

*Yes, you may have read this before if you had an older child in 5H.)*

## **Why Did I Get a 1, 2, 3, or 4? by Ms. Haskell**

Progress reports are once again upon us, and before they go home, I wanted to share the philosophy of assessing student performance. Progress report season is angst ridden for many students, (parents, and teachers too.) In our culture of testing and competitiveness we often overlook the reasons for assessment. We assess students so they can receive feedback and understand their strengths and areas for growth. It is information. Progress reports are simply that, a report on progress. These are not final, unchangeable products. There is always room for growth and improvement. Learning is an ongoing task.

The reporting system is new to many adults. Levels of current performance are indicated on a one to four rubric. These levels do not equate to grades but rather represent a child's understanding, consistent, independent application and extension of a year long learning goal. Level fours represent skill and understanding beyond the grade level and are regularly initiated by a child independently or a child regularly extends him/herself when prompted by the teacher.

A level two represents a developing understanding of the learning goal with a need for support in completing the task or understanding the task. This child might still need an adult to rephrase a word problem, or have help breaking it into solvable parts. Perhaps this child needs a model of the problem or a great deal of teacher help and prompting in choosing books or outlining a story. These are all perfectly appropriate

needs, but represent support in attaining a learning goal. Over time, the goal is to have independent application by slowly removing that support.

At the other end of the spectrum, perhaps a child is capable of reading books beyond grade level, yet does not seek out, read and comprehend these books consistently and independently. Or perhaps s/he is able to retell the story but cannot pick out themes or messages of the author or make connections beyond the text independently and consistently. This child is showing a working understanding of the learning goal and applying it with minimal support (level 3.)

The second part of the progress report reflects the habits of mind of the learner. Does this child need reminders to turn in assignments or transition from one activity to another? Does this student do neat and careful work without prompting? Does s/he seek assistance when appropriate? In interpreting the social/behavioral section of the report card, please keep in mind that the goal is for students to apply the behaviors independently, not always an easy task but one we would like to instill in our learners. In assessing a child I ask the following questions.

### **Consistently**

Does this student...

- show this behavior nearly all of the time without reminders, prompting or coaching?
- work toward growth in this area independently and take responsibility for improving?
- show self-monitoring and self-management in this area?

### **Usually**

Does this student...

- show this behavior much of the time without reminders, prompting or coaching?

- usually work toward growth in this area but need reminders, prompting or coaching?
- need to work on consistency and independence in this area?

### **Sometimes**

Does this student...

- show this behavior at times but often need reminders, prompting or coaching?
- shows some progress in this area but need focused attention in this area?
- sometimes have difficulty in this area?

### **Rarely**

Does this student...

- infrequently show this behavior independently?
- need a great deal of support in this area?
- show this behavior almost only with reminders, prompting or coaching?

### **Reading**

There are three areas; comprehension, decoding and independent reading. For comprehension, I assess the in-class and at-home reading journals that students keep. Do they show both literal and inferential levels of understanding? What books are they reading? What connections are they making? Can they find the author's message? What types of questions do they ask? Can they make predictions based upon the text? I also assess book group discussions and one-on-one conferences. What does a child notice about the text, author, plot or style of writing? Comprehension related activities and projects also factored into the assessment.

In looking at decoding, how does a child attack an unfamiliar word? Is s/he able to use context clues? What does s/he do when coming to a new word? How fluently does a child read aloud? What kinds of miscues is s/he making?

The fifth grade learning goals call for a fifth grader to read 25 books or book equivalents. However, I look at not only how many but what books a child is reading. What is the difficulty level? Is s/he trying new

authors and genres? Does s/he take recommendations? How much does s/he read in and out of class? Does s/he talk about books? Is s/he engaged during Reader's Workshop? Does s/he stick with a book or drop many books? Does s/he read a variety of authors, genres and levels?

### **Mathematics**

There are essentially three aspects of the math progress reports. Concepts, Operations and Problem Solving. The first part of the progress report reflects a child's underlying understanding of the number system and geometric concepts. Can s/he see the relationship between fractions and percents? Is s/he able to break numbers into parts to solve an equation ( $235 = 200 + 30 + 5$ ) When presented with a problem such as "It costs \$15 for 50 magnets. How much is one magnet?" does s/he rely on concepts rather than a rote algorithm? Does s/he demonstrate understanding that 25% is one-fourth, that one eighth is half of a fourth? When finding factors does s/he recognize that since 250 is a factor 1,000 that 125 is too because  $250 \times 4 = 1000$  and half of 250 is 125;  $125 \times 8 = 1000$ ?

Can the child identify key information in a word problem and solve a multistep problem? Can s/he take a problem solved the day before and apply that knowledge to a novel situation? Does s/he clearly explain thinking? Are the parts of a problem organized? Does s/he recognize patterns? Can s/he create his or her own problems and extensions?

### **Science**

The two units that we have completed are both parts of the Design curriculum for 5th grade. We will be completing the Light and Scale & Magnification Units during the second semester. In the Design unit I am assessing active participation in the creation of models, testing of theories, asking questions, recording and analyzing experiment results. In the science journal does the student create charts,

diagrams and explanations for his/her ideas? Does s/he ask “what if” questions? We are concerned with developing the skills as an investigator.

### **Social Studies**

During the first semester of the year we have completed the Ancient Egypt Unit. Examples of learning goals from this unit include how does Geography affect culture? Locate Egypt and its major geographical features on a map. What are major contributions of Ancient Egypt? What were major inventions of the culture and how did they influence contact with other cultures? A great deal of my assessment comes from in-class activities; writing - including our brochures, expert research and tomb painting, as well as our Social Studies notebooks.

### **Celebrating Success & Effort**

I will be speaking to students about progress reports and encourage you to have this conversation at home too. The intent is that a child understand his/her strengths and areas for growth. Can your child recognize and celebrate the strengths and set concrete goals for the areas of growth?

In all fairness, a student needs to know “*what do I need to do to improve?*” And for a child, this usually involves very concrete, small steps. For example, a child struggling with problem solving is not able to solve a word problem without continuous adult monitoring. Perhaps this child needs models of solutions and to solve multiple problems of the same format with changing variables. For example, using the magnet problem I mentioned earlier, the variables are simply changed and s/he does one every night for a week. Now it is \$30 for 50 magnets. \$15 for 100 magnets. \$15 for 25 magnets. Can s/he recognize and write about the relationship among these?

Academic improvement is greatly enhanced by productive habits of mind, consistent practice and application of skills. More importantly, it is improved by positive

self-image. During this time of progress reports, test scores and goal setting, it is also important for balance. A child should also be able to celebrate strengths, (both in and out of the classroom!)

Thanks again to all 5H families for the continued support.

Progress Reports go home : **Friday, February 6th.**