

STANDARDS-BASED LEARNING HANDBOOK

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At San Gabriel Academy (SGA), we believe that the highest kind of education aligns with our Christ-centered philosophy and should seek to unfold God’s plan for our students’ lives. From this perspective, all children, given love, time, opportunity, and proper training, should be able to achieve heights previously thought unattainable. This type of education program requires high levels of intentionality and design. SGA uses Standards-Based Learning (SBL) as the basis for designing our curricular program. SBL is the foundation for developing our framework.

THE BASICS OF STANDARDS-BASED LEARNING (SBL)

Standards-based learning measures the mastery of the content standards, in other words, how well students understand the material in class. The marks are not a comparison of one student to another, but rather a way to measure how well students are doing on grade-level/course level standards. Proficiency Scales (P-Scales) have been developed which will allow students, teachers, and families to answer three important questions about student learning:

- **Where am I going?**
- **Where am I now?**
- **How do I get from here to there?**

There is no doubt that all students can learn, but not always on the same day and in the same way. SBL provides multiple opportunities for students to practice and retake assessments until they demonstrate that they have mastered or learned the content being taught. SBL creates a shift in conversation from what a student is doing to what they are learning; this, in turn, immerses everyone. This allows parents to understand more clearly what is expected of students and how to help them be successful in their educational program.

Standards-Based Learning also changes the conversation to include not only what students are learning, but how they are learning it. Using a standards-based learning approach, a student’s **progress** (how much he/she has learned) and **process** (how he/she has been learning) will be evaluated separately from the **product** (what he/she can now do with that learning). Student processes, such as organization, class participation, academic practice (homework), and following directions, are non-academic habits or behaviors essential to academic success and they have traditionally “counted” toward quarterly subject grades. In many instances, this allowed grades to be used as tools to control student behavior, as opposed to tools for reporting what students have learned. When that’s the case, it’s difficult to identify the reasons students get the grades they get. Reporting student progress and product separately from process (or habits) enable parents, students, and teachers to have a more accurate picture of what students truly know and can do.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND STANDARDS-BASED LEARNING

TRADITIONAL	STANDARDS-BASED
<p>Based on a % system; often norm-referenced (grade based on how students perform compared to their peers), criteria for grades is not always clear.</p>	<p>Criterion-referenced (grade based on how students perform compared to a defined standard) and proficiency-based using a limited number of levels with criteria; learning targets are known to all.</p>
<p>Uses an uncertain mix of achievement, attitude, effort, and behavior. Uses penalties and extra credit.</p>	<p>Measures only achievement; behaviors reported separately. No penalties or bonuses are given.</p>
<p>Includes group scores.</p>	<p>Includes individual evidence only.</p>
<p>Includes every score regardless of when it was collected.</p>	<p>Emphasizes the highest understanding demonstrated by the student.</p>
<p>Grades are calculated using the average.</p>	<p>Uses median, mode, and professional judgment to determine grades.</p>
<p>Assessments vary in quality.</p>	<p>Uses only quality assessments and carefully recorded data.</p>
<p>Includes inconsistent use of zeros</p>	<p>Eliminates the negative impact of zeros in reporting of student grades</p>

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COMPONENTS OF STANDARDS BASED LEARNING

CONTENT STANDARDS

SGA's Learning Standards, defined by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and the State of California Education Departments describe what students should know and be able to do by the end of the course. Student progress is reported in terms of proficiency on a given standard. Standards are grouped in the units in which they will be taught. All standards will be taught and assessed but the prioritized standards are reported. These standards have been designated as "priority" for student learning and success.

ASSESSMENT

Assessments are measurements taken to see if students have met the requirements of the standards which allow teachers to communicate a student's progress on the content standards. Information gathered from assessments is used as evidence of student learning. The assessments can be formative or summative. Formative assessments are assessments FOR learning that are used to guide students on their path to learning. Summative assessments are assessments OF learning and are both may be used to report progress toward mastery.

Types of assessments include exit tickets, journals, exams, quizzes, handouts, pretests, labs, projects, and tests, among others.

Students are given many opportunities to show their level of proficiency in a standard. Teachers lead their students through each standard progressively with some 1.0 practices, many 2.0 practices leading to several 3.0 and some 4.0 practices and assessments.

Proficiency scales indicate student achievement as it relates to a given standard and use a four-point system where a score of 3.0 indicates proficiency within a standard. In other words, a student receiving a score of 3.0 has met the standard. A general description of each score level is on the next page.

PROFICIENCY SCORES

4.0	In addition to meeting the standard, the student demonstrates applications that go beyond what was taught in class. The score of 4 is reserved for occasions where the student has gone above and beyond to demonstrate mastery of the skill.
3.0	The student has demonstrated proficiency in the skill or standard. The student has met the standard.
2.0	The student has gained an understanding of the vocabulary and simpler processes of the standard.
1.0	With help, the student can achieve partial success with the vocabulary and the simpler processes involved in the standard.
0.5	The student is successful with instruction.
0.0	There is little or no evidence of the student having met the standard.

REASSESSMENT

Mastery does not occur at a single point in time but is achieved through a process over time. A key component of standard-based learning is providing multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery through reassessments. Students are expected to provide evidence of learning and progress toward mastery leading up to the reassessment.

REPORTING

Weekly reports will be available through RenWeb to parents and students to communicate a student's progress toward mastery of standards. These Progress Reports will provide descriptive feedback to parents and students regarding their progress in each subject area. More detailed feedback will be available on either Google Classroom or Showbie.

HOW TO READ THE PROGRESS REPORT:

Categories: The Progress Report will be separated into the following general categories: proficiency and progress.

PROFICIENCY CATEGORIES

In short, proficiency categories will include the current level of your student's progress towards a particular standard. These categories will be progressive as the class develops in their learning towards the standard. Meaning, assessments will be reported as they are offered up to that point in time during the quarter. For example, a proficiency category may list a 2.0 Assessment but not a 3.0 or 4.0 Assessment. This is because a 3.0 or 4.0 Assessment has not been offered to the student yet.

Within each proficiency category, there will be three types of assessments: 2.0 Assessment, 3.0 Assessment, and 4.0 Assessment. The highest score for each of these assessments is indicated in their title. Each type of assessment will report on the highest score of each of those types of assessments.

Additionally, as students progress towards the standard, 2.0 or 3.0 assessments may be marked excused in the status column. An excused assessment simply means that the student's score for this assessment is being replaced for a higher score. For example, if a student has received a 3.0 on a 3.0 assessment, their score of 2.0 on their 2.0 Assessment will be excused. This makes it so that the student's grade only reflects the 3.0 and doesn't average the 2.0 and 3.0 together resulting in a 2.5. For more details on how this works, please see the extended version of the parent handbook.

The maximum score of each assessment should be out of 100 to allow for the proper calculation of the student's grade. A score of 3/100 is the maximum score available for a 3.0 assessment and a score of 2/100 is the maximum score available for a 2.0 assessment. The average of these proficiency categories makes up the student's grade.

PROGRESS CATEGORY

A single progress category will list all the work that the class has done throughout the grading period. The title for each assignment will include the code for each prioritized standard that it is working towards. The maximum score for each assignment is indicated under the max score column.

The notes column may provide additional information about the student's performance on a particular assignment.

CODES

Codes under the status column will be particularly important to communicate how the student has performed on specific assessments. A table indicating the codes and their definitions is below.

STATUS CODES	
STATUS	DEFINITION
VALID	The student has completed the assessment in completion.
INCOMPLETE	Some work was turned in, but the assignment is incomplete.
MISSING	The assignment has not been turned in.
PENDING	The assignment is in the process of being graded, but it has been turned in.
EXCUSED	The assignment has been completed, but it is being replaced with a more current score.
ABSENT	The student was absent for this assessment.

LETTER GRADE

A calculation of a student's letter grade is an average of the highest score for each prioritized standard for that grading period. The scores can be viewed under the Proficiency category for each prioritized standard. Those scores are then averaged to determine a letter grade. It's important to note that a single assessment does not determine the student's grade, rather an average of all the prioritized standards within the grading period. The conversion scale for the averages of standards

CONVERSION SCALE	
LETTER GRADE	PRIORITIZED STANDARDS AVERAGE SCORES
A	≥3.26
A-	3.0 - 3.25
B+	2.84 - 2.99
B	2.67 - 2.83
B-	2.5 - 2.66
C+	2.34 - 2.49
C	2.17 - 2.33
C-	2.0 - 2.16
D+	1.76 - 1.99
D	1.26 - 1.75
D-	1.0 - 1.25
F	0.0 - 0.99

QUESTING

The particular style of Standards-Based Learning that San Gabriel Academy is implementing was developed by Dr. Marie Alcock; this framework is best described as Questing. Questing provides a way to help students reach their highest potential while developing into self-navigating learners. This is more than just reaching standards (the traditional form of Standards-Based Learning). Questing is the process of developing self-navigating or self-guided learners who engage in a journey to take their learning beyond what is taught in the classroom through making deliberate decisions.

A quest is the outcome of that journey and does not have a set format. Quests can be anywhere between a project and applying a skill to a different scenario. Quests will vary for each standard and not every quest will look exactly the same because there is room for personalization and choice. Quests demonstrate that a student has developed the skills necessary for self-navigation of a student's learning as well as a transfer of that learning in the classroom to other applications.

It is the invitation to learners to use their knowledge and skills practically, to engage as leaders, to solve problems, improve society, or create enterprises. From our SDA perspective, each Quest works to help students fulfill the Gospel commission through their academic, co-curricular, and future professional endeavors.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY DOES SAN GABRIEL ACADEMY USE STANDARDS-BASED LEARNING?

Here at SGA, we think very differently about education and understand the dynamics of teaching and learning. This is a shift that is supported by volumes of research and enables us to provide the highest quality Christian education for our students. A key component of standards-based grading is that it provides grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning.

ACCURATE: By basing a student's grade on solely academic factors, the teacher creates a clear picture of what the student has learned without the influence of other factors. These other factors, such as effort and attitude, are still essential, but are not part of the student's academic grade and are communicated separately.

CONSISTENT: For each standard, the teacher will use a mastery criteria rubric to determine exactly what the student will need to do to master that standard. The rubric establishes clear expectations for mastery up front and applies them consistently across classrooms.

MEANINGFUL: A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place. In a standards-based classroom, scores are recorded by standard rather than by types, such as tests or homework, making it easier to identify areas of strength and to address areas of concern for teacher and student.

SUPPORTIVE OF LEARNING: Standards-based grading supports learning by focusing on the material that has or has not been learned rather than on accumulating points to reach a certain total. The reassessment policy also supports student learning by allowing new levels of learning to replace old when a student shows improvement on an assessment.

WHAT STUDENT EVIDENCE DETERMINES GRADES?

Teachers carefully consider the following in determining progress: independent daily written or oral tasks; application of skills; periodic assessments (quizzes, tests), performance tasks, and teacher-student questioning. Several different types of assessments will be available. Students can retest to show they know the concept or skill. Consistent descriptive feedback will be given to let students know what improvements are needed and what they are doing right. This feedback will be verbal and/or written where the students turn their work in, in Google Classroom or Showbie. The information that provides the most accurate depiction of students' learning is the most current information. If students demonstrate that past assessment information no longer accurately reflects their learning, the new information will be given greater consideration when assigning grades.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT MY CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW AND/OR DO TO MASTER A STANDARD?

Charts called P-Scales, describe what student learning “looks like” for every reported standard. These P-Scales are the key to getting the most out of standards-based grading because they show students, parents, and teachers exactly where students are in their path to mastery. Parents can contact teachers directly for more details.

WHY SHOULD MY STUDENT DO THE ACADEMIC PRACTICE (HOMEWORK) ASSIGNED IN CLASS IF IT ISN'T INCLUDED IN THE GRADE?

Many students feel that in a standards-based class they don't have to worry about anything except their final chapter or unit test. This is incorrect. It is important for students to understand that teachers evaluate progress every day and that everything they do in class informs their teacher's judgment of their progress. Teachers intentionally choose academic practice that will prepare them for the assessments. Just as an NFL team would never expect to win the Superbowl without hours upon hours of purposeful practice, students need the academic practice that prepares them for success.

Student work is also analyzed by teachers to determine growth and improvement towards mastery of a specific skill or content. Every teacher has the responsibility of taking all the evidence of student learning into account when assigning a grade for a reporting period. So, if a student chooses not to do an assignment, not only are they missing an opportunity to practice a skill and receive feedback, they also miss an opportunity to display mastery of a standard.

WHY HASN'T MY STUDENT'S GRADE CHANGED YET?

Because standards-based learning measures a student's proficiency of the standard on the most recent level of learning, your student's overall class grade may not progress as frequently as it did when every assignment impacted the grade. This shift is especially noticeable at the beginning of the quarter when it may take a few weeks for the teacher to collect enough evidence to determine each student's level of mastery. While the overall grade may not change as frequently, the teachers are still recording other assignments, such as academic practice, that provide important feedback to you and the teacher about what work is being done. In Google Classroom or Showbie, you can see exactly what your student has turned in as well as the feedback given by the teacher. Please contact the Front Office at any time if you have questions about your student's grades.

WHY DOES MY STUDENT HAVE A C- WHEN THEY SAY THEY HAVE DONE EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN ASKED OF THEM?

The progression of each unit helps students to build skills and knowledge towards the standards of that unit. Students may not have had the opportunity to demonstrate complete proficiency of the standards as they are progressing through the parts of the standard. When this occurs, there is the possibility that they have done well in all the work asked of them, but have not been assessed on the entire standard yet. In that case, their overall score will be less than a 3.0 resulting in a lower letter grade. By the end of the unit, they will have been given multiple opportunities to show their proficiency, and their letter grade will reflect that.

ARE THE STANDARDS-BASED LEARNING SCORES 4, 3, 2, 1 EQUIVALENT TO TRADITIONAL LETTER GRADING?

The 4, 3, 2, 1 Standards-Based scale is not synonymous with the A, B, C, D traditional grading scale. A “4” is not equal to an A. Grades and proficiency levels do not correlate with each other. Traditional grading systems average academic and non-academic factors over a marking period. Standards-Based learning measures student knowledge over time by reporting the most recent, consistent level of performance. Many times a student may struggle when a new concept is first introduced, but then after practice, the student can demonstrate a proficient level of performance by the end of the marking period or school year.

ARE NON-ACADEMIC FACTORS, SUCH AS EFFORT, ATTITUDE, PARTICIPATION, AND BEHAVIOR PART OF THE CLASS GRADE?

While achievement is a result of both academic and non-academic skills, only evidence of standards mastery can be counted in the reporting marks.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY CHILD NEEDS HELP?

Assignments, student work, and teacher feedback can be seen on Showbie or Google Classroom. It is important that you check these frequently to see how your student is doing in class. You can also check the “Progress Category” of the RenWeb Progress Report to see if your student is turning in work or is consistently needing to make corrections on their practice work or assessments, that can be a sign that your student is in need of extra support. Academic interventions will be provided to those students who are struggling to meet the established standards.

IF MY STUDENT HASN'T MET ALL OF THE STANDARDS, WILL HE/SHE GO ON TO THE NEXT GRADE LEVEL?

Promotion decisions will continue to be made on an individual basis, but now we'll have more detailed information on which to base those decisions. The goal for each student is appropriate, continual, academic growth in each subject, every school year. Grade level advancement is based on the progress of learning, which takes into account all learning that has occurred over the course of the school year.

WHAT CAN MY CHILD DO TO RAISE THEIR GRADE?

Students may be permitted to take a reassessment to demonstrate a higher level of proficiency. If the student increases his or her mark on the assessment, the new score will replace the old score. Students are expected to master essential outcomes for their grade level so any efforts to raise a student's mark will have the same goal. Students will work with their teacher to determine how to improve their understanding of the material.

CAN MY STUDENT TAKE AS MANY REASSESSMENTS AS THEY WANT WHENEVER THEY WANT?

No, reassessment procedures will be established appropriate to grade level. Generally, students will be required to demonstrate additional evidence of learning within a set timeframe.

WHAT ABOUT EXTRA CREDIT?

Extra credit does not measure learning. In a standards-based system, students are actually able to demonstrate their learning in many different ways and timeframes. In a traditional system in which points determine the student's grade, extra credit, and extra points will influence a grade and may not reflect any additional learning.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, the overall governing body of SDA Education, has recently decided to adopt Standards-Based Learning for all of the Seventh-day Adventist schools in North America. Their training is about to begin. Because of the vision of SGA's Administration, we are significantly ahead of the game and are already fully implementing SBG throughout our entire curriculum.

In September of 2019, a WASC accreditation team was on our campus for several days. When speaking of the impact the SBL implementation has had on the students, the committee commented, "[Students] expressed that the standards-based approach is challenging and thought-provoking, and requires them to truly learn the material. It demands higher-level thinking, a necessary skill for life and beyond." (ACS WASC Visiting Committee Report, September 15-18, 2019) Other student comments stated, "SBL forces me to be precise in what I am learning, I can't just get by anymore," "With SBL I can help myself to learn," and "Now I know what I am learning and why I am learning it." Finally, a student who has traditionally struggled in school remarked, "I feel like I can make it now, I have more chances to learn things and I can get it right." (SGA Admin and Teacher Exit Interviews with Students, May 2019)

If you would like more information about SGA's implementation of standards-based grading, we encourage you to contact Bernelle Rivera, coordinator of Standards-Based Grading (TK-12) and Chair of the SBG Committee at brivera@sangabrielacademy.org or Rose Gorospe, the liaison for the elementary school at rgorospe@sangabrielacademy.org.

Adapted from Oregon City Schools Standards-Based Grading Parent Handbook K-6

