



DIOCESE *of* SACRAMENTO
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Standards-Referenced Grading

Frequently Asked Questions

for

Parents

Diocese of Sacramento
2018-2019

*Portions of the guide come from similar guides and resources in the Diocese of San Diego, the Diocese of San Jose, and the Diocese of Oakland.

Table of Contents

What are educational standards	3
What is Standards-Referenced Grading (SRG)?	3
Why is the Diocese of Sacramento adopting Standards-Referenced Grading?	3-4
How is Standards-Referenced Grading different from traditional grading?	4
How is Standards-Referenced Grading different from Standards-Based Grading?	4
What is a Proficiency Scale?	4
What do the numbers represent on the Proficiency Scale?	5
Sample Proficiency Scale	6
How does a teacher handle proficiency scales based on year-end standards?	7
How do teachers address multiple opportunities to learn?	7
How do teachers assess a Cultivation of Cardinal Virtues (Education in Virtue)?	7-8
How will students' scores be determined?	8
Redo's and Retakes	8
What can a student do to raise his/her score within SRG?	8
Why aren't all standards listed on the report card?	8
What about behaviors such as doing homework?	9
How will Standards-Referenced Grading scores be similar to and different from scores on assessments such as STAR?	9
Will Standards-Referenced Grading prepare students for grading in high school?	10
How will my student's scores be determined?	10
Are non-academic factors, such as participating in class, behavior, attitude, and work ethic part of the overall score?	10
Students with Specialized Needs	11
If a student receives 1s all year, does that mean he/she will be retained?	11
How will I know if my child needs help?	11
What about extra credit?	11-12
Does retaking a test teach children to do their best the first time?	12
Timeline for Implementation	13

What are educational standards?

Educational standards are the learning goals for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Education standards, like Common Core are *not* a curriculum. Local communities and educators choose their own curriculum, which is a detailed plan for day-to-day teaching.

What is Standards-Referenced Grading?

Standards-Referenced Grading (SRG) is a system of grading where teachers provide feedback to students about their demonstrated level of understanding on a set of defined standards and levels of performance.

As students begin a unit of study, the classroom teacher begins by sharing a specific proficiency scale with the students. A proficiency scale is a set of learning progressions showing what a student needs to know and be able to do by the end of the school year

(A sample scale is on page 6).

- Criteria for mastery (3.0) should be displayed and reviewed in student-friendly language in the classroom regularly, and student progress toward the standard should be reviewed throughout the unit.
- Students generally start by learning important vocabulary and skills.
- Students then move up the proficiency scale to the target level (3.0), which is considered “at grade level.” Here they are demonstrating knowledge of the state standards. This usually involves higher level thinking skills.
- Some students may go beyond the target level, which is considered to be more in-depth and often involves real world applications (4.0).

Why is the Diocese of Sacramento adopting Standards-Referenced Grading?

The Diocese of Sacramento is working to establish grading practices that are highly effective. Standards-Referenced Grading (SRG) is a tried and tested method that has many benefits for students. To name a few, SRG provides meaningful feedback, allows students to document their progress, and gives students ownership of their learning. Each is explained below.

1. Meaningful Feedback: Feedback has been defined as “just-in-time, just-for-me information delivered when and where it can do the most good” (Brookhart, 2008). In other words, students know their learning goals and that the target (3.0) is at grade level, which is displayed prominently in the classroom. By having clear learning targets, teachers can use the proficiency scale to discuss where a student is on the learning progression and give specific feedback as to how to improve. Feedback has a powerful impact on student learning; it is considered one of the top influences on student achievement (Fisher, Frey & Hattie, 2015).

2. Documents Progress: By receiving feedback based on a learning progression, students can track their own progress over time. The teacher and student have a clear picture of what the student has learned and where improvements can be made. When students track their own progress, student achievement increases significantly (Marzano, 2010).

3. Students Have Ownership of Their Learning: In SRG students have tremendous ownership over their learning. They are aware of what is required for success. They have various ways to show the teacher what they know and can do related to the standards. Students should be able to answer and ask these questions for each lesson of the day:

- **What am I learning?**
- **Why is it important to know and be able to do?**
- **How will I know if I am successful or not?**

How is Standards-Referenced Grading different from Traditional Grading?

Traditional grading typically averages all of the work assigned in a class including homework, tests, quizzes, and projects. The scores may also reflect non-academic factors such as behavior, timeliness, and participation. Averaging of scores does not indicate growth, nor does it show what a student knows and can do. SRG, on the other hand, **tracks progress** over time. It is expected for students to have lower scores as they begin learning new and difficult material. Scores later in the unit have more weight because it is expected that students would be closer to mastering the knowledge and skills as the unit progresses. Another distinction is that non-academic factors are recorded separately in SRG.

How is Standards-Referenced Grading Different from Standards-Based Grading?

SRG is a system in which students receive feedback about their proficiency on a set of defined standards. Schools report students' progress regarding grade-level standards. If a student masters standards quickly, he/she is given the opportunity for more in-depth study and/or real world applications. In a Standards-Based Grading (SBG) system when a set of standards is mastered, the student moves immediately to a more challenging set of standards or grade level. It is important to keep in mind that the Diocese of Sacramento is using standards-referenced grading.

What is a Proficiency Scale?

A proficiency scale defines the progression of intended learning. It includes scores of a 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0 each representing levels of the learning progression. For a sample of a proficiency scale and further explanation of the levels, please see sample on page 6.

What do the numbers represent on the proficiency scale?

The numbers on the proficiency scale represent a learning continuum and are **not** points that are averaged. Level 2 provides important vocabulary and skills. Next on the progression is the target, Level 3. Level 3 is the grade level standard and requires knowledge of additional skills and concepts. Level 4 is considered more in-depth and requires higher level thinking skills than the previous levels. **The proficiency scale scores represent the following:**

4.0 Exceeds the Standard	The student demonstrates an understanding of more complex content and thinking (not new content), including deeper conceptual understandings and applications.
3.5	In addition to the level 3.0 content, the student demonstrates some understanding of more complex content and thinking.
3.0 Mastery of Grade-Level Standard	The student demonstrates grade level proficiency on the standard or learning target and shows understanding of the content, details, vocabulary, procedures, processes, and skills.
2.5	In addition to the level 2.0 content, the student demonstrates partial knowledge of the 3.0 content.
2.0 Progressing Toward Grade-Level Standard	The student understands the simpler content, details, vocabulary, processes, and skills, including foundational material.
1.5	In addition to the level 1.0 content, the student demonstrates partial knowledge of the 2.0 content.
1.0 Initial Progress Toward Grade-Level Standard	With help, the student partially understands some of the simpler and more complex content, details, vocabulary, concepts, processes, procedures, and skills.
0.5	With help a partial understanding of the 2.0 content, but not the 3.0 content.
0.0 Even with help, no success	No understanding or skill demonstrated.

Sample of a Proficiency Scale

Analyzing Claims, Evidence, and Reasoning (4 ELA)

4.0	The student will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify two opinions on a particular topic in a text and notice what reasons and evidence are provided for these opinions (for example, identify what opinion the Billionaire Resort’s general manager Stephanie Ravessoud disagrees with, list the reasons and evidence that support her opinion, and identify the opposing opinion in Ilya Gridneff’s “Kenya Tries to Balance Turtles and Tourism” at tweentribune.com).
3.5	In addition to score 3.0 performance, partial success at score 4.0 content
3.0	The student will: <p>ACER1 (*Analyzing Claims, Evidence, and Reasoning)—Explain how reasons and evidence support an author’s opinion (for example, identify reasons and evidence in Ilya Gridneff’s “Kenya Tries to Balance Turtles and Tourism” at tweentribune.com that support the opinion that preserving turtles is good for Kenya’s tourism and for the environment).</p>
2.5	No major errors or omissions regarding score 2.0 content, and partial success at score 3.0 content
2.0	ACER1 —The student will recognize or recall specific vocabulary (for example, <i>detail, evidence, example, fact, opinion, personal experience, quote, reason, statement</i>) and perform basic processes such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how an opinion is different than a fact. Identify whether a statement is a fact or an opinion. Explain why it is important to support opinions with reasons and evidence. Identify types of evidence a text can use (such as examples, personal experiences, quotes, facts). Annotate details that relate to an opinion in a text. Annotate words or phrases that can accompany a reason or piece of evidence (such as <i>because, for example, proof</i>). Identify different types of evidence in a text (such as a fact, an example, a quote).
1.5	Partial success at score 2.0 content, and major errors or omissions regarding score 3.0 content
1.0	With help, partial success at score 2.0 content and score 3.0 content
0.5	With help, partial success at score 2.0 content but not at score 3.0 content
0.0	Even with help, no success

How does a teacher handle proficiency scales based on year-end standards?

Some of the proficiency scales are based on “year-end performance” standards such as reading on grade level. Thus, for many students a 3.0 (proficient) level may not be reached until toward or at the end of the school year.

For recording grades and for the report card, teachers will report students’ current level toward the year-end performance goal. If the student is “on target” to be at a 3.0 (proficient) by the year-end, comments on the report card should reflect this.

There may be few proficient grades on “year-end” performance standards that will not be fully assessed until toward or at the end of the school year. Level 3.0 is not expected until the end of the school year on year-end performance standards, and teachers will let parents know if their child/ren is/are on track to achieve mastery by the end of the year.

Only 1-2 scales are measured as year-end standards such as math fluency and reading fluency. More often, students will have an opportunity to earn a 3.0 and a 4.0 on the learning targets in the various scales.

How do teachers address multiple opportunities to learn?

The Diocese of Sacramento values the purpose of multiple opportunities for students to be able to show what they know and what they can do. Thus, we highly encourage using multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning. The Diocese of Sacramento is encouraging grade level PLCs and individual schools to develop a multiple opportunity protocol.

Generally speaking, when giving a retake to a student, a new score should be added (as opposed to replacing the old score). This history of data shows where the student is relative to the standard at that point in time and provides evidence from the previous attempt.

On very rare occasions, the teacher may choose not to include the original assessment score for a student. For example, the score was not at all indicative of what the student knows and can do because of a serious illness. In this case, the teacher would exempt that student’s previous score.

How do teachers record Cultivation of Cardinal Virtues (Education in Virtue)?

The Diocese of Sacramento believes strongly in valuing work ethic and therefore separates work ethic from the academic score. Academic grades/scores should contain information about

academic achievement separate from behavior, habits of work, attendance, timeliness, and attitude. These characteristics can be paired with appropriate daughter virtues and found in “Cultivation of Cardinal Virtues.”

How will students’ scores be determined?

Students’ scores are comprised of ongoing assignments, assessments, and projects that serve as evidence of what a student knows and can do. In addition, informal evidence such as teacher observations, classroom discussions, and student generated projects provide evidence of student learning. As a reminder, the last five scores we report in a grading period should be of significance and represent level 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0 content (such as larger exams, projects, authentic learning experiences, and a broad sampling of knowledge/skills).

Re-dos and Retakes

With a focus on academic learning, a Standards-Referenced System removes many of the supports, such as extra-credit or completion-based homework that some students relied on to mask weaknesses in their learning. The shift can be especially difficult for students who are normally “A” students because of these factors. However, those supports are now replaced with the opportunity for a student to continue learning and be reassessed to improve his/her scores. Under a Standards-Referenced System, students may have multiple opportunities for re-dos and re-takes if they have not reached level 3 proficiency.

What can a student do to raise his/her score within SRG?

The goal is to ensure all students attain mastery (3.0 or higher) on all of the proficiency scales. The teacher will continue to work with the student to help him/her attain proficiency (3.0 or higher). In addition, the student should be invited to meet with the teacher to determine which assignments, assessments, or projects could be revised. The student and teacher will devise a plan to learn the material and arrange a time for reassessment.

Why aren’t all standards listed on the report card?

The purpose of the standards-referenced report card is to communicate with parents and students about the progress of the student. Teachers collect evidence on specific grade-level standards and use that evidence to make a decision about a grade to report. Although the teacher is collecting evidence on the standards, reporting every single standard at each grade level would most likely be overwhelming to parents and teachers. **For example, in third grade, there are over 40 standards in English Language Arts alone. Many of the standards are not taught in isolation, so listing them separately is not necessary.**

What about teaching behaviors such as doing homework?

Homework plays a role in the education of children. Based on the work of Ken O'Connor, *How to Grade for Learning*, the purposes of homework are to allow students to practice, integrate, and prepare for learning. In addition, homework needs to be related to instructional objectives and/or content standards.

Homework for Practice or Preparation for Learning	Homework to Integrate Learning
Reflects effort, not mastery of concept	Supports long-term, continuing projects that parallel classwork
Reviews and reinforces skills or knowledge	Enriches classroom experiences and deepens the students' understanding
Gives independent practice for a skill or concept	Creates opportunities for problem solving and critical thinking
Allows for mistakes as part of the learning process	Integrates and applies different skills and knowledge sets to a task
Provides background information for upcoming lessons	Expects students to apply previous learning to complete these assignments
May be incorporated into the effort grade but not the academic grade	May be incorporated into the effort or academic grade

To be clear, classwork and homework completion are not issues unique to a Standards-Based System—students will only complete the work they see value in, regardless of the grading system being used. One way to convey the value is to remind students that they are assessed on everything they do. Everything from class discussions to homework to assessments informs your decision about the student's level of proficiency on an outcome, so it is in the student's best interest to put forth the best effort at all times.

How will Standards-Referenced Grading scores be similar to and different from scores on assessments such as STAR?

There will likely be some similarity in how a student scores in Standards-Referenced Grading and STAR. If a student scores high on STAR, the student most likely will have similar scores by the end of the year in Standards-Referenced Grading. There is also a difference between Standards-Referenced Grading and scores on STAR. Because STAR results are snapshots in time of a student's level of mastery, they are not considered to be as strong an indicator as a collection of evidence. Standards-Referenced Grading offers a collection of evidence to show a student's level of mastery.

Will Standards Referenced Grading prepare students for grading in high school?

“As far as preparing students for high school and beyond, clearly the best preparation that any school can offer is to engage students in a rigorous and challenging curriculum and then do what is possible to guarantee that students learn excellently what the curriculum includes. A standards-referenced report card identifies the specific learning goals within the curriculum so that appropriate rigor can be ensured. It also communicates more detailed information about higher levels of success. These distinct benefits serve to prepare students well, no matter what type of learning environment they enter after they leave school” (Guskey & Bailey 2010).

“Schools use grades because it’s one of those things somebody once decided on and now everyone goes along with it. I don’t know where it started, but I know where it stops—in the real world. You don’t see supervisors telling their employees ‘Great job, I’m going to give you an A.’ Or, ‘You really screwed up here; that’s a C-.’ No, in the real world adults get real feedback and indications of where they need improvement” (Littky & Grabelle 2004).

Identifying one’s strengths and weaknesses as a learner, being self-motivated to meet grade-level objectives, developing strong study habits, and mastering grade-level standards are all aspects of the Standards Based System that will help students succeed in high school. The Catholic School Department and area Catholic high school have been in communication throughout the process of transitioning from traditional grading to standards-referenced grading.

How will my student’s scores be determined?

A student’s scores are comprised of ongoing assignments, assessments, and projects that serve as evidence of what a student knows and can do. In addition, informal evidence such as teacher observations, classroom discussions, and student generated projects provide evidence of student learning.

Are non-academic factors, such as participating in class, behavior, attitude, and work ethic part of the overall score?

The Diocese of Sacramento believes strongly in valuing work ethic and therefore separates work ethic from the academic score. Academic grades/scores should contain information about academic achievement separate from behavior, habits of work, attendance, timeliness, and attitude. These items will be assessed in the Cultivation of Cardinal Virtues (Education in Virtue).

Students with Specialized Learning Needs

Students with Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) and or students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are expected to achieve the same rigorous learning outcomes; the standards are the same in all of our schools and for all of our students. Students with exceptional needs may have ILPs and/or IEPs that include specific accommodations and/or modifications that enable a student to meet the standards. Students with exceptional needs must be provided with the same opportunity to receive passing grades and advance in grade level with their peers. The same range of grades available to ALL students must be available to students with exceptional needs. Students with exceptional needs may require special services and supports to achieve certain grade-level standards. For students with accommodations, the content of the standard remains the same, but the method for learning and demonstrating mastery of that standard may be adjusted. If a student with consistently implemented accommodations is still not making progress towards achieving the grade level standards (similar to his/her peers who are also progressing towards meeting the standards), then the accommodations are not having the planned impact to remove the barriers (related to the students exceptional needs) and other accommodations may be needed. Modification, on the other hand, could mean changing the standard itself, which includes identifying standards that are fundamentally related but also developmentally appropriate. The SST team, including the parents, makes decisions regarding what content areas (if any) require modification of the grade-level standards.

If a student receives 1s all year, does that mean he/she will be retained?

Intervention opportunities are in place at most of our Catholic schools to support learners who are behind in math and reading. If a student receives 1s or 2s, it means his/her work is not yet meeting grade level standards. A number of academic interventions will be offered to those students who are struggling to meet the established standards. Grade level retention is not a practice that is generally supported by research and is only rarely used in consultation with parents.

How will I know if my child needs help?

Receiving a 1, 2, IE (Insufficient Evidence) on a grade/report card can be a sign that student is in need of extra support in the areas where he/she is receiving low marks. This is one of the many benefits of a standards referenced report card; areas in need of support are clearly evident.

What about extra credit?

Extra credit does not measure learning. In a standards-referenced system, students are actually able to demonstrate their learning in many different ways and timeframes. In a traditional

system in which points determine everything, extra credit and extra points will influence a grade and not reflect any actual or additional learning. For instance, a student who has a 2.0 on a specific learning goal may have multiple opportunities to demonstrate his/her learning at the 3.0 level. However, in a traditional system in which extra points are simply added in to the overall grade, extra points can be earned regardless of whether or not learning may have occurred.

Does retaking a test teach children to do their best the first time?

In a standards-referenced system, students have multiple opportunities to achieve a standard by retaking a test or portions of a test. In the real world, only people who master certain information or skills are able to receive certain privileges. Standards-referenced grading puts more focus on student learning and allows for multiple attempts for success.

Timeline for Implementation

The Diocese of Sacramento will use an implementation strategy based on research by the Marzano Research Institute. Together in grade level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), teachers will customize proficiency scales and align assessments before schools are expected to proficiently use the Standards-Referenced Report Cards (SRRRC). This approach will allow schools and educators to build the capacity and confidence before transitioning to the SRRRC.

A Standards-Based-System (SBS) is dependent upon instruction, grading, and reporting a valid and standardized set of outcomes and expectations and common outcome assessments for each course.

2018-2019

- Three diocesan-wide professional development days with Marzano Research Institute learning about **Standards-Referenced Grading and Proficiency Scales**.
- Teachers to develop priority standards using the Critical Concepts from Marzano Research Institute in Math, ELA, Science and Social Studies. Teachers in other disciplines will develop proficiency scales with the support and guidance of the Marzano Consultants.
- Teachers to begin customizing proficiency scales in cluster grade level PLCs.
 - Score 2.0 Vocabulary Terms and Basic Processes
 - Score 3.0 Elements
 - Scales for additional measurement topics

2019-2020

- Three diocesan-wide professional development days with Marzano Research Institute for developing **Proficiency Scales**.
- Teachers continue to customize proficiency scales in cluster grade level PLCs.
 - Score 2.0 Vocabulary Terms and Basic Processes
 - Score 3.0 Elements
 - Scales for additional measurement topics

2020-2021

- Teachers to match existing assessment items to the customized proficiency scales, to generate assessments (both common and formative), and to score them using a standards-referenced approach.
- Teachers to design high quality, aligned assessments
 - Varying types of assessments
 - Unobtrusive and obtrusive (formative/summative)
 - Student-generated assessments
 - Student response types
 - Successfully scoring assessments

2021-2022

- Implementation of the Diocese of Sacramento Standards-Referenced Report Card for students in grades TK-8th Grade.
- Teachers to continue to provide specific feedback to students and parents about progress using proficiency scales and aligned assessments.