

## Introducing the New 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Standards-Based Report Card

Teams of Stafford County Public Schools teachers, with the guidance and support of school administrators and the Department of Instruction, started exploring the merits of standards-based teaching and grading in 2002. In 2004-05, a standards-based report card for Grades 1-3 was implemented, and several elementary schools in Grades 4-5 piloted the new report starting in 2005-06. Based on feedback at the schools piloting the new report card in Grades 4-5, several revisions were made. All remaining elementary schools will begin implementing the standards-based report card in Grade 4 and, a year later, in Grade 5 (See the Implementation Schedule below) with full implementation in every school by 2010-2011.

Most parents will be familiar with the new Grades 4-5 report card since it continues the same grading system that they have grown accustomed to in Grades 1-3. A standards-based report card is a grading system that uses a performance rating scale of “1” to “4” to provide parents specific information about how their child is progressing toward meeting rigorous standards aligned to the Virginia Standards of Learning. A child earns a “3” for consistently demonstrating an understanding of grade level material.



### Implementation Schedule

Grades 4-5 in 2007-08	Garrisonville, Hartwood
Grade 4 in 2007-08 and Grade 5 in 2008-09	Hampton Oaks, Park Ridge, Stafford
Grade 4 in 2008-09 and Grade 5 in 2009-10	Margaret Brent, K.W. Barrett, Falmouth, Ferry Farm
Grade 4 in 2009-10 and Grade 5 in 2010-11	Anthony Burns, Conway, Grafton Village, Moncure, Rockhill, Rocky Run, Widewater, Winding Creek

### How does the new report card improve teaching and learning?

The challenge for teachers and schools has always been to understand what the students know and don't know. Since students and teachers are held accountable for local, state, and national standards, knowing where the students are in their progress toward meeting grade level or content area standards is crucial for planning and carrying out classroom instruction. Teachers teach to the needs of their students. The new report card is designed to give parents as well as teachers more information about their child's progress in meeting the expected standards as well as more specifics about what their child knows or doesn't know. For instance, when the old report card is compared to the new standards-based report card, a student would receive only one grade for the multi-faceted content area of mathematics. The new report card, however, gives more information about students' mathematical strengths and weaknesses because the content area of mathematics is broken-down into ten skills or standards. These same skills or standards are also evaluated on the state tests each year. As parents will see when they receive the results of the state SOL tests on the Report to Parents, the new report card is aligned perfectly with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL's).

### How does the new report card help improve my understanding of my child's learning?

On each report card, parents will see the skills or standards their child is working on during the grading period. They will also see their child's progress in learning these skills or standards. Instead of teachers having different expectations from classroom to classroom, all teachers will develop lessons to address the same standards and expectations. Standards are an effective way of giving students and parents the “rules of the game” when they are in school. Doug Reeves ([101 Questions and Answers about Standards, Assessment, and Accountability](#), 2004) makes this point in the following quote:

*“By comparing one child's performance to a clear standard, parents, children and teachers all know precisely what is expected. Every time a student attempts a task, the performance is compared to the standard, not to other children's performances. The most important advantages for children and families are fairness, clarity, and improved learning.”*

### How are parents being informed?

Each school will host parent information nights and individual parent conferences during the fall. If you have any questions about the new report card, please see your school principal about 2008-09 dates for parent events. New brochures about the report card are being printed. In addition, you can contact Chris Quinn, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction (e-mail: [quinnrc@staffordschools.net](mailto:quinnrc@staffordschools.net); or Phone: 540.658.6683). The underlying purpose of the new standards-based report card is to help every child be successful by being very specific about the student's strengths and weaknesses.