St. Martin of Tours Academy Family Guide to Standards-Referenced Grading & Progress Reports

Introduction

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. The steps within SRG are as follows:

1. As students begin a unit of study, the classroom teacher begins by sharing descriptions of learning progressions with the students. Learning progressions show what a student needs to know and be able to do by the end of the school year. **(A sample progression is on the following pages.)**
2. Students generally start by learning important vocabulary and skills.
3. Students then move up proficiency levels to the target level, which is considered "at grade level." Here they are demonstrating knowledge of the diocesan standards. This usually involves higher level thinking skills.
4. Some students may go beyond the target level, which is considered to be more in-depth and often involves real world applications.

How is Standards-Referenced Grading (SRG) different from Traditional Grading?

Traditional grading typically averages all of the work assigned in a class including homework, tests, quizzes, and projects. Those scores may also reflect non-academic factors such as behavior, timeliness, homework completion, and participation. 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. This is recorded in our gradebook by giving the most recent score the most weight. Another distinction is that non-academic factors are recorded separately in SRG under Successful Learner Traits (see Successful Learner Traits on page 5).

What are some of the advantages of Standards-Referenced Grading?

Meaningful Feedback – "Just-in-time, just-for-me information delivered when and where it can do the most good" (Brookhart, 2008). Feedback has a powerful impact on student learning; it is considered one of the top influences on student achievement (Fisher, Frey & Hattie, 2015). Feedback is given in various ways at SMA, for example: exit tickets, various assignments, verbal feedback, and rubrics.

Progress Monitoring- By identifying very specific learning targets, teachers are able to focus on areas of strength as well as areas for improvement. Students, parents, and teachers receive specific feedback on student growth as it relates to the standards. Instead of an average score for the entire subject (example 85% in Math), students receive specific feedback on areas within that subject that are strengths and areas for improvement. (*Example: Standard - Use place value understanding to round decimals to the hundredths place. Feedback - Student is confident in rounding to the ones place and tenths place, but needs to build confidence in rounding to the hundredths place.*)

Students have Ownership of Their Learning – In SRG, students have tremendous ownership over their learning and participate in ongoing self-reflection. 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:

1. What am I learning?
2. Why is it important to know and be able to do?
3. How will I know if I am successful or not?

What are the academic performance level descriptors?

Academic Performance Level Descriptors

E= Exceeds Grade Level Standard Mastery Consistently
M = Mastering Grade Level Standard Consistently
P = Progressing Toward Grade Level Standard
IP = Initial Progress Toward Grade Level Standard
NP = Even with Assistance, No Progress
NE = Not Evaluated

See next page for sample learning progression -->



Sample Learning Progression

Analyzing Claims, Evidence, and Reasoning (4 ELA)

4.0 E	The student will: • 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).
3.0 M	The student will: **ACER1—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).
2.5 P+	No major errors or omissions regarding score 2.0 content, and partial success at score 3.0 content
2.0 P	**ACER1—**The student will recognize or recall specific vocabulary (for example, *detail*, *evidence*, *example*, *fact*, *opinion*, *personal experience*, *quote*, *reason*, *statement*) and perform basic processes such as: • 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 *because*, *for example*, *proof*). • Identify different types of evidence in a text (such as a fact, an example, a quote).
1.5 IP+	Partial success at score 2.0 content, and major errors or omissions regarding score 3.0 content
1.0 IP	With help, partial success at score 2.0 content and score 3.0 content
0.5 IP-	With help, partial success at score 2.0 content but not at score 3.0 content
0.0 NP	Even with help, no success

What do the Numbers Represent on a Learning Progression?

The numbers on the learning progression 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 standards 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.

SRG Grades Explained - Proficiency Scale (generic)



Exceeds Grade Level Standard Mastery Consistently

The student demonstrates an understanding of more complex content and thinking (**not new content**) including deeper conceptual understandings and applications related to the standard.

- A student earning an **E** demonstrates higher-level critical thinking skills.
- An **E** is rare and only achieved when a student is able to demonstrate deeper application of the concept in various ways.
- An E does not mean moving on to the next grade level's standards.



Mastering Grade Level Standard Consistently

The student demonstrates full understanding of simple and complex content, details, vocabulary, procedures, processes, and skills related to the standard.

- An **M** can only be earned once all learning targets within the standard have been taught and assessed.
- A student earning an **M** demonstrates understanding of grade level skills and concepts.
- An **M** throughout the school year indicates strong, excellent work at grade level.
- The **M** mark is the goal for the grade level and should be celebrated.



Progressing Toward Grade Level Standard

The student understands the simpler content, details, vocabulary, processes, and skills, including foundational material, but may struggle with more of the complex content related to the standard.

- A student earning a **P** has not **yet** met the standards but is progressing toward achieving skills and learning end-of-year concepts.
- A **P** indicates growth and conversations about having the "growth-mindset" are encouraged.
- A **P** at the beginning of the year or unit is to be expected since the standard(s) may not have been fully taught yet.



Initial Progress Toward Grade Level Standard

With help, the student partially understands some of the simpler content, details, vocabulary, concepts, processes, procedures, and skills related to the standard.

- A student earning an **IP** is currently **not** meeting grade level standards **independently.**
- The student demonstrates an inconsistent understanding and application of knowledge or the standard is new to the student.



No Progress, Even with Assistance

No understanding of skill related to the standard is demonstrated, even with help**.**

- A student earning a **NP** is currently not meeting grade level standards even with help.
- The student demonstrates little to no understanding and application of knowledge.

Not Evaluated- Curriculum or standards for that class were not assessed during this grading period for this specific student.

Blank Score- Curriculum or standards for that class were either not taught or assessed during this grading period.

Successful Learning Traits Descriptors

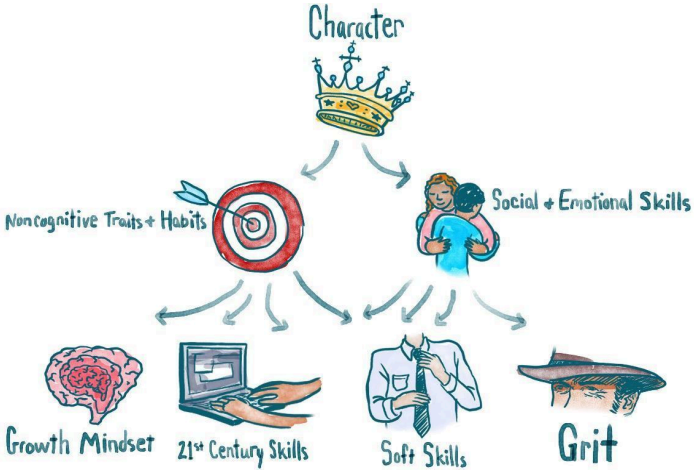
Teachers will use Successful Learning Traits to communicate non-academic efforts, such as participating in class, behavior, attitude, and work ethic. SMA believes strongly in valuing work ethic and therefore separates work ethic from the academic score. Academic grades/scores should contain information about academic achievement separate from behavior, habits of work, attendance, timeliness, and attitude. These grades are included under "Successful Learner Traits" and will be shared on the report card each trimester.

R=Routinely, O=Occasionally, S=Seldomly

Develop Self-Management Skills to Achieve School & Life Success
Produce Legible Work
Demonstrate Organizational Skills
Participate in Class Activities
Complete Assignments/Homework
Completes Assignments/Homework in a timely manner
Uses Class Time Wisely
Shows Metacognition and Self Awareness of Learning

Use Social Awareness & Interpersonal Skills to Establish & Maintain Positive Relationships
Respect the Feelings & Perspectives of Others Based on Gospel Values
Use Communication & Social Skills to Interact Effectively with Others
Demonstrate an Ability to Prevent, Manage, & Resolve Interpersonal Conflicts in Constructive Ways
Make Relevant Contributions to Class Discussion

Demonstrate Decision-Making Skills & Responsible Behavior
Accept Directions & Follows Rules
Apply Decision-Making Skills Responsibly with Daily Academic & Social Situations
Contribute to the Well-Being of One's School & Community
Accept Directions & Follows Rules



What can my student do to raise his/her score within SRG?
Some standards are not repeated throughout the year. This is commonly the case in Social Science-History, Science, and in Math. Therefore, students are encouraged to apply their growth mindset into new learning and attend any tutoring sessions offered. The teacher will continue to work with the student to help him/her attain mastery. As the learning continues this year, most standards will be revisited time and time again in different ways.

In English Language Arts, students will work with informational texts to develop their skills as readers using different texts in whole group lessons, collaborative projects and assignments, as well as independently. If a student hasn't shown mastery yet, they will have other opportunities this year to practice that standard and gain mastery. Our gradebooks will calculate mastery using the most recent score for each grading period. This follows the philosophy that as long as a student shows grit, perseverance, and a growth mindset to work toward mastery, they will earn the score that shows their current mastery (not an average). This would allow for them to apply that knowledge in the next unit and to show growth over time.

FAQ's

- **How does a Standards-Referenced Report Card help parents?**
  - Standards-referenced grading allows parents to receive accurate information based on cumulative student progress throughout the trimester and year. In addition, SRG promotes more detailed and meaningful conversation between parents and students as well as parents, students, and teachers. It also allows for more careful and precise monitoring of student achievement and reflects grade-level standards and expectations so parents gain a complete idea of student progress.
  - Grades will also be communicated to parents through SchoolSpeak. Teachers should be updating the grade books every other week in 3-8 grade. Parents will also receive Progress Reports half way through the trimesters. If at any time a parent is wondering about their child's progress, they should reach out directly to the teacher.

- **What if a child is not yet progressing at an acceptable rate toward a grade-level standard?**
  - Remember, the goal is for all students to attain mastery on all of the standards by the end of the school year. The teacher will continue to work with the student to help him/her attain mastery. As the learning continues this year, most standards will be revisited time and time again in different ways.

● Can a student perform at a P (Progressing) and then move to an IP (Initial Progress) the next Trimester?

○ Yes. Remember, some standards are not repeated throughout the year. This is commonly the case in Social Science-History, Science, and in some cases Math. A student may be progressing in standards taught in trimester 1 but have more difficulty mastering the standards in trimester 2.

● What is the purpose of standards-referenced grading?

○ The purpose of standards-referenced grading is to raise student achievement by clearly communicating students' progress towards learning outcomes in a timely, accurate, fair, and specific manner. SRG accurately communicates student achievement to students, parents, and educators. The influence of work habits on student learning is reported separately from academics.

● How does standards-referenced grading work?

○ Traditional grading averages a student's achievement data with other characteristics, such as work habits, indicators which can distort the grade. SRG removes extraneous factors and focuses solely on a student's academic achievement and continues mounting evidence that indicates a true assessment of the student's present mastery level of learning. Other characteristics are reported separately.

● How is standards-referenced grading different?

○ The student's grade more accurately represents the progress toward proficiency of standards than traditional grading does. Subject areas are subdivided into big ideas related to standards and their respective learning outcomes that students need to learn or master. Each target is assessed. The influence of positive and consistent work habits on student learning is reported separately from academics.

● What are the disadvantages of standards-referenced grading?

○ Changing long-held traditions is a challenging and lengthy process. This will take time! Some parents have commented that they wish the teachers graded like this when they were in school as it makes so much more sense. The major barrier to implementing SRG is the substantial professional development needed for teachers to align instruction and projects to standards and learning targets. We are providing the necessary ongoing development for all our teachers. Like any change effort, this will take time, however our school will provide a stronger academic environment as a result.

● How will I know what progress my student is making and if he or she is on track to meeting the standard?

○ In order to know what progress students are making, parents should begin with talking to their child to understand what assignments, assessments and/or student work products are most important for their student in any given content area (ex: Religion, ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, etc.). Parents should look at the progress reports sent during each trimester and pay attention to trends in these scores, knowing that over time, students should be progressing toward **M**astery by the end of the semester. Teachers will be utilizing

assignments, assessments and student work products as a body of evidence to make a final mark at the end of each trimester.

• What about homework? I've heard it doesn't "count" in standards-referenced grading. How do I make sure my child understands the importance of homework if it isn't part of the final grade?

○ Homework is practice. Therefore, let us re-think the question to be, "Does practice count?" to use a sports analogy. Practice is extremely important and valuable as it prepares you to perform. Students will have homework in SRG. It will be focused on the standards and meaningful. Homework will be accounted for in regards to Successful Learner Traits (SLTs) on the Report Card.

• What about my child who is a high achieving student?

○ SRG is beneficial for students who learn at all levels since it allows for more specific feedback. Please read the *Letter to Parents of High-Achieving Students* from Rick Wormeli Rick, an experienced educator who now writes professional articles and education books while training teachers, principals, superintendents, business organizations, school boards, and parents in North America and around the world. He also presents to many Catholic arch/dioceses across California, including San Diego. SRG allows high-achieving students the opportunity to receive **E** for Exceeds Mastery.

• How will this affect my child on the High School Placement Test (HSPT) or for high school acceptances?

○ SRG has been around for a long time and there are other Catholic schools in San Diego who have been using SRG for over 7 years now. In total, there are 22 schools in the Diocese who have already transitioned or who are in transition like us. One of the schools is Mater Dei Elementary School (they opened their school with SRG), which is the feeder for Mater Dei High School. As principals, we meet and discuss what is the best way to move forward in education and this is the future for Catholic schools. We are looking to help students succeed beyond our elementary schools. Catholic high schools are used to seeing the SRG report card. Some have even commented that they prefer the SRG report card because they are able to see where a student is academically and what skills they have mastered. It is more difficult for them to determine what an A in math means from one school to another since the way a teacher might grade an A paper at one school might look different than how a teacher grades an A paper at another school. The principal at Mater Dei High School has said, "We definitely want parents to know that we support the type of grading that their Catholic elementary school uses, either traditional or SRG. We are trained in understanding both, and neither will put their students at an advantage or disadvantage."

○ The schools that have already transitioned have the same Catholic high school acceptance rate as schools who have traditional grades. The HSPT is a placement test that helps the high schools know where a student should be placed in regards to classes (remedial, honors, advanced, AP, etc.). The schools who have transitioned to SRG also have students who receive scholarships. The high schools do not judge a student's acceptance based on SRG or traditional grades. They look at the whole picture (teacher and principal

recommendations, report cards, interview and HSPT score) in order to determine acceptance.

- **How will this affect my child being College and Career Ready?**
  - Colleges are also getting on board with SRG and are accepting of standards-based grading methods. In fact, most colleges use rubrics to measure the whole student's character and leadership experience to establish acceptance rather than just SAT and GPA scores.

Want to learn more?

Video: What is standards-based grading? How does it work? Why is it a better way to assess what kids are learning? This video answers common questions about this grading system that provides better data for parents, teachers and students about how well kids are learning. https://bit.ly/3jvSp95

Video: Standard-based grading (Standard-referenced Grading) introduction with the emphasis on feedback. https://bit.ly/3mmzVK6

Resources:

- Diocese of San Diego SRG Parent Handbook & SRG Site
- What's Wrong with Using Points Article
- SRG Video (Spanish subtitles)
- USCCB Common Core Standards FAQ

