

Parents, teachers sound off on new report cards

These are excerpts of responses to the Cobb School District's survey on the Standards Based Report Cards where teachers and parents were asked "to provide any additional comments you would like to share regarding report cards." The responses are dated between Nov. 7 and Dec. 1, 2009. The Journal requested and received the responses late Friday. Spelling and grammatical errors have not been corrected.

Against.

■ "Having a standards-based report card will in no way tell me how my child has progressed any better than the current grading system. This proposed system will only cost the students their motivation to succeed in the classroom. The students with a 'B' average, have not mastered the material as well as those students with an 'A' average. This is easy to see under the point system or traditional system."

■ "I am very dissatisfied with the standards based report card. It is far too vague to be of any value."

■ "The Standards Based Report Card is too subjective & grossly confusing. You have tripled the teacher's work without adding to the parent's/student's ability to understand where improvement is needed & how to achieve it. Stop re-inventing the wheel!"

■ "Schools should reflect the views of parents, not someone trying to build their resume. P.S. I am a teacher."

■ "You should have involved the community in this process rather than management by surprise. What is the cost to the taxpayers of Cobb for the reworking of the report card?"

■ "This does not provide for adequate reporting for students with special needs"

■ "This survey is biased!!! I thought we were going to be able to critique this grading system objectively through this survey! I will just say that I strongly disagree with it. ... My friends that are teachers who are already implementing it say that there is no standard between schools and it is quite subjective!!! I think it is a mistake to change the current grading system!!!"

■ "I can read the report card and have no idea how my child is doing as compared to other children. ... It provides little to no guidance on how a child is doing compared to the others in his/her class."

■ "I would prefer a grading system that is less vague and subjective."

■ "It is a joke. The standards in the content areas are worthless in my opinion. Do I really need to see my child is able to identify changes by melting/ripping or tearing?"

■ "I believe the new report card is a lot more work for the teachers and does not benefit the parents. I simply scanned the entire report card looking for anything less than a 3, but there was so much clutter I did not read the specific entries unless they were less than 3. I think the teacher's time is better spent making individual comments as

required by the student than filling out all the tedious check boxes."

■ "Cobb County has always been known for excellence in schools. This report card waters down the academic focus."

■ "No wonder parents are putting their kids into private schools, because of this grading system I am considering it as well."

■ "I thought it was a waste of money to change the cards. One more way to be PC because we don't want to hurt a child's self-esteem."

■ "The new report card is for the birds. First, I don't want to have to go to college to become a teacher in order to understand what it says. It does not tell me whether or not my child is on the right track to be prepared for the next grade. How can the teacher's comments help me, when there is only one SMALL box for all of the comments the teacher has for the entire year? ... I am looking forward to my child getting older so he can get a report card that makes sense!"

■ "I have an MBA and I struggle to read all the education jargon. ... Spend time teacher, not spinning in circles over a bunch of political junk."

■ "(These) report cards suck."

■ "I think that changing to this type of reporting encourages mediocrity in student achievement."

■ "I'm living in an Ayn Rand novel. Please allow our students to achieve excellence if they can."

■ "This new grading sys-

tem is totally unacceptable. There is no mechanism for rewarding exceptional work."

■ "There is no way you can do away with the A, B, C rating system. How can you determine GPA and how do you distinguish between a child with a high A and a low B. This whole new system is crazy."

■ "This county is one of the strongest in the state and we have converted to the worst! This report card gets an F from us."

■ "This report card is a terrible idea. It in no way should go beyond 2nd grade if it is used at all."

■ "This report card is yet another example of Cobb County's failure to adequately think-through the implementation of a new program."

■ "You may think this is innovative, but it actually makes us a laughingstock for the nation."

■ "I believe these report cards are water-downed and not useful in the classroom. Honestly, I don't see the benefit of each report card that is put out annually."

■ "This report card waters down the academic focus."

■ "High level students will become lazy and settle for a 3."

■ "This would do the opposite for our students. Do NOT dumb them down."

■ "I hate this new report

card!!!! It appears that all the county is concerned about is making sure every child is average."

■ "If this continues I will pull my children from CCSD."

■ "New system seems to dumb-down the report card. I assume you just want to pass more students to get a better salary bonus ... wrong wrong wrong!"

■ "We think this new rating system is ridiculous — whatever happened to the ABCDF system which was fine."

For

■ "I think the report card is wonderful. I know my child exceeds expectations in several areas, and I would have liked to see that noted."

■ "I really like the report card. It provided more information about my child's grade than I would have gotten from the previous card. I think that the addition of a standards level will only benefit the report. I think that I would like to see my child was in an area so that I could nurture that area or maybe even extend the knowledge at home."

■ "We think the report cards were excellent. They seem to focus on individualized areas. We would like to see an overall grade too — like a,b,c etc. What distinguishes a child that has A work from B work?"

■ "Some change is good. Please, think through your changes carefully before implementing. The new reporting system is just OK; not a great improvement."

■ "Liked the detail/standards provided, but need more levels of achievement, 3 is not enough, really liked 5 breakdowns."

■ "I find the report card clear and easy to understand."

■ "Although I had some fears about the new system, once I saw the report card and read the backside and included materials I found it to be simple to understand."

■ "I think the additional detail provided is better than one overall grade that is not specific in grades K-3 but and overall grade in 4th and higher is important also."

■ "I prefer the new report card to the old style for grades K,1,2. I think older grades should be graded."

■ "The report card is an excellent tool that is detailed and easy to read. But ongoing, open communication with the teacher is key."

■ "I love the specificity of the new report cards. I like that they assess the achievement of a goal and not the mistakes made in working toward that goal."

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Cards

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Board members said they didn't know why Benson failed to mention the survey when he gave the board a lengthy presentation on the report cards on April 15.

"You'll have to ask him," Banks said.

But Ronke Abraham and

"From a scientific point of view, it's biased who is going to respond," Abraham said, noting that residents who respond to surveys usually are those who oppose the status quo.

Crowder-Eagle said she wasn't surprised to hear of the negative responses, which match initial reaction in places like Clarke County where the cards are used.



"I think when it started

card. Added Abraham: "There is a shift going on in the country with No Child Left Behind that is a standards-based approach."

Now used in kindergarten, first and second grades, the standards-based report card uses numbers in place of traditional letter grades: "1" does not meet standards; "2" indicates progress toward standards; and "3" indicates

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