initially, we only received 11 responses by the stated deadline. However we reissued an invitation to respond to the survey and opened it for two more weeks. We received a total of 36 responses between the two campuses. We also paid attention to the informal contacts parents made with fourth and fifth grade teachers following the distribution of the new report card. A total of 25 parents e-mailed or telephoned teachers to discuss the report card; 4 requested a meeting with the teacher.

Parent response ranged from appreciation for the clarity and level of detail in this report card to dissatisfaction and a desire for letter grades. Overall, the response was more positive than negative: the percentage of parents answering in the first two categories combined (*Strongly Agree and Agree*) was consistently higher for each question on the survey than the percentage of parents responding in the last two categories combined (*Disagree and Strongly Disagree*). The highest positive rating showed that 63% of parents understand the new scoring scale and only 15% of parents do not. The lowest positive rating was the question about communicating with the child about progress: 43% of parents believe the report card assisted them and 37% of parents did not. Comments at the end of the survey indicated thoughtful consideration of this new system. A few parents commented that they understand letter grades much better and would prefer them. Others felt that the new scoring scale was more specific but would take some time to get used to. A few parents felt the report card is too long; others appreciated the finer level of detail. Both teachers and parents are finding that a score of "2" is hard to assess and to interpret. In this scoring system, a 2 means "Yes, but not quite;" it means that the student's performance is not quite to grade level standards at this time. For some students and parents, this feels very disappointing. For some teachers, the distance between current performance and meeting grade level standards is hard to

convey. The pilot team teachers have continued to work on clarifying what a 2 means so that both students and parents understand. We are committed to continuing our dialogue with parents and to make the scoring scale one that communicates important information about student performance. Information will be made available to parents this spring and principals will make the new report card a topic of conversation in meetings with parents.

Development of Standards-based Reporting at Grades K-3 and 6

This winter, presentations were made to faculties of middle and elementary schools about standards-based teaching, assessment, and reporting. Teachers learned about the guiding principles of standards-based assessment, the design and features of the pilot report card, and feedback from the pilot teachers. Emphasis was placed on engaging teachers to develop standards-based learning descriptors at each grade level and a timeline for developing standards-based report cards was outlined.

Since those initial meetings, teachers and specialists in grades K-3 and 6 have met in several sessions to deepen their understanding of standards-based assessment and to draft report card descriptors in all subject areas at each grade level. Discussions have been lively and teachers have offered much input and raised important questions. A full draft of a new report card for each grade level will be shared with teachers by mid April. At that time, teachers will have the opportunity for further input and discussion of how assessments align with report card descriptors.

Next Steps

During the spring, drafts will be finalized at each grade level, K-6, and will be ready to enter in our student data management system (X2) by the close of the school year. We will also develop a brief information piece on standards-based assessment and reporting for principals to include in their parent newsletters and we will work with PTO and PTA to set up times for parents to meet and discuss the new system. This spring will also be an important opportunity for schools and the district to develop goals and set aside time to support standards-based instruction, assessment, and reporting for the 2011-2012 school year.

A summer work session will be offered to teachers on standards-based assessment and reporting. To date, more than 35 teachers have indicated their interest in participating in a two-day session in late June. This session will be an opportunity for professional development and a working session to prepare for the coming school year. In July, a new description of our standards-based assessment and reporting system will be developed for the parent handbook.

In 2011-12, we anticipate that students in grades K-6 will receive the new standards-based report card each trimester. We will prepare a parent letter and information materials to distribute in the fall and principals will again work with PTO and PTA to schedule information sessions. Teachers and specialists will be working to refine assessments and methods of recording results. Most importantly, teachers will provide ongoing feedback and encouragement to students to help them all reach grade level standards.

PARENT LETTER TO ACCOMPANY GRADES 4/5 REPORT CARDS

HEADING principal

December 15, 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Today you are receiving the Term 1 report card for your child. This communication of your child's progress is designed to provide you with written documentation of your child's growth as a learner and academic achievement thus far in the school year.

The design and intent of this report card is new. As you may know, we are piloting a new standards-based report card in grades 4 and 5 this year, with the intention of using a similar report card in grades K-6 by September, 2011. The purpose of a standards-based report card is to communicate to students and parents about student progress relative to grade-level standards. We believe that this report card gives you clear information about the important learning targets for the year in each subject area. This report card is intended to provide a picture of student strengths and needs at the end of each trimester. The enclosed brochure gives you more information on the scoring system in this report card and provides answers to some commonly asked questions.

We encourage you and your child to review the card carefully, celebrate the areas of strength, and discuss goals and expectations for the next trimester. Please sign the signature sheet at the end of the report card and return it to your child's teacher next week.

I appreciate hearing any comments, questions, or concerns that you may have as we continue to strengthen our home/school communication.

Sincerely,

Name, Principal

PARENT FEEDBACK WANTED!

Please give us your perspective on our new report card by taking a short survey. The survey is on the LPS website. You do not need to sign in to the website in order to take the survey. You may access the survey by entering the following URL into your Web browser, or by following these "breadcrumbs" on the www.lincnet.org website:

Start Pages>Parents>Parent Surveys www.lincnet.org/parentsurveys

Surveys will be available on the website until December 22, 2010.

We welcome your feedback during this pilot year of a new standards-based report card. Please respond to the following questions using the scoring scale below.

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Neutral** **Disagree** **Strongly Disagree**

1. The new report card makes the expectations clear in each subject area.

2. The new report card gives me a clear understanding of my child's current progress toward meeting grade level standards at the end of the first trimester.

3. The new report card provides me with a picture of my child's strengths and needs in social development and work habits.

4. The new report card provides me with a picture of my child's strengths and needs in academic achievement.

5. The new report card will assist me in communicating with my child about his/her progress.

6. I understand the 1-2-3-4 scoring scale.

7. I would like more information about how to read this report card.

Please enter below any comments you'd like to share: