

Why Trimesters?

High Quality Teacher Feedback

Because there are only three report cards instead of four, teachers spend less time on the administrative task of "data entry" and more time on "data analysis."

- **Meaningful Comments:** Teachers can provide more detailed, qualitative feedback on a trimester report card because they have observed the student for a longer stretch of time.
- **Conference Alignment:** Trimester schedules usually allow for parent-teacher conferences to happen deeper into the term, providing a more comprehensive picture of the child's progress.
- **More Time Teaching:** Students and teachers are able to spend more time with direct instruction, small group support, and intervention. Currently 2-3 weeks before the end of each quarter are used by teachers to assess, and students are not receiving intervention services during those times. Additional time to add back meaningful 1:1 goal setting.

Better Alignment with the "READ Act" (2026)

With the current **Minnesota READ Act** requirements, students must be screened three times a year (Fall, Winter, Spring).

- **Data Consistency:** Trimesters align perfectly with these mandatory screening windows. A report card issued in November can include the "Fall" benchmark data naturally, whereas a quarter system often feels "out of sync" with these state mandated testing cycles.

Comparison at a Glance

Feature	Quarters (9 Weeks)	Trimesters (12-13 Weeks)
Grading Frequency	4 times per year	3 times per year
Assessment Focus	Frequent, "snapshot" data	Long term growth and mastery
Stress Level	Higher for students/teachers	Lower, more "breathing room"
Admin Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More time spent on testing/grading• Subs for testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More time spent on instruction/intervention• No subs/save funds (60 days)

Additional Benefits:

More Time Teaching: Students and teachers are able to spend more time with direct instruction, small group support, and intervention. Currently 2-3 weeks before the end of each quarter are used by teachers to assess, and students are not receiving intervention services. Less required tests equals more time teaching/learning. More WIN time. More seminars.

Cost Saving: no subs required for testing (4Xs/year X 15 teachers).

Work to be done:

- Review Calendars/Dates

Grading days/PD days (more PD to work on READ Act training).
Conferences

- Standards-based grading. Discussions regarding reading and/or math grades. Realign benchmarks/grade level expectations for all subjects (reading, fluency, writing, math). Will take some discussion/work because of changes to time of year. Use subject 'teams' to review year-long plans.

- STEP (quarterly) and DIBELS (3Xs/year) go away and is replaced with FastBridge (3Xs/year – can include a 4th at entrance assessments to support progress monitoring. FastBridge (FAST) will serve as our primary reading assessment tool for grades K-8. This system meets all current MDE requirements for intervention qualification and READ Act mandates. For students in grades 9-12, FAST will be utilized for those currently performing below grade level.

The FAST system provides a comprehensive view of student performance through several sub-tests:

- **earlyReading (Grades K-1):** A 5–10 minute, 1:1 assessment focusing on foundational skills like phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency.
- **aReading (Grades K-12):** A 15–30 minute computer-adaptive test assessing broad reading abilities, including vocabulary and comprehension.
- **Lexile Reporting:** This assessment also provides Lexile levels for each student.

- Capti ReadBasix given to 3rd and 4th grade students below benchmark expectations on FAST and/or Prep fluency benchmarks.

-Discussions about 1:1 student relationships/support (when, for what?)

-gradebook alignment categories/weights

-PD on data analysis (reading the data and what interventions to do with it)
Will lead to better and more discussions at PLCs around data.