

HELP YOUR CHILD

REACH HIGHER STANDARDS

MEETING HIGHER STANDARDS

Students in Portland Public Schools today are working harder to meet higher academic standards than ever before. They are challenged to work hard and to maintain a focus on their learning.

Students must also show their understanding and mastery of the

standards on tests, performance assessments, and on classroom work samples.

Families are important partners in all of our efforts to improve student achievement. Only by working together can we raise expectations, build on basic skills

and find new ways to prepare students for our rapidly changing world.

Your participation in parent-teacher conferences is one important step in strengthening the home-school partnership that will help your child succeed.

BENCHMARKS SHOW PROGRESS TOWARD ACADEMIC GOALS

Student progress toward meeting state standards (or benchmarks) in English (reading/literature, writing and speaking), math, science and social studies is measured each year in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10, and in grades 4, 6, 7 and 9 on the Portland Achievement Levels Test (PALT). (Tests and performance tasks currently are being finalized for science and social studies.) Regular progress checks alert us to problems students have so that they can receive extra help.

Three different indicators — multiple-choice tests, performance assessments and classroom work samples, provide students, families

and school staff with information on each student's progress.

When students are in non-benchmark years (pre-K, K, 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 and 9) their classroom activities are designed to help them meet standards at the next benchmark level. Their teachers also gather samples of their students' work to show progress and achievements.

Teachers score classroom assignments, or work samples, on a 1-to-6 point scale to measure student progress toward the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). The directions for scoring are provided by the Oregon Department of Education. In most cases

students must score a 4 or better to meet the state benchmark. The exception is the third-grade benchmark score in writing and speaking. Third graders must score a 3 in writing and speaking to meet the state benchmark.

Students who reach the standards will earn their Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) in the tenth grade. Beginning in 2005, assuming the Oregon Department of Education proceeds with the necessary preparation, students can receive their Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM), which documents an even higher level of achievement.

ENCOURAGING YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING AT HOME

You can encourage your child's learning at home. These basic suggestions will help you set the stage for better learning:

- ◆ Ask about your child's homework and talk about projects your child is working on at school.
- ◆ Provide a quiet spot with good lighting for homework and encourage your child to do homework at the same time each day or evening.
- ◆ Read aloud to your child and encourage him or her to read aloud to you.
- ◆ TURN OFF THE TV!
- ◆ Encourage your child to tell you stories and write his or her own stories.
- ◆ Check your child's homework for neatness, accuracy, and completion.
- ◆ Emphasize that you expect your child to do well at school and that you believe school work is important.
- ◆ Praise your child for doing well at school.
- ◆ Volunteer in your child's classroom and school.
- ◆ Talk regularly with your child's teacher and ask about other ways you can encourage learning at home.

The following pages explain what the standards are and give you some ideas about things you can do at home to help your child learn.

HELPING YOUR CHILD REACH THE BENCHMARKS GRADES K-3

READING/LITERATURE

To meet the standards:

Students read accurately and fluently at the third grade level, and can identify main ideas and understand meaning.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ READ ALOUD to your child regularly and play games that help your child learn the ABC's.
- ◆ Ask the teacher for a copy of sight words your child needs to learn. Look for those words on billboards, in ads or headlines, etc.
- ◆ Use magnetic letters to encourage your child to make words he or she knows on the refrigerator.
- ◆ Help your child look up information in the newspaper, in recipes and in book resources.
- ◆ Ask your child to retell stories you've read together.
- ◆ Encourage your child to record on a tape or read to a brother or sister.

Grade 3 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ Multiple-choice test (score of 201 meets standard; 215 exceeds standard) administered in April.

WRITING

To meet the standards:

Students write about a topic which shows clear ideas and organization and use of correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Have your child make shopping lists or labels for things in cupboards.
- ◆ Make cards or letters for friends and relatives.
- ◆ Have markers, pens, paper and crayons available for writing about special things you do (trips, birthdays, going to the zoo, etc.) include a beginning, middle and end.
- ◆ Keep a message board where you and your child can write notes back and forth.

Grade 3 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ Teachers score one writing assignment (classroom work sample). Students are scored on ideas and content, organization and conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation). Minimum score of three in each trait.

SPEAKING

To meet the standards:

Students can speak before a group, presenting their ideas in a clear, well-organized manner.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Give your child an opportunity to read or recite a poem on special holidays and other family occasions.
- ◆ Encourage your child to speak in group situations (beyond the immediate family), describing special events, books or opinions he or she has.

Grade 3 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ Students make one oral presentation before a group and are scored on ideas and content, organization and delivery.

MATHEMATICS

To meet the standards:

Students show that they understand math concepts, choose and carry out strategies that work, explain their reasoning and accurately solve problems.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Let your child help with measuring ingredients when you are cooking. Ask him or her to double or halve quantities.
- ◆ When you are traveling, play games with sights along the way. Find something in the shape of a triangle, an octagon or a cone. Find a sign or license plate with even digits or with consecutive digits.
- ◆ Point out the time that daily events occur in your home. Ask your child to tell the time, especially from a clock with hands.
- ◆ Use jigsaw puzzles to help your child learn to visualize spatial relationships. Checkers, chess, Connect Four and other games help children develop reasoning skills.

Grade 3 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ Multiple-choice test (score of 202 meets standard; 215 exceeds standard) administered in April.
- ◆ Teachers score one math assignment (classroom work sample) in which students demonstrate their ability to solve problems, communicate their thinking and understand concepts.

The Oregon Department of Education has developed a plan in which additional assessments and work samples in other academic areas will be added over time.

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HELPING YOUR CHILD REACH THE BENCHMARKS

GRADES 4-5

READING/LITERATURE

To meet the standards:

Students can read accurately and fluently. They must show that they understand what they read, can connect it to other ideas and talk about the author's writing style.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Have your child read and use informational materials, such as recipes, bus schedules, television listings or directions on how to make something.
- ◆ Give your child a magazine subscription as a gift. Encourage your child to read areas of interest in the newspaper (sports, movie reviews, etc.).
- ◆ Look for crossword puzzles that link words to word meanings, or play games that involve reading.
- ◆ Continue to read aloud to your child using books in a series. Listen to books on tape from the library.

Grade 5 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ Multiple-choice test (score of 215 meets standard; 231 exceeds standard) administered in April.

WRITING

To meet the standards:

Students write papers in which they communicate about a topic, giving examples and details, organizing information, and using correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Have your child write letters to friends or relatives, or letters to get information about a topic of interest.
- ◆ Encourage your child to write reviews about books, favorite television shows, or movies for neighborhood newspapers, school publications, etc.
- ◆ Buy a diary and encourage your child to write in it about special times and personal feelings.
- ◆ Keep a notebook by the phone so your child can write phone messages for other family members.
- ◆ Encourage your child to enter writing contests sponsored by the zoo, children's magazines, etc.

Grade 5 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ State Direct Writing Assessment scores students in each of four traits — ideas and content, organization, sentence fluency, conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation). Word choice and voice are also scored, but don't enter into decision of meeting the standard. Assessment administered in mid-winter.
- ◆ Teachers score one classroom work sample in ideas and content, organization, sentence fluency and conventions with a minimum score of four in each trait required to meet the benchmark.

SPEAKING

To meet the standards:

Students make presentations before a group, demonstrating that their ideas, organization and delivery are clear and understandable.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Encourage your child to read a written paper he or she is proud of to family members and friends.
- ◆ Have your child give oral directions to someone else on how to do something or get somewhere.
- ◆ Encourage your child to take part in local community programs and/or ceremonies for youth organizations.

Grade 5 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ Students give one oral presentation that is rehearsed and presented before a group. This presentation must show that students can communicate their ideas in a clear, well-organized manner.

MATHEMATICS

To meet the standards:

Students show that they understand math concepts, choose and carry out strategies that work, explain their reasoning and accurately solve problems.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Share ways that we use math every day. For example:
 - When you are traveling, ask your child to determine the miles to your destination, the shortest route, etc.
 - When shopping, compare prices and sizes. Check weights and quantities.
 - Share examples of math in newspapers and magazines. Graphs, charts and ads appear daily. The sports page is full of numbers and mathematical concepts.
- ◆ Encourage your child to be a problem solver. Ask if your child can find another way to solve a problem. Share your own 'tricks' for solving problems in your head.

Grade 5 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ Multiple-choice test (score of 215 meets standard; 231 exceeds standard) administered in April.
- ◆ Students take State Math Performance Assessment (problem-solving) in mid-winter.
- ◆ Teachers score one math assignment (classroom work sample) in which students demonstrate their ability to solve problems, communicate their thinking and understand concepts.

HELPING YOUR CHILD REACH THE BENCHMARKS GRADES 6-8

READING/LITERATURE

To meet the standards:

Students can read accurately, fluently and critically and they can identify main ideas and understand meaning.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Set aside a specific time for reading at home (with the TV off!).
- ◆ Visit the library or a bookstore so your child can choose books or magazines that interest him or her.
- ◆ Encourage your child to read and follow a recipe, or follow the directions to make a model or craft project. These kinds of real-life reading skills are very important.
- ◆ Remember that any kind of reading is appropriate and helpful to your child. Reading magazines, newspapers, computer handbooks and novels all help build skills.
- ◆ Model reading in all languages.
- ◆ Discuss reading with your child.

Grade 8 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ Multiple-choice test (score of 231 meets standard; 239 exceeds standard) administered in April.

WRITING

To meet the standards:

Students write papers in which they communicate about a topic, giving examples and details, organizing information, and using correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Give your child materials that encourage writing (a diary, blank book, computer, etc.).
- ◆ Encourage your child to keep a photo album and write a narrative about each photo in the album.
- ◆ Encourage letter writing.
- ◆ Emphasize what is right in your child's writing instead of marking every error and focusing on what is wrong. With encouragement, your child will be more likely to continue writing.

Grades 6, 7, and 8 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ State Direct Writing Assessment scores students in each of four traits — ideas and content, organization, sentence fluency, conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation). Word choice and voice are also scored, but don't enter into decision of meeting the standard. Assessment administered in mid-winter.
- ◆ Teachers score one classroom work sample.

SPEAKING

To meet the standards:

Students make presentations before a group, demonstrating that their ideas, organization and delivery are clear and understandable.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Listen to your child. Have your child tell you about events in his or her day, or a movie he or she watched.
- ◆ Encourage your child to tell you how to do something or have your child try to persuade you to do something.

Grade 8 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ Students give one prepared and rehearsed oral presentation. Students are scored by their teachers in four areas — ideas and content, organization, delivery and language.

MATHEMATICS

To meet the standards:

Students show that they understand math concepts, choose and carry out strategies that work, explain their reasoning and accurately solve problems.

Some ways to help your child reach the benchmarks:

- ◆ Share ways that we use math every day. For example, encourage your child to estimate or measure quantities. Ask how much paint will be needed to paint the house or how much gas you'll need to drive to the beach. Ask your child to estimate the amount you are spending for groceries.
- ◆ Encourage your child to use statistical information to make decisions and research topics. For example, have your child collect statistics in your home such as number of hours of television watched versus number of hours reading.
- ◆ Share with your child how important mathematics will be in the future.
 - Many jobs require algebra and the ability to interpret statistics.
 - Many colleges require three years of mathematics for acceptance.
- ◆ Find out what areas of math your child enjoys and what areas seem difficult. Find out how your child learns mathematics best and share this information with the teacher.

Grade 8 students are assessed in the following ways:

- ◆ Multiple-choice test (score of 231 meets standard; 239 exceeds standard) administered in April.
- ◆ Students take the Math Performance Assessment in mid-winter.
- ◆ Teachers score one class assignment in which students demonstrate their ability to solve problems, communicate their thinking and understand concepts.