



MAKING THE SWITCH
Getting Started With Standards-Based Assessment
By Lynne Jessup Michael

The students' response was amazing. What they liked best about the system was that a try was worth something, since the only way to get a "0" was to make no effort at all.

Once they realized this, students began completing all their assignments. The collaboration in small groups improved, and because they shared the same learning challenge, the problem of having one student in the group who knows all the answers and dominates the lesson was eliminated.

In the process of making sure my assessments are standards-based, I have seen that assessment can be a tool for teaching and learning rather than a method to separate students and judge them. It is a kinder, gentler way to teach and gives students a great deal of control over their learning.

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Rethinking Report Cards
By Kate Steinheimer, GreatSchools.net
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Diane Mead, a teacher on special assignment in the Beverly Hills Unified School District in California believes students are the biggest winners when standards-based report cards are used. These report cards give students specific information about how they're doing and pinpoint where they need to improve.

This approach can carry over to classroom assignments, too, as the report card influences the way teachers assess student learning throughout the year. In the first two years of using a standards-based report card in Beverly Hills, teachers worked together to describe clearly what student work that meets the standards looks like.

Teachers share these expectations with students, often posting them on the classroom wall. Now when students get an assignment they know exactly what they have to do to be proficient or advanced. That's a big change from the way assignments used to be given and graded.

"If you get a 90 percent, it doesn't tell you much about where to go from there," said Mead.

According to Hoover Liddell, special assistant to the superintendent in the San Francisco Unified School District in California who leads a standards-based report card pilot project in San Francisco, the new report card is part of an effort to close the gap in achievement among different groups of students.

Because concrete skills and knowledge are listed on the report card, it is one way to help monitor whether all students are being exposed to the same curriculum and learning the skills they should learn in each grade. The new report cards also make the standards very clear to parents, noted Liddell.

"Parents should know exactly what their students should be able to do," he said.

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