

A Parent's Guide to Progress Reports

Hilliard City School District
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
5323 Cemetery Road
Hilliard, Ohio 43026

In concert with family and community,

The Hilliard City School District will empower all graduates to thrive in the 21st century.

We accomplish our mission by :

- *Setting and enforcing high, measurable standards of performance*
- *Ensuring that all students exhibit appropriate knowledge of the basic skills*
- *Encouraging and empowering students to be effective and informed problem solvers, critical thinkers, responsible decision makers and communicators in the context of a diverse, changing global society.*

Special points of interest:

- Progress reports in the Hilliard Elementary Schools are sent to parents three times each school year at the conclusion of 12 week marking periods.
- **2011-2012 Progress Report Dates:**
November 18, 2011
March 2, 2012
June 1, 2012

Fair and Honest: Our Commitment to Providing The Best Information About Student Learning

This guide has been created to provide parents and others with the following information about Student Progress Reports in the Hilliard School District:

- ***An overview of philosophy and purpose***
- ***An explanation of how to use and interpret the Hilliard Elementary Progress Reports, including the "Fair" component which shows individual student progress and personal work habits and traits; and the "Honest" component which indicates individual student achievement evaluated against grade level standards/expectations.***
- ***Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions.***

Reporting student progress is an essential part of the communication and

partnership process between home and school. It is the responsibility of the Hilliard City School District to provide parents and students with complete and useful information that thoughtfully reflects the fullness of the learning process. Namely, parents and students require information that is both FAIR and HONEST. The Hilliard City Schools' Elementary Progress Report provides both kinds of information to parents and students.

FAIR information shares a student's successful performance and independence with grade-level expectations in terms of where the student began his/her learning and the progress that has been made by the student along his/her learning journey.

HONEST information shares an evaluation of a student's achievement of grade-level expectations

at a given point in time.

Progress Reports and the marking of student progress in the Hilliard Elementary Schools is done to provide teachers, students, and parents with a timely snapshot of student learning that reflects grade level expectations and state standards for learning, individual student progress toward expectations, and where students need help and support.

Reporting both progress toward expectations and achievement of them IS both fair and honest.

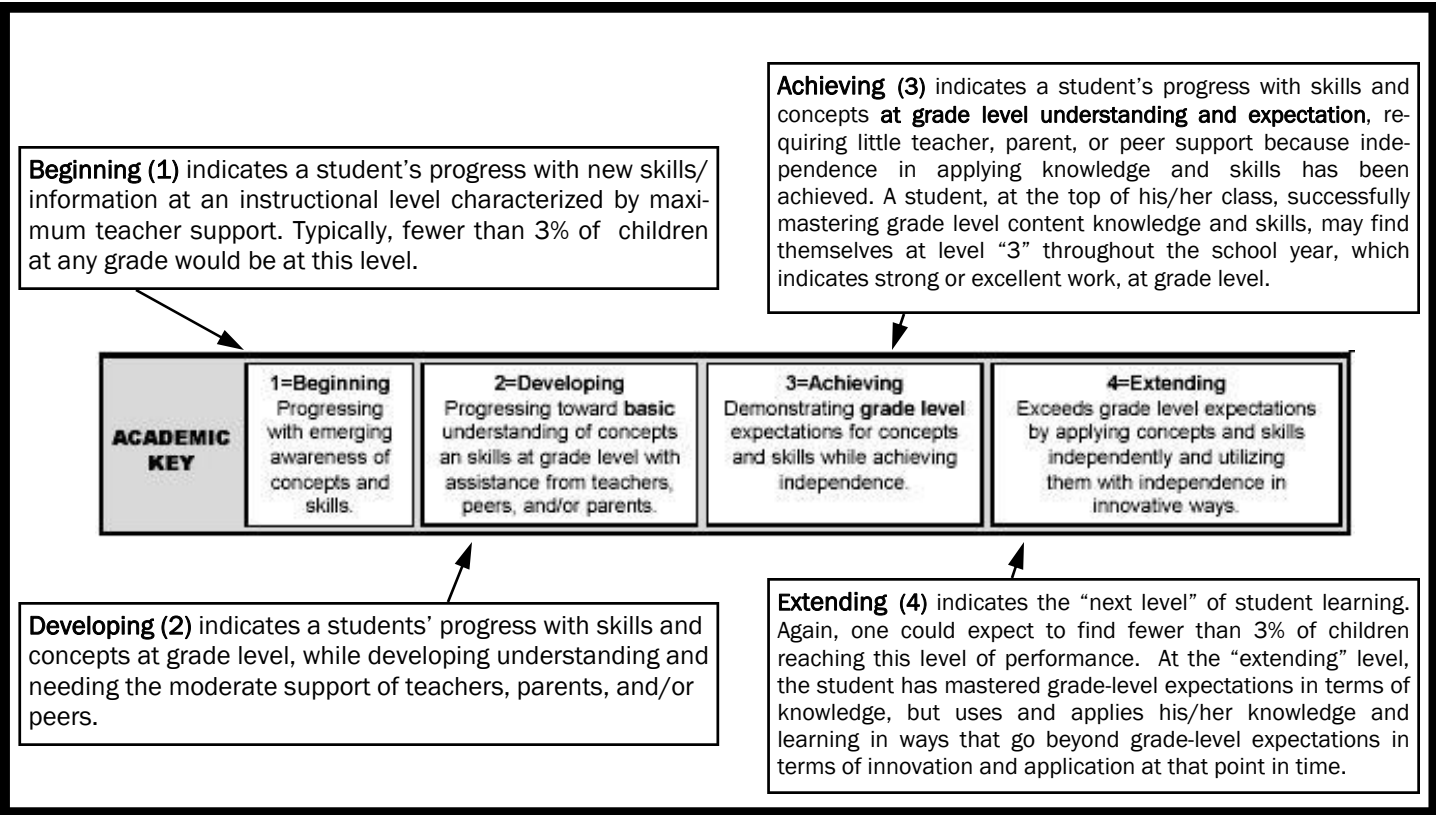
Learning is the message we wish to send to both student and parent. Students should be evaluated on their individual progress in achieving skills, as well as in comparison with peers on the continuum of grade-level process and content skill acquisition.

Understanding the “Academic Key”

To be “FAIR” in reporting a student’s progress and **growth** in each academic area, teachers use the “Academic Key” pictured below to mark individual progress in academic areas and work traits/habits.

Four levels of progress are noted using a numeric (numbers 1-4) marking system. In the academic key, the numbers themselves are not the focus. Rather, the descriptor that coincides with each number is most important. The descriptors indicate the level of the individual student’s skill acquisition and the confidence/independence with which the student performs the skill.

The numeric marking system (1,2,3,4) is not significant in itself. Rather, the description found under each number is the focus and meaning of the mark.

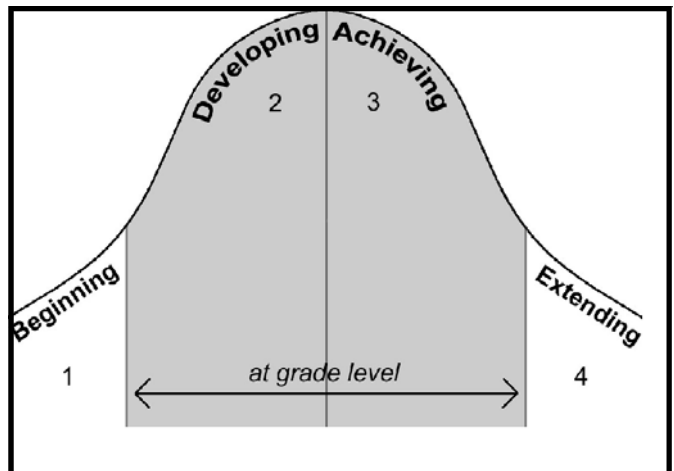


To understand the 1,2,3 and 4 markings another way, consider the traditional “bell curve”, pictured at right. **Beginning (1)**, is found at the lowest quartile. Considered below grade level or emerging, one might expect to find 3% or less of students performing at that level.

Developing (2) and Achieving (3), found at the center of the bell curve, would both be considered **at grade level**. Approximately 94% of all students would be expected to perform at these levels. Students who are “developing” would be working at grade level, but with adult/peer support needed. Students who are “achieving” would be working at grade level, independently.

Extending (4), would be found at the highest quartile. Again, 3% or less of students would be working at this level, which is performing above grade level in knowledge, application, and independence.

Both “2” and “3” are considered “ON TARGET” in terms of grade level expectations, with varying levels of support.



“So, why don’t we use letter grades in the elementary school?”

“... [traditional] report cards say too little about the specific tasks the student has actually done or not done, and to what specific and verifiable level of performance. Adding a single letter grade helps very little; the parent still does not know whether the grade represents relative or absolute achievement.”

*—Grant Wiggins
Author of Understanding by Design*

We made a switch from letter grades (A, B, C, D, F) at the elementary level in order to communicate **more specifically** what a student has learned, achieved and to what degree.

While letter grades seem “understandable” to parents, they give only limited information about what children have learned or can do. Grades are also dependent on teacher and parent interpretation, and focused on surface knowledge rather than understandings. Consider an “average” of numbers to determine a grade. The “test” grade, which is the final result of learning, is averaged with earlier quizzes that reflect the “practice” and diagnostic learning along the way. A final test score of “A” could actually be lowered by the averaging, and not reflective of “final learning.”

With the Hilliard progress reporting system, **we use information from observations, conferences, and a child’s actual work to make an assessment against specific learning indicators that describe a child’s learning and understanding.** That information, when discussed with parents, gives a more detailed picture of what a child can do as well as identifies future learning goals.

“Acts with Character”: An explanation

All of our elementary schools engage in teaching and learning to help students develop the traits of good citizenship and “character.” Schools work on these traits through instruction and reflection on responsibility, respect, self-discipline, compassion, honesty, and other “core virtues.”

In the “*Personal Achievement*” section of the progress report, teachers communicate with parents about a student’s effort in developing specific skills and habits of respect, collaboration, self-discipline and self-control which relate to being a productive member of a classroom community.

The line “**Acts with Character**” is intended to report a student’s effort in applying the skills and habits of good character described above in his/her daily actions throughout the school. It is the collective effort a student makes to be trustworthy, honest, and acting with principle.

The “Acts with Character” line is NOT a pronouncement of a student’s being “good” or “bad.” Rather, it is indicative of a student’s effort to exhibit good character.

Questions Most Frequently Asked by Parents About Our Progress Reports

How do I help my student “get a 4?” Remember that a mark of three indicates that a student is meeting grade level expectations with independence and excellence. **With high and challenging expectations, a three is exactly where a competent student should be, at grade level.** “Getting a 4” is not about what *more* a student does, but, rather, about what a student knows, and at what level s/he applies what s/he knows to new and higher level situations that “exceed grade level expectations.” The shift in thinking from the A,B,C,D, F letter grades is that “3” is the top—for the grade level — and should be celebrated as such.

How is it possible for my child to “drop” from one mark to another? First, it is important to note that the student does not “drop”. The number is an indication of performance with expectations that increase consistently throughout the school year. The student may be working on grade level during the second marking period, but with increased expectations and requiring more teacher support, the number speaks more specifically about the level of independence with which the student is performing the grade level task at that point in time .

Does reporting progress in this way only benefit low achievers by bringing everyone to the “middle?” We don't believe this to be true. Many parents fear that by not giving letter grades, the intention for all students is to gain the same level of learning. The opposite is actually true. Letter grades are tied to a percentage, and students who already “know” gain higher percentages throughout their learning. Letter grades do not encourage students to extend their learning. By using standards, we identify the expected or minimum standard, and teachers encourage their students to exceed them.

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