



**SHERIDAN COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT #1**

Individual Success Through Education

Standards-Referenced Learning

2016-2017 Parent Guide

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What is standards-referenced learning?

Standards-referenced learning focuses a student's learning on the essential outcomes for a class, or how well the student understands and can apply the key material in class. At the beginning of each unit, the teacher will break down the outcomes for the unit into smaller components and criteria using a proficiency scale. During the unit, learning is monitored frequently to gauge understanding and application of the material. Teachers will use a variety of assessments, such as traditional pencil-and-paper tests, projects, discussions, or reports, as well as other non-traditional methods such as observation, individual work, or conversations with a student. The class grade will be based on all of the evidence the teacher collects demonstrating a student's mastery of the essential outcomes.

The goal of this approach is to provide the teacher, student, and parent as accurate a picture as possible of the student's learning and to encourage a conversation about how the student can master the material for the class. In particular, because learning is a process that takes place over time, the teacher will provide feedback to the student about what to focus on next, and the student will be allowed to show improved learning over time by relearning and reassessing. If the new evidence shows a higher level of mastery, the new score replaces the old one.

How is standards-referenced learning different from traditional grading?

In the traditional 100-point grading system, a student's grades are typically based on all of the work assigned in class, including classwork, homework, projects, quizzes, and tests. These scores are often arranged in the grade book based on the type of assignment rather than on the essential outcomes for the class. The grade may also include points for non-academic factors, such as participation, effort, or attitude.

Standards-referenced learning looks at how well a student has demonstrated proficiency on the outcomes, so the grade book does not separate out tests, homework, or projects. Instead, all of the work a student does is used to assess what a student knows and can do. Students' scores are tracked by component and outcome to give the teacher, student, and parent a very detailed picture of each student's learning. Non-academic factors like behavior, attitude, and attendance are not included in the outcome grade, but are recorded and reported separately.

Why is the district using standards-referenced learning?

The goal of Sheridan County School District 1 is to improve student learning by reporting grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning, and the shift to standards-referenced learning is an effort to reach that goal. Here is how standards-referenced learning addresses each of those four criteria.

Accurate: By basing a student's grade solely on 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 unit, the teacher will provide a proficiency scale that describes what the student must know or do to demonstrate proficiency. The proficiency scale establishes clear expectations for mastery at the beginning of a unit and is referenced consistently throughout the unit and semester.

Meaningful: A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place. In a standards-referenced classroom, scores are recorded by the essential outcomes rather than by type, such as tests or homework, making it easier to identify areas of strength and areas of growth.

Supportive of Learning: This approach 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 outcome.

What does the number scale (4, 3.5, 3, 2.5, 2, 1.5, 1, .5 and 0) on the rubric mean?

The scores on the scale represent a learning continuum and are NOT equated to grade point average. Each of the levels builds on the others and explains the learning students have to demonstrate in order to earn a score (See the sample rubric on the last page of this document). Students must demonstrate proficiency as they move up the scale. For example a student may not earn a 3 until they demonstrate proficiency of the level 2 concepts or skills. The scale designations are as follows:

4 – The student demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the material by completing advanced applications of the material.

- 3.5 – In addition to a 3.0 score, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications with partial success.

3 – The student demonstrates proficiency on the complex, targeted knowledge and skills for the class.

- 2.5 – In addition to a 2.0 score, the student demonstrates partial knowledge of 3.0 elements.

2 – The student understands the foundational material, but is still working to master application of the concepts and skills

- 1.5 – The student demonstrates understanding of all 2.0 elements with help and independent understanding of some 2 elements.

1 – The student is able to demonstrate an understanding of all of the foundational material with support

- 0.5 – The student demonstrates understanding of some 2.0 elements.

0 – Even with assistance from the teacher, the student shows no understanding of the material.

What is the grade scale for standards-referenced learning?

At the middle and high school level, outcome scores on the report card reflect the following number scale: 4, 3.5, 3, 2.5, 2, 1.5, 1 or 0. Middle school scores are reported for each outcome. Outcome scores at the high school are averaged at the end of the semester and translated to a letter grade to determine a grade point average.

This is the number scale score	=	This is the number scale score range
4		3.2 – 4.0
3		2.7 – 3.1
2		2.3 – 2.6
1		1.8 – 2.2
0		0.0 – 1.7

Why is the grade scale for standards-referenced grading different?

Standards-referenced grading focuses on measuring students' mastery of a specific set of outcomes. The grade scale reflects the level of proficiency achieved for each outcome. Outcome scores on the middle school report card are reported using the number scale 4, 3.5, 3, 2.5, 2, 1.5, 1 or 0. Each outcome is reported separately and is not averaged together for a final math grade.

At the high school level, the number scale grade for each outcome is averaged and then entered into a traditional letter grade to determine a grade point average for report card and transcript purposes. In order to translate the number score into a traditional letter grade, we adjust the cutoffs to reflect the 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 scale. The resulting scale is shown below.

This is the number scale grade	=	This is the standards-based grade range	=	This is the letter grade
4		3.2 – 4.0		A
3		2.7 – 3.1		B
2		2.3 – 2.6		C
1		1.8 – 2.2		D
0		0.0 – 1.7		F

One common misconception that arises when moving to SRG is that a student only needed to get a 25% percent to pass, and while technically correct, this misconception misses what exactly the 25% percent means. In a traditional grading system, a 25% means that a student answered 25% of the questions correctly. In SRG, this means that a student reached the 1.0 level on the proficiency scale, which is based on the learning the student demonstrated and is completely unrelated to how many questions the student answered correctly. This distinction is an important one as the SRG interpretation sets a much higher level of expectation for student learning.

What does EXE, MET, NMY, and NC mean?

Practice and participation in assigned learning tasks can support and enhance your child’s learning, therefore your student will be given a variety of learning tasks to help them master foundational concepts and apply new skills. Since learning is a process that takes place over time and at different speeds for different students, learning tasks in a standards-referenced grading system will be scored using the acronyms below. Scores on learning tasks may provide additional evidence that will allow the teacher to exercise professional judgment in the determination of a final course grade. The main purpose of scoring learning tasks, however, is to provide detailed feedback to students and parents about student progress. You will see the following score codes in the grade book:

- EXE – student performance on the learning task exceeds expectations
- MET – student performance on the learning task met expectations
- NMY – student performance on the learning task did not meet expectations
- NC – student has not completed learning task

What does “NMY” mean?

NMY stands for “Not Met Yet”. This label is used to indicate our philosophy that learning occurs over time. Teachers use a variety of methods to check for understanding of concepts and skills being taught. The informal data collected helps guide next steps in instruction. If a student did not demonstrate proficiency on concepts or skills being taught at that time, the teacher would use “NMY” to indicate that the student needs more time and support to demonstrate proficiency.

What does “LND” mean?

LND stands for “level not determined.” This score is used when there is not enough information to give a student a score for an outcome based on the current assessment evidence. This score may be used when a student struggles with an assessment and the teacher needs more information to determine the level of proficiency. LND’s are temporary scores used while the teacher gathers more evidence to give a score and will not be in the grade book for more than two weeks. An LND does not affect the student’s overall grade.

What does “INC” mean?

INC stands for “Incomplete.” This score is used when the student has not completed the necessary assessments to be given a grade for a standard due to absences or other factors.

How will my student be assessed?

A student's learning is assessed using a variety of formative and summative assessments. These tools include formal assessments such as traditional paper-and-pencil tests, projects, written papers, lab reports, or verbal assessments, but they may also include informal assessments such as classroom discussions or teacher observations. Essentially, everything that a student does in a standards-referenced class provides the teacher with evidence of the student's learning.

What can my student do to raise their grade in a standards-referenced class?

The goal in a standards-referenced class is to ensure that students master the essential outcomes for the class. The student should meet with the teacher to determine which outcomes need improvement and fill out a reassessment agreement to create a plan to learn the material and set a date to be reassessed. If the student demonstrates a higher level of mastery on the outcome assessment, then the newer score will replace the older score. Again, the focus is to improve the student's mastery of the content and skills required in each unit, so extra credit points, or score penalties for retesting, are not used in standards-referenced grading.

What does my student need to do in order to be reassessed?

After completing an assessment in a standards-referenced class, the student can ask for a reassessment using the process described below. The reassessment agreement is included at the end of this document.

1. The student gets a copy of the reassessment agreement from the teacher and completes the "Outcomes to Reassess" section to identify which outcomes need to be reassessed and at what levels.
2. The student completes the "Preparation Information" by picking a few activities that would help them learn the concepts and/or skills. The student then arranges a meeting with the teacher to discuss the agreement. The teacher may require specific activities to prepare for the reassessment, such as completing missing assignments. Any activity selected by the student or teacher must have evidence that it has been completed.
3. Together, the student and teacher will decide when, where, and how the student will be reassessed in the "Reassessment Information" section.
4. Once all of the relearning activities have been completed, the student will show the necessary evidence to the teacher, and both the teacher and student will sign the "Reassessment Approval" section of the agreement.
5. The student is now ready to be reassessed as described in the "Reassessment Information" section.

The reassessment agreement supports a student's learning by:

- Ensuring that learning takes place before reassessment.
- Identifying the specific steps the student must complete to be reassessed.
- Clarifying the reassessment process for both the student and the teacher.
- Identifying exactly how the student will be reassessed.

If you have any additional questions about the reassessment process, please contact your student's teacher.

Why should my student do the homework assigned in class if it isn't included in the grade?

Many students feel that in a standards-referenced class they don't have to worry about anything except the final test. This is incorrect. It is important for students to understand that their teacher is evaluating their performance on learning tasks, or homework, on a daily basis. Teachers analyze student work to determine growth and improvement towards proficiency of a specific skill or content. When assigning a final score, each teacher has the responsibility to take into account all the work a student completes during a quarter or semester. If a student chooses not to do an assignment, not only are they missing an opportunity to practice a skill, or apply a concept, they also miss an opportunity to display mastery of an outcome to their teacher.

Why doesn't my student have a grade yet?

A SRG focus is on the learning a student demonstrates over time therefore their grade may not be updated as frequently as it was when every daily or weekly assignment impacted the grade. This shift is especially noticeable at the beginning of the grading period when it may take a few weeks for the teacher to collect enough evidence to determine each student's level of proficiency. However, while the overall outcome grade may not change as frequently, the teacher is still recording information on other learning tasks, such as in-class learning activities and tasks that provide important feedback about what work is being done and how well students met expectations. This additional information is available in PowerSchool Parent Portal by clicking on a student's overall grade at the high school level, or at the middle school level by clicking on the dash that should be where the final grade is located (remember that in the middle school level there will be no overall grade listed, however, there is more information available on daily classwork if you click on the dash mark). Please contact your student's teacher at any time if you have questions about your student's grade. Teachers are required to update grades weekly to reflect work completed in class.

Are non-academic factors, such as effort, attitude, participation, and behavior part of the class grade?

These factors have always been and will continue to be an important part of every student's success. However, in standards-referenced grading, these factors will be communicated separately from the student's academic grade.

How will standards-based learning affect my student's GPA and transcript?

Standards-referenced grading reports an overall letter grade for each high school course once a score is entered into PowerSchool. At the end of the grading period, all outcome scores are averaged into a single final score, so it does not have a negative impact on a student's grade point average or transcript.

If we change school districts, how will my student's grade be transferred if the new district does not use standards-referenced learning?

When a student transfers to a new district, the transfer grade is determined by the student's current letter grade. For example, if the student currently has an average of 3 on the standards-based proficiency scale, the current letter grade is a B, so the transfer grade is sent as a B.

What classes are currently using standards-referenced grading?

All elementary schools, Tongue River Middle School, 6-12 Math, Language Arts and Technology classes are using a standards-referenced system. We will transition all of our core secondary school classes to standards-referenced learning over the next few years. If you are unsure whether or not a specific class is standards-referenced, please contact the teacher of that class.

How can I get more information about my student's grade or about standards-referenced grading?

If you have questions or concerns about your student's learning in a class or if you would like more information on standards-referenced grading, please contact the teacher, the building principal or the district Curriculum Director.

SCSD #1 Reassessment Agreement

Name: _____

Class: _____

Hour: _____

Outcomes to Reassess (to be completed by the student)

I would like to be reassessed on the following outcomes at the indicated levels. (Circle all that apply.)

_____	2.0	3.0	4.0
_____	2.0	3.0	4.0
_____	2.0	3.0	4.0

Preparation Information (to be completed by the student with teacher input)

Before my reassessment, I will complete the following activities to prepare:

Date	Activity*	Evidence of Completion
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

*Use the list of ideas on back of this page if necessary. Your teacher may require specific activities.

Reassessment Information (to be completed by the student and teacher together)

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Reassessment Method (to be determined by teacher):

- Written response Verbal assessment Revised form Same form Other (please describe):

Student Signature

Teacher Signature

Reassessment Approval

I have completed all of the necessary activities and am now ready to be reassessed.

Student Signature

Teacher Signature

Date

Reassessment Guidelines

- The student must complete all the activities and provide evidence of learning in order to be allowed to complete the reassessment.
- If a student is unable to take the reassessment due to missing evidence or failure to show up, the student will be allowed to reschedule the reassessment once.
- No reassessments will be allowed during the final week of a quarter or semester.
- The reassessment score will be recorded in the grade book and used to help determine the student's grade for the outcome. Completing a reassessment does not guarantee that the student's grade will increase.

Reassessment Study Activities

Select from the activities below to complete the "Preparation Information" section of the reassessment agreement. You can also check with your teacher to see if there are any particular activities that are recommended. If you need any additional explanation or information about any of these ideas, please see your teacher.

Sample Activities

- Complete missing assignments
- Make flashcards
- Create practice assessment
- Tutoring with a teacher
- Study your notes – 30 minute minimum
- Complete internet activities provided by your teacher
- Design a review game
- Make a poster explaining a topic or process
- Create a web diagram
- Write a summary for each of the individual topics in the rubric
- Complete review exercises in the textbook

Possible Evidence of Completion

- Completed assignments
- Completed flashcards
- Completed practice assessment with answer key
- Signed note documenting tutoring time
- Study log
- Screenshots showing completion
- Completed game
- Completed poster
- Completed diagram
- Completed summaries
- Completed exercises

Other activities provided by your teacher:

Additional Notes

Proficiency Scale

Outcome:

Score	Description	Additional Notes:
4	<p>In addition to a level 3 score, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>These are not just harder tasks, but learning that requires deeper or more rigorous thinking.</i> • <i>Examples of this type of learning may include: applications for real-world use, teaching another person the material, using information to solve problems in a different context, explaining connections between ideas, demonstrating a unique insight, and/or creative application of skills.</i> 	
3.5	<p><i>In addition to a level 3 score, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications with partial success.</i></p>	
3	<p>While engaged in grade appropriate tasks, the student demonstrates an ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This level is the focus for the entire rubric.</i> • <i>This is the expected level of performance for all students.</i> • <i>This level includes essential outcomes, state standards, and related skills and processes.</i> <p>No major errors or omissions with level 2 or 3 elements.</p>	
2.5	<p>The student demonstrates no major errors or omissions regarding level 2 elements and a partial knowledge of level 3 elements.</p>	
2	<p>The student demonstrates no major errors or omissions regarding the simpler details and processes such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This level is the basic learning necessary and serves as the foundation for the higher levels of learning.</i> • <i>Examples of this type of learning may include recall questions, fact-based skills, and basic applications.</i> • <i>This level does not represent partial understanding of the level 3 elements.</i> <p>However, there are major errors or omissions with level 3 elements.</p>	
1.5	<p>The student demonstrates understanding of all level 2 elements with help and independent understanding of some level 2 elements.</p>	
1	<p>With help, the student demonstrates understanding of all level 2 elements or some level 2 and 3 elements.</p>	
0.5	<p>The student demonstrates understanding of some level 2 elements.</p>	
0	<p>Even with help, the student demonstrates no understanding or skill.</p>	