



Lincoln Public Schools

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

To: School Committee
From: Mary Sterling
Re: Update on Standards-based Assessment and Reporting
Date: December 6, 2011

Several of our 2011-12 district goals address our practices of assessing and reporting on student learning progress using a standards-based approach:

- Implement standards-based planning, instruction, differentiation, assessing and reporting in all subjects
- Implement standards-based report cards for grades K-5, pilot grade 6, and develop plans for grades 7 and 8
- Provide professional development for teachers implementing standards-based reporting.

In 2010-11, two reports were presented to School Committee regarding a standards-based system of assessing and reporting. On November 15, 2010 a report described the background for the standards-based initiative and explained some guiding principles of standards-based approaches. The report also described the early steps in the pilot of a new standards-based report card at grades 4 and 5.

On March 23, 2011 a progress report was submitted to update the School Committee on the grade 4 and 5 pilot and to describe plans for the development of standards-based report cards in grades K- 5 and a pilot for grade 6. The presentation in March also featured a discussion of parent input and parent response to standards-based reporting.

This report reviews the steps the district has taken to become more standards-based in its approach over the past few years and provides update on the implementation of the K-5 report card, the pilot report card in grade 6, and plans for grades 7 and 8.

Foundational Steps

Since 2006, the Lincoln Public Schools have become increasingly standards-based in our approach to planning, teaching, assessing, and reporting. The timeline below highlights the steps taken since that time to ensure solid development of a standards-based teaching and learning environment:

- **Standards development 2006-present** Initial work in "understanding by design" laid the foundation for the Lincoln Learning Expectations which were developed over the next few years and posted on the district website in 2009.
- **Assessment development 2008-present** Assessments related to standards with criteria scored on a four point scale began to be developed in 2008. Many of these assessments became

Common Assessments and have been refined and used in grades K-8 to the present. In addition, a plan for literacy assessment was developed and is now in current use. Mathematics assessments have been identified as common assessments; they are connected to our mathematics programs, *Everyday Math* and *Impact Mathematics*.

- **Standards-based assessing and scoring 2009-present** Teachers at all grade levels increased their use of assessments related to standards and engaged in scoring student work with colleagues according to criteria that related to standards.
- **Report card review and development 2010-present** A steering committee began to review existing report cards and to develop a new model to better reflect student achievement related to standards. Teacher input was solicited to develop indicators to describe "growth as a learner."
- **New report card development and pilot 2010-present** A new report card was developed for grades 4 and 5 teachers to pilot during the 2010-11 school year. Teachers were involved in professional development and input in report card design and contents. Parents received information about a standards-based approach and responded to a survey about the pilot report card. In the spring, teachers in grades K-3 were involved in developing a standards-based report card at their grade level. Also, teachers at grade 6 were introduced to a standards-based model and had input in the development of a pilot report card. Teachers at grade 7 and 8 were introduced to the guiding principles of standards-based assessment and reporting.

2011-2012 Steps towards Standards-based Report Cards

Our commitment to move forward on the goals for this year is supported by our allocation of professional development time and resources. In late June 2011, fifty-six teachers participated in a two-day summer work session to prepare for the beginning of the next school year. Teachers in grades K-6, including specialists, read about standards-based principles and practices, listened to presenters, and worked in collaborative teams to organized their record-keeping and align their assessments with standards. The collaborative work has continued during the fall on Wednesday afternoons, in faculty meetings, and in grade-level common planning time. Teacher investment and growth in implementing standards-based approaches is on-going. The morning of Institute Day, January 13, 2012, has been set aside for teams in kindergarten through grade six to continue working on standards-based practices in planning, teaching, assessing and reporting. Several Wednesday afternoons in the winter/spring of 2012 have been dedicated to this professional work.

Parent education has been an important focus as we have moved towards standards-based report cards. In September at each school's curriculum night presentations, teachers talked about some aspects of standards-based teaching and learning. They have sent home student work scored on a four point scale and they followed up in October at parent conferences. The PTA at Lincoln and the PTO at Hanscom hosted parent meetings to discuss principles of standards-based teaching and assessment, and to show and discuss features of the new report card. Informal coffee and conversation meetings have been held on the Lincoln campus. A meeting for Boston parents in Dorchester is scheduled for December 8th and another meeting for Hanscom parents is scheduled for December 20th. A website especially for parents is now available on the parent page of our district webpage. The site provides samples of all the new report cards grades K-6, information about scoring guidelines, flyers displaying overview of the changes in report cards, Frequently Asked Questions, and other documents of interest. When first term

report cards are issued, they will be accompanied by a parent letter and a flyer: “Parents’ Guide to Standards-based Report Cards.”

Development of a standards-based report card in grades 6-8 began in the fall and will continue through the winter and spring. Led by the middle school principals and the assistant superintendent, ongoing support has been provided for grade 6 teachers who are piloting a standards-based card this year. We expect that the grade 6 report card will be finalized for the 2012-13 school year. Also, meetings and informal discussions have been held with 7th and 8th grade teachers to provide them with information about standards-based approaches and to get their input in the development of the new report card. Our current thinking is to continue issuing letter grades in the core academic subjects but create a “hybrid” card that also displays standards-based scores on specific concepts and skills. The meaning of the letter grades would be redefined in terms of a student’s performance on standards-based measures. Ongoing professional development and work with 7th and 8th grade teachers on the new report card will occur on Institute Day and during designated Wednesday afternoon meetings in the winter and spring. A first version of a new standards-based report card for grades 7 and 8 will be ready by September 2012. If revisions are needed, such changes will shape the final version of the grade 7 and 8 card for September 2013.

Adjustment to a Change in Standards: The National Common Core Standards

While our district has progressed in becoming more standards-based, the very standards on which our Lincoln Learning Expectations are based will be changed in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics.¹ Massachusetts is one of 47 states who agreed to adopt the National Common Core Standards (NCCS). Last August, the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) published new curriculum frameworks in ELA and mathematics, which integrate the Common Core Standards. These changes in state standards will require revisions to our Lincoln Learning Expectations and adjustments in our report card descriptors. During the fall, we have been learning about the state’s expectations and timeline for districts across the commonwealth to implement the new ELA and mathematics frameworks. As part of the state’s roll-out of new standards, there is some guidance about the impact on state testing, yet plans are still in the early stages of development. As a district, we are in the process of determining the implications of the changes at the state level and we are developing a schedule for adjustments to our district expectations and the finalization of our report cards. In the months ahead, we will utilize the early-release Wednesdays designated for curriculum and professional development to extend our work on standards to include an understanding of the new state standards. In the summer of 2012, we will designate some summer work sessions to focus on adjustments to the new standards.

¹ The new national Science standards are in draft and Massachusetts is one of 20 states whose educators are among the lead developers of these “Next Generation Science Standards.” The timeline for adoption and publication of new science standards has not yet been firmly established.