1. What are standards?
Standards describe what students should know and be able to do in each subject area at each grade level. They help shape the curriculum from one grade to the next because teachers know what instruction has already occurred and can build upon it.

2. Where can I find the standards?
The Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) Grade Level Standards and the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards (WMAS) are available on the web for all content areas at http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/tnl/standards/index.html

3. What is a standards-based report card?
A standards-based report card is designed to inform families about students’ current levels of achievement toward the Madison Metropolitan School District’s Grade Level Standards. Achievement is not measured against other students’ performance, but is measured against specific knowledge and skills needed to make progress through the K-12 system. Academic achievement is reported out separately from non-academic factors (for example: use of class time; homework completion; and cooperation with peers and adults) so it is very clear what the student knows and is able to do.

4. Why is the Madison Metropolitan School District changing to a standards-based report card at the middle school level?
All students must be offered the opportunity to learn the standards. Performance on standards has a direct impact on students learning what they need to know to be successful at the next grade level and on the standardized assessments. Families have a right to know specifically how a student is performing measured against what the student is expected to know and be able to do.

5. What is the time line for middle school standards-based report cards?
Middle school standards-based report cards will be implemented in 2008-09. A more detailed time line, including professional development opportunities, is posted on the District website.

6. Are we using MMSD Grade Level Standards or Wisconsin Model Academic Standards?
We are using the MMSD Grade Level Standards which are aligned to the Wisconsin State Academic Standards (WMAS).

7. Will teachers be required to use the standards-based report card?
Yes. All middle school staff will be required to use the standards-based report card in 2008-09.

8. Which standards will be on the report card?
There are many standards in each subject area and reporting out too much information is not useful. Instead, grade level standards are combined into broad categories called power standards. Between 3-5 power standards will be reported out in each subject on the report card.
9. When will a draft of the middle school standards-based report card be available?
A first draft was shared with middle school principals and learning coordinators in December 2007. The December draft of the report card was a key component of the January 14, 2008 professional development provided to all middle school staff. Future drafts will be shared as updates are made throughout the spring 2008 semester.

10. Will all courses at the middle school level be included in the standards-based report card?
Yes. All middle school courses will be included in the standards-based report card and will be include the appropriate power standards.

11. Will letter grades still be used?
Yes. Letter grades will be used to provide summary information for each subject. Letter grades will be based on the student's grasp of the content and the application of that knowledge.

12. What are Learning Skills?
Learning Skills are work habits and behaviors that support learning. Learning Skills will be reported on the report card in each subject area using marks consistent with the elementary report card – Most of the time (M), Some of the time (S), Rarely (R). Learning Skills are not included in the academic grade or in the Grade Point Average (GPA).

13. How is homework reported in a standards-based reporting system?
Homework has a dual role in a standards-based reporting system. Homework completion is an expectation of students and included under a section called Learning Skills. What students learn by doing homework will be demonstrated through the use of classroom assessments.

14. Will middle schools continue to report grades all four quarters?
Yes. There will be no changes in the quarterly reporting system that is currently in place.

15. Will progress reports still be used in a standards-based system?
Yes. There will be no differences in the practice regarding communicating with families for students who are not making expected progress.

16. Will there be common language used for proficiency levels?
Yes. The development of common language to describe proficiency levels is in progress and will be released in May 2008.

17. How will teachers ensure consistent evaluation of student work district-wide?
The development and refinement of assessment tools will be an on-going process. As teachers gain confidence and expertise in the use of standards-based tools, they will be key in the co-development of these tools.

Generic rubrics will be implemented in all content areas in 2008-09. District-wide common assessments will be implemented in all content areas in 2010-2011.
18. Will all schools have adequate technology to deal with standards-based grading and reporting?
Yes. MMSD began using the Infinite Campus (IC) student information system in 2007-08. All teachers currently have access to computers that are able to record attendance and post grades. The standards-based grade book and report card are features of Infinite Campus, and will not require different or additional technology than is currently need to conduct the basic functions already required in IC.

19. Will teachers be able to use an electronic grade book in a standards-based system?
Yes. Upgrades to Infinite Campus Grade Book will enable teachers to use standards-based tools to record and report grades. The IC 2008.2 upgrade includes a standards-based grade book feature.

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Professional Development

20. How were middle school teachers’ concerns and needs taken into consideration in the development of the standards-based system?
A district-wide survey of concerns related to implementing standards-based instruction was administered in the spring of 2007. A detailed analysis of the survey results was conducted by the UW-Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) in the summer of 2007. Survey results were the basis for designing the professional development plan for 2008-09. School-based results were shared with Principals and Learning Coordinators in September 2007.

21. What is the role of the school-based Learning Leadership Committee members?
The Learning Leadership Committee (LLC), established in 2007-08, is a committee of teachers and learning coordinators representing all middle schools and content areas. The LLC will dedicate four (4) full days as a group to provide input into the design of professional development and serve as a conduit for school and content-based issues.

22. What professional development opportunities are being provided to staff to prepare them for the transition to a standards-based system?

**DVD Series**
A series of five (5) DVD’s, detailed Learning Guides and Facilitators Guides are being produced for all middle school staff during the spring of 2008. The DVD Series provides consistent and clear information to all middle school staff about how standards-based curriculum, instruction, assessment, recording and reporting differ from traditional practices.

**Summer Grade Book Sessions**
Infinite Campus Grade Book sessions will be offered in August 2008. These summer sessions will be designed to provide middle school staff the time and support to set up standards-based IC Grade Books to integrate with the standards-based report cards.

**Standards-based Curricula and Assessment Design Institute**
A 1-week summer institute will be held for middle school staff in August. The institute will provide middle school staff with additional information, time and support to transition their curricula and assessment into a standards-based design.
Online Resources
Professional resources are available on the district-wide web. These resources include professional references, team learning activities, websites and information to assist with Special Education and English language learner issues.

Communication

23. How is information being shared with families and the community?

A plan has been created to:

1. Share information in a timely fashion with parents and family members of middle school students regarding the transition to a standards-based report card.
2. Gather input from a diverse group of parents of middle school students regarding the information they feel is most important in the design of a standards-based report card.

The plan includes:

- Series of articles to be included in all middle school newsletters
- Links to the articles in MMSD Today
- Focus Group Sessions
- General Information Sessions
- Board of Education Update
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- Family Brochure
- District-wide Survey

English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education

24. Will there be Spanish and Hmong translated versions of the report card?
All MMSD report cards are available in Spanish and Hmong.

25. Will there be a separate report card for Spanish bilingual classes?
No. There is not a separate report card for Spanish bilingual classes. Bilingual classroom teachers can use the comment box to indicate which language (English/Spanish) progress toward academic standards is being reported on.

26. How can I show growth for students who are English language learners on a standards-based report card?
Staff are encouraged to use the "comment" section to highlight student growth.

27. How do promotion guidelines impact students who are English language learners?
MMSD promotion guidelines apply to students who are English language learners at DPI English language proficiency levels of 3, 4, 5 in MATH ONLY. Students who are English language learners at DPI English language proficiency levels 1 and 2 are not impacted by MMSD promotion guidelines.
28. How will the needs of Special Education students be met with a standards-based report card?
If the student is involved full-time in the general education curriculum for a content area (with and without accommodations), the student should receive a number or letter grade based on grade level standards. This includes students who are involved in same grade curricular standards but are expected to achieve different levels of depth or breadth. Accommodations are changes in the way instruction is provided or the way in which the student is expected to respond during instruction. Accommodations do not change what is taught.

The Modified Expectations (ME) grade designation may be used when the curriculum (based on MMSD standards) for a particular content area has been modified to meet the student’s ability level, and the student is not expected to become as proficient in the same number of curricular goals as other students in class. The ME grade designation should be used with care and the use of number or letter designations should occur as quickly as possible as students acquire proficiency in that content area. More detailed explanation of the use of “ME” is available on the district-wide web.