

November 19th, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian;

The Eastern School District is pleased to provide a *student report* that will be used by intermediate schools across the district. It will give you information about how well your son/daughter is doing in each class. There are a few changes that I would like to tell you about.

In previous years, students got class marks for each term. A final mark was calculated based on these terms. Some schools had three terms and some had four and the value of each term was unique to each school. To improve consistency between schools, student progress will be calculated on an ongoing basis. Using this cumulative method, each report will be based on marks from the beginning of the school year.

In addition to a cumulative mark for each class, your child's teachers will be reporting on your son or daughter's work habits. Examples of work habits are *being prepared*, *arriving on time*, and *turning in assignments on time*. The number reported will be out of four and will not be included in your child's mark.

Another feature of this report card is the opportunity for each teacher to write a comment. Based on what your child is learning, the teacher may note your child's strengths and/or areas for growth. Your child's teacher may tell you about a skill that your child needs to work on or tell you about an excellent piece of work!

On the back page of the report you will find the number of days your child was absent from school. The report will also tell you the cut-off date for the absences. If your child missed school just before the report was printed, these absences will be included on the next report.

The ESD hopes that you will find these changes useful and informative. Any comments or questions about your child's progress should be directed to his or her teacher. If you would like more information about the changes to the report card or the cumulative mark method, please go to our Report Card FAQ site at www.edu.pe.ca/esd/main/curriculum_delivery.htm.

Yours truly,

Tamara Hubley-Little, EdD
Secondary Curriculum Consultant

ESD INTERMEDIATE REPORT CARD FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Three changes, that impact on the reporting of student achievement, were introduced at the intermediate level this year:

- A new report card form that is common among intermediate level schools
- New organizing structures for assessment activities
- A cumulative method of calculating student marks and grades

In anticipation of some questions that parents and guardians may have, the following questions and answers may be useful.

Why does the ESD have a common report card?

Schools with intermediate grades used to produce a school-developed report card. The features of the report card were numerous and differed from school to school. In order to provide information that was consistent from school to school, the ESD developed a common report card.

What are common reporting structures?

Reporting structures are the way in which teachers group or organize assessment activities for the purpose of calculating student achievement. Last year, committees of teachers developed common reporting structures for language arts, mathematics, science and social studies based on the intermediate curricula. The language arts reporting structure is organized by strand, whereas the other curricula structures are organized by unit. These structures are being piloted this year. Many other teachers have also started to use topic-based reporting structures for their courses. By organizing marks by topic (units or strands), teachers, parents and students can see, at a glance, how well a student is doing on specific aspects of a course and respond to the learning in a more timely manner.

What are the benefits of organizing marks by topic (unit and strand) instead of task?

1. Teachers can see the achievement of each student and the class for a particular unit rather than their achievement based on task-types such as tests or assignment thus better information for instructional practices.
2. The focus of discussions with students and parents is in respect to student achievement of outcomes. Results are explicitly referenced in terms of the curriculum, not the types of tasks that students perform.

3. The distribution of weight across topics parallels the curriculum, whereas a task-type approach may skew weighting to unintentionally over- or under-value aspects of the curriculum.
4. Parents and students can view marks arranged by topic or unit rather than by term and task which better answers the question of 'How am I doing?' related to the curriculum as opposed to tasks such as tests, assignments, projects, etc.
5. A sequence of instruction may benefit the transient student population.
6. The co-development of instructional and assessment resources is fostered, thereby promoting consistent expectations for student achievement and collaborative practice.
7. A supportive environment for new teachers or the teaching of challenging concepts is provided up front.
8. Insight into curricula challenges across the district, allows for focused professional development programs and evidence-based dialogues with the provincial department responsible for public education.

What is the cumulative method?

Teachers used to calculate student achievement based on marks obtained during a prescribed time-frame known as a term. Schools had three or four terms, each with different weights. The cumulative method is a more consistent and accurate way of representing student achievement. This method disregards time-frames, calculating student achievement from all relevant marks obtained during the school-year.

What are the benefits of the cumulative method?

1. Teachers can instruct and assess without worrying about arbitrary term-deadlines.
2. Students and parents looking at marks on-line through StudentsAchieve will always see a cumulative mark. This reduces the large swings that can occur early in a new term due to the first assignment taking on the entire value of the new term. The cumulative mark on the report will more closely align with the mark being reported in StudentsAchieve.
3. By always submitting the cumulative mark rather than a term mark which is “locked in”, rounding errors are reduced since the teacher is always submitting a cumulative mark.
4. Removing term weighting across the Eastern School District will level variances across schools due to the different number of terms and the weight applied to the terms by each school.
5. Students have the opportunity to show growth and have that reflected in their final grade.

Why do units and strands within a course have different weights?

The reporting structures are based on the provincially approved curriculum. The curriculum gives teachers guidelines as to how much time to spend on instruction. Instructional time is regularly used to determine how much weight a topic, unit or strand should have. For example, if a unit

requires approximately 20% of instructional time, it is likely that this unit will be worth approximately 20% toward the final grade.

Is it possible for one assessment mark to affect the overall mark?

From an assessment perspective, more marks generally mean a more valid and reliable grade. This is a good thing. On occasion there may only be one mark for a unit or strand. This is especially true early in the school year. In this instance, that one assessment mark will take on the whole value or weight of the unit.

Each assessment's relative weight is changed each time a new mark is entered. That is, as more marks are entered, the weight of each assessment within a unit changes. As the school year proceeds, the teacher will continue to provide assessment opportunities from which marks will be added and included in the calculation. Therefore, each assessment has potential to affect the overall mark. The question is the degree to which an assessment mark will impact upon the overall mark. This largely depends on the number and weight of the existing assessment marks. However, regardless of the number and weight of assessments within a unit or strand, the overall value of a unit or strand remains the same throughout the year.

If you didn't find an answer to your question, please contact Dr. Tamara Hubley-Little at 902 894 0233 or talittle@edu.pe.ca