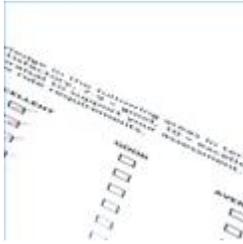


# Pros & Cons of Standards-Based Report Cards

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1.

Standards-based report cards show what skills a student has mastered.

It can be surprising for a parent when a student receives an A for coursework but fails the final exam. Traditional grades are often a combination of knowledge, effort and classroom behavior, and may not be a valid reflection of whether the student has grade-level-appropriate skills. Standards-based report cards allow objective comparisons by measuring each student's performance against a list of desired achievements for his grade.

## Fairness

2. Because students receive marks based solely on their knowledge of an objective standard, standards-based reporting decreases the chance that a student's grade will be unfairly influenced because of teacher bias. Letter-grade report cards can be weighted by how well a teacher feels an individual student should be doing, resulting in students with greater ability being judged more critically.

Teachers in different classrooms and schools may also be teaching at multiple levels of difficulty. For example, an A at a [school](#) where students were learning multiplication in fifth grade would not show as much accomplishment as an A at a school where fifth-graders learn algebra. Standards-based reporting requires that any student who demonstrates knowledge above the agreed-upon baseline receives a mark of exceeds expectations, regardless of how well other students perform.

## Highlighting Problem Area

3. With standards-based reporting, parents get a realistic assessment of whether a student's performance meets requirements for his grade level, and can see if any particular skill needs additional followup. Traditional report cards give an overview of each subject but don't show whether an individual concept has been missed.

This can also show whether an educator is having difficulty with teaching a subject. If the majority of her students are not reaching the desired achievement levels, this may signal that the skills are not being taught properly.

## Distribution of Resources

4. Critics of standards argue that teachers spend more time stressing the baseline skills instead of including a wide range of subjects. There are also concerns that children at the extreme ends of the performance spectrum will be overlooked.

If a school's performance is measured based on the percentage of students who meet the grade-level standard, there is an incentive to give the most resources to students who are at the margin of reaching the standard. This is because students who are high performers won't need additional help to perform well, and students who are low performers may not meet the standards even with intensive assistance.

## Discrimination Against the Learning Disabled and Alternative Learners

5. A student may be punished with lower marks because he has a learning disability or an alternative learning style. Standards-based reporting treats equally a student with a learning disability and a student with behavior issues who refuses to do the work. Also, since most teachers relay information by speaking or showing visual examples, students who have a tactile learning style may seem to under-perform.

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## References

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- [Ohio Department of Education: Standards Based Education](#)
  - ["Practical Solutions for Serious Problems in Standards-Based Grading"; Thomas R. Guskey; 2008](#)
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## Resources

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- [Great Schools: Rethinking Report Cards](#)
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