# **Understanding Grading Practices at Central Academy:**

# A primer for parents and students

# September 2023

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## Table of Contents

SCORING vs. GRADING	2
TOPICS, TARGETS, & SCALES: THE VOCABULARY OF SRG:	2
SEEING THE BODY OF EVIDENCE FOR STUDENT PROGRESS	3
GENERATING EVIDENCE AND COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS:	4
One assignment, multiple targets.	4
The gradebook order of targets and assignments.	5
Multiple Opportunities and deadlines.	5
Calculating the semester grade.	7
GRADE POINT AVERAGE	7
How do semester grades convert into a Grade Point Average?	8
But what about weighted classes?	8
Do middle school grades count in students' GPA?	8

The table of contents is hot linked to the text. Click on a line and go to that topic.

### Scoring by Target

Central Academy September 2023

#### SCORING vs. GRADING

Scoring by target in a Standard Referenced Grading (SRG) system is different from grading by assignment in a traditional grading system. Grading by assignment historically meant collecting points for completing assignments, like getting paid for doing work, instead of specifying the knowledge and skills that needed to be learned. Students and parents knew the subject a student was studying, like "Biology". But the specific knowledge and skills required to master that subject often varied widely from teacher to teacher and school to school.

Scoring by target is about being specific about what we want students to demonstrate that they know and can do. To organize this information, the subject of a class is broken into major topics of study. Within each topic of study are specific learning targets for students to master over the course of the semester. In content-based classes like Science and Mathematics, the topics are sequential—learn this set of ideas before learning the next set. But in skills-based classes such as Languages and Humanities, the topics are parallel—students develop skills simultaneously in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, for example, and continue to work on these skills throughout the semester and from year to year.

At Central Academy, semester grades accurately predict how well students will do on standardized tests such as Advanced Placement exams (AP tests), college placement exams (ACT), or other measures of achievement (PSAT, ISASP). It used to be, when we graded by assignment, that a student's grade on the first assignment was a good predictor of a student's grade for the entire semester. Now, when we score student progress on specific learning targets, the scores on early assignments do not necessarily predict the semester grade. So, while the semester grade is accurate, parents aren't always certain DURING the semester how their child is progressing. We have been clarifying our learning targets and our topics of study so that student progress is easier to understand and strive to give timely feedback so students can see which ideas and skills they need to work on during the semester.

#### TOPICS, TARGETS, & SCALES: THE VOCABULARY OF SRG:

A scale is an articulation of the learning targets within a topic of study for a subject. In the example below, the <u>subject</u> is Algebra I, the <u>topic</u> is "One-Variable Statistics", and the <u>learning targets</u> are listed as LT1A and LT1B. Below the target, the <u>scale</u> describes the progression of specific skills that must be demonstrated.

Topic 1: One-Variable Statistics: IM Unit 1, Lessons 1,2,4,5, 9-14						
Topic I	Achieving Grade Level (AT)					
When collecting evidence related to these targets, it will be recorded in this topic in Infinite Campus.	The Level 3 Targets are the grade level expectation for students in all classes. Success Criteria are provided below each target.					
One-Variable Statistics	LTIA- Represent and Describe a distribution of data. (S-ID.A.1)  Learning that shows evidence of progressing towards grade-level learning target:    I can create a dot plot, box-plot, histogram, and five-number summary to represent data. (Lesson 2)   I can describe the shape of a distribution using statistical terminology. (Lesson 4)   I can calculate the interquartile range, mean, and median for a data set. (Lesson 5)  LTIB- Analyze a distribution of data. (S-ID.A.2,3)  Learning that shows evidence of progressing towards grade-level learning target:   I can describe how an extreme value will affect the mean and median. (Lessons 10-14)   I can use the shape of a distribution to compare the mean and median. (Lessons 10-11)   I can use IQR and standard deviation to describe the variation of a data set. (Lessons 10, 12, 13)   I can find outliers, describe their impact on statistical measures, and figure out what to do with them. (Lesson 14)					

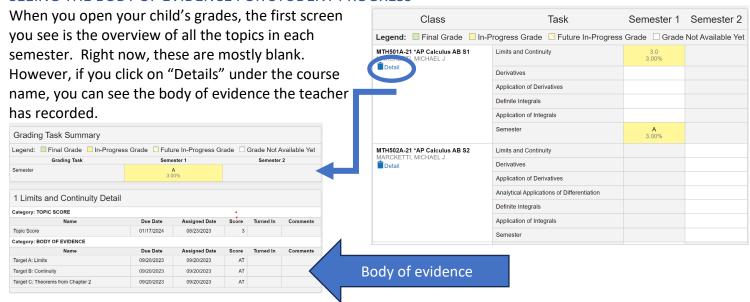
Topics and Targets show up differently in the grade book. Topic Scores are whole and half numbers 4.0, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5, 2.0, etc. and are used when scoring MULTIPLE targets. The letters, ET, AT, PT, NM, and M are used when scoring discrete targets.

TOPIC SCORES: Scoring MULTIPLE targets	Score
Student demonstrated proficiency (AT) in all learning targets	4.0
and success at level 4 tasks that go beyond those targets	
Demonstrates proficiency (AT)in all targets and partial	3.5
success in level 4	
Demonstrates proficiency (AT) in <b>ALL</b> targets	3.0
Demonstrates proficiency (AT) in at least half of targets	2.5
Demonstrates some success (PT) towards <b>ALL</b> targets	2.0
Demonstrates some success (PT) towards <b>SOME</b> of the	1.5
targets	
Does not yet meet minimum criteria for the targets	1.0
Produces no evidence appropriate to the learning targets at	0
any level	

Scoring ONE target	Score
Exceeding the Target	ET
Achieving the Target	AT
Progressing towards Target	PT
Target Not Met	NM
Missing Evidence	М

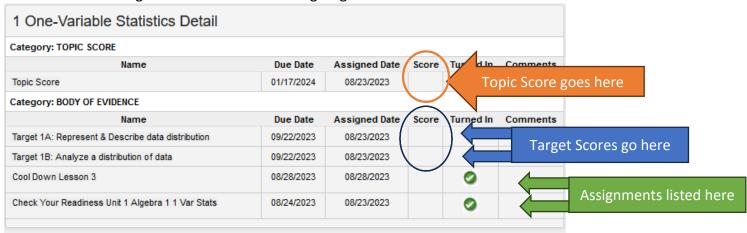
The letters specify progress in each target. But numbers show where a student is within the entire scale for the topic. Teachers use their judgement to determine how well a student has met the targets within each topic and assigns a topic score. Infinite Campus is programmed to average all the topic scores together to determine semester grades. Averaging Topic Scores together is something Infinite Campus does automatically.

#### SEEING THE BODY OF EVIDENCE FOR STUDENT PROGRESS



#### **GENERATING EVIDENCE AND COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS:**

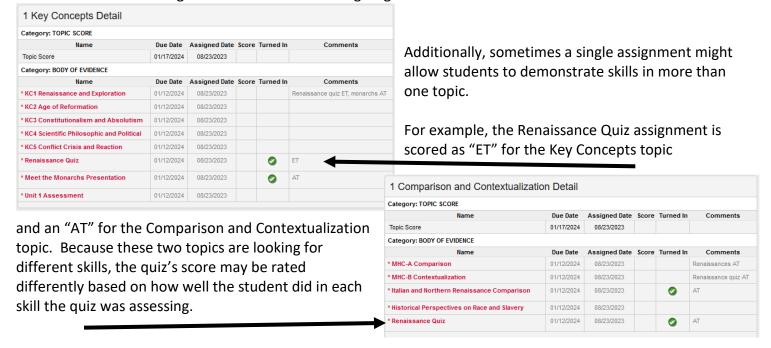
The assignments that teachers give are very important because they allow students to demonstrate the skills they are developing. Assignments are the way that students generate evidence of their learning. In the grade book, teachers have two sections to report student progress for each Topic. The top part is where the Topic Score is entered. In the second part, "Body of Evidence", teachers will report on each learning target. Most teachers list the assignments below the learning targets.



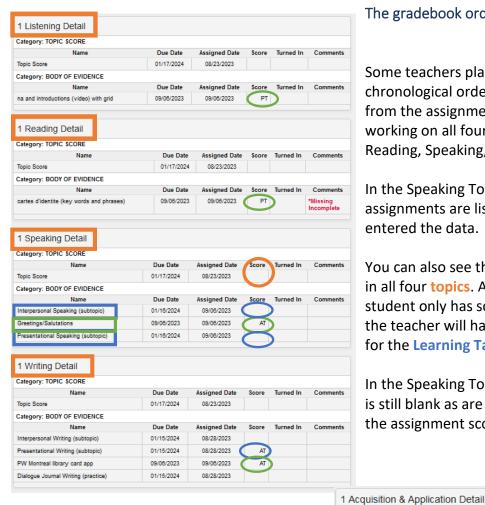
Especially early in the semester, when students haven't generated enough evidence to show they meet specific learning targets, often the only thing reported is if assignments are turned in. Soon target scores (ET, AT, PT, NM, M) will be added and finally the topic score (4.0, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5, etc.) will be determined.

#### One assignment, multiple targets.

Some teachers add details to assignments to describe how well students did on specific assignments. In this example, the topic is "Key Concepts". KC 1 - 5 are the learning targets. Below the targets, the assignments are listed. The teacher added comments to describe how the student did on the assignment and noted in the comments that both assignments are tied to learning target KC1.



(You can also see in the comments column that the quiz was measuring the Contextualization learning target for this topic.)



The gradebook order of targets and assignments.

Some teachers place the assignments and targets in chronological order instead of separating the targets from the assignment. In this example, the student is working on all four topics at the same time: Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing.

In the Speaking Topic, you can see that the targets and assignments are listed based on when the teacher entered the data.

You can also see that the student has done assignments in all four topics. At this point in the semester, the student only has scores listed for assignments. Soon, the teacher will have enough evidence to enter scores for the Learning Targets.

In the Speaking Topic, the Topic Score, circled in orange, is still blank as are the target scores, circled in blue. But the assignment score circled in green has been entered.

This example is from an English class. Can you identify the learning targets? In the Acquisition & Application Topic there are 2 targets, A and B. There are also 2 assignments—the student got an ET on one assignment and an NM on another assignment.

In the Analysis and Detail Topic, there are 3 targets, A, B, and C and 3 assignments that are scored. In this case, it is not as clear in the gradebook to which target each assignment is related. However, the teacher explains that as part of the assignment in class.

No topic or target scores have been entered yet because it is still early in the semester. After

Name	Due Date	Assigned Date	Score	Turned In	Comments
Topic Score	01/17/2024	08/23/2023			
Category: BODY OF EVIDENCE					
Name	Due Date	Assigned Date	Score	Turned In	Comments
Acquisition and Application A	08/23/2023	08/23/2023			
Word Within the Word Quiz 1	09/08/2023	09/08/2023	ET		
Acquisition and Application B	08/23/2023	08/23/2023			
Topic and Target Quiz	08/30/2023	08/30/2023	NM		
1 Analysis Detail Category: TOPIC SCORE Name	Due Date	Assigned Date	Score	Turned In	Comments
Category: TOPIC SCORE	Due Date 01/17/2024	Assigned Date	Score	Turned In	Comments
Category: TOPIC SCORE Name		_	Score	Turned In	Comments
Category: TOPIC SCORE  Name  Topic Score		_	Score	Turned In	
Category: TOPIC SCORE  Name  Topic Score  Category: BODY OF EVIDENCE  Name	01/17/2024	08/23/2023			
Category: TOPIC SCORE  Name  Topic Score  Category: BODY OF EVIDENCE	01/17/2024 Due Date	08/23/2023 Assigned Date			
Category: TOPIC SCORE  Name  Topic Score  Category: BODY OF EVIDENCE  Name  Analysis A  Analysis B	01/17/2024  Due Date 08/23/2023	08/23/2023  Assigned Date 08/23/2023			
Category: TOPIC SCORE  Name  Topic Score  Category: BODY OF EVIDENCE  Name  Analysis A  Analysis B  Teacher Biography	01/17/2024  Due Date  08/23/2023  08/23/2023	08/23/2023  Assigned Date 08/23/2023 08/23/2023	Score		Comments
Category: TOPIC SCORE  Name  Topic Score  Category: BODY OF EVIDENCE  Name  Analysis A	01/17/2024  Due Date 08/23/2023 08/23/2023 08/28/2023	08/23/2023  Assigned Date 08/23/2023 08/23/2023 08/23/2023	Score		

several target scores are entered, the teacher will determine the topic score.

#### Multiple Opportunities and deadlines.

Because students work on both topics all semester long, the students will have additional opportunities to demonstrate their improved skills and revise their topic scores as the semester progresses. The ET and the NM scores will NOT be averaged into a PT. The teacher will examine the entire body of evidence and determine the level of skill the student demonstrates at the end of the semester when finalizing grades. There

are deadlines for individual assignments. The teacher may recommend that a student demonstrate the skills on the next assignment rather than re-doing a particular assignment over and over.

This next example is from later in the semester in an English class. The Speaking and Listening Topic, shown

Category: TOPIC SCORE						
Name	Due Date	Assigned Date	Score			
Topic Score	01/18/2023	08/24/2022	3			
Category: BODY OF EVIDENCE						
Name	Due Date	Assigned Date	Score			
Speaking and Listening A	08/24/2022	08/24/2022				
Introduction to CA	08/25/2022	08/25/2022	A <sup>-</sup>			
Interest Survey	08/29/2022	08/29/2022	P.			
Marigolds	09/22/2022	09/22/2022	A			
Short Story Group Presentation	10/10/2022	10/10/2022	P.			
Short Story Presentation Listening Log	10/24/2022	10/24/2022	A <sup>-</sup>			
About Me Presentation	01/19/2023	01/19/2023	E.			
Speaking and Listening B	08/24/2022	08/24/2022				
Short Story Group Presentation	10/10/2022	10/10/2022	P.			
The House on Mango Street Discussion ?s Pgs. 45-85	12/06/2022	12/06/2022	P.			
About Me Presentation	01/19/2023	01/19/2023	P.			

here, is something that students work on all semester long. All the world language classes have semesterlong topics.

One characteristic of semester-long topics is that as the semester progresses, the topic gets increasingly complex. Learning to say, "Hello my name is..." in Japanese may be a satisfactory interpersonal greeting in the Speaking topic at the start of the semester, but by the end of the semester we expect students are able to have interpersonal conversations that go substantially beyond this.

The increasing complexity can sometimes result in AT

scores early on when the work is simpler, and PT scores later when the topic is more complex.

This is why doing the earlier work is so important—getting practice when the work is simpler helps students build foundational skills they need later in the semester when the cognitive complexity of the task increases. Later assignments weave together the skills learned earlier in the semester. More complex assignments provide additional opportunities to demonstrate learning in the topic because students can show their skill in the previously assessed material as well as the current skill the student is working on. Missing an earlier assignment is really a missed opportunity for feedback and skill development students need later.

Category: TOPIC SCORE					
Name	Due Date	Assigned Date	Score	Turned In	Comments
Topic Score	01/18/2023	08/24/2022	2.5		
Category: BODY OF EVIDE	NCE				
Name	Due Date	Assigned Date	Score	Turned In	Comments
Target A: Constant Acceleration	10/14/2022	09/16/2022	AT		
Target B: Constant Acceleration	10/14/2022	09/16/2022	AT		
Target C: Constant Acceleration	10/14/2022	09/16/2022	PT		
Target D: Constant Acceleration	10/14/2022	09/16/2022	PT		
Quiz 1: Constant Acceleration A and C	10/05/2022	10/05/2022		9	
Quiz 2: Constant Acceleration A, B, C	10/14/2022	10/14/2022		9	
Quiz 3: Constant Acceleration D	10/26/2022	10/26/2022		9	
Additional Opportunity CA Student Initiated	10/26/2022	10/26/2022		0	additional evidence provided Target A: AT Target B: AT Target C: PT, Target D: PT, Target C: PT, Target D: PT

In this next example, also from later in the semester, the teacher has set up the gradebook to separate targets from assignments.

At the top are the targets, A, B, C and D. Students have copies of the scale, so they have the exact language of each target. Below the targets are the assignments, Quizzes 1, 2, and 3.

Because the student has not yet achieved all the targets in the topic, the overall topic score is a 2.5. Even though the student is meeting expectations in targets A and B, they have not yet mastered target C

and D. This student has completed all 3 quizzes, which have provided several opportunities to demonstrate all four learning targets, and the student has initiated reassessments of all four targets and Targets C and D were reassessed twice. After each reassessment, the teacher changed the target score and, if necessary, the topic score.

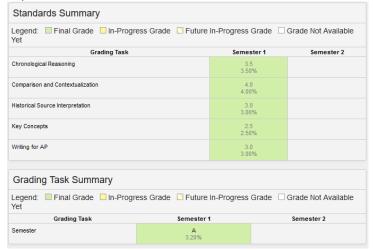
It should be noted, that unlike the previous example from an English class, this class will not be focused on Kinematics and Constant Acceleration for the remainder of the semester. Primary instruction in this class has moved on to the next topic in the sequence even as this student is reassessing targets of this topic. There is a deadline for completing the reassessments and this topic will not be open for reassessments all semester.

#### Calculating the semester grade.

Here is an example from the end of a semester. Under the topic "Comparison and Contextualization", we see that this student has demonstrated skills that Exceed the Target (ET) on both targets. The student didn't need to do the last two assignments because they already demonstrated skills above the target.

In the next topic "Historical Source Interpretation" the student met both topics and earned a topic score of 3. But in "Key Concepts" this student was proficient (AT) in about half of the targets and earned a 2.5.

At the end of the semester this student had this set of topic scores:



The computer averaged these topic scores together and assigned the semester grade of A because the average was a 3.0 or higher (3.20 average in this case).

Category: TOPIC SCORE							
Name	Due Date	e Assign Date	ed Score	Turned In			Comments
Topic Score	01/18/202	3 08/24/2	022 4				
Category: BODY OF EVIDE	NCE						
Name	Due Date	Assign Date	ed Score	Turned In			Comments
CC-A Comparison	01/13/202	3 08/24/2	022 ET		Colonies	ET, Re	volution AT, transition ET
* CC-B Contextualization	01/13/202				Bacon le Revoluti	tter AT, on ET, M	7 Years War AT, presentation AT, Marshall ET, Union victory missing
Colonial Comparison Assignment	10/14/202	2 09/14/2	122	0	ET		
Peaceful Transition of Power	11/22/2022	2 11/01/20	122	0	ET		
* Women in the Revolution SAQ	10/21/202		-	0	AT, ET		
* Bacon Letter	10/14/202	2 09/19/2	122	0	AT		
* 7 Years War DBQ Practice	11/22/2022			0	AT		
* Marshall Court Analysis	11/22/2022	2 10/27/2	122	0	ET		
* Mexican-American War SAQ	01/06/202				*Missing		
* Union Victory Assignment	01/06/202	3 12/15/2	122		*Missing	3	
Name		Due Date	Assigned Date		Turned In		Comments
Topic Score	0	Due Date 1/18/2023					Comments
Topic Score	0 NCE		Date 08/24/2022 Assigned	3	In Turned		Comments
Topic Score Category: BODY OF EVIDE Name	0 NCE	1/18/2023	Date 08/24/2022	2 3 Score	In	Presi	
Topic Score Category: BODY OF EVIDE Name * HSI-A Analyzing a Source * HSI-B Analyzing Multiple	O O	1/18/2023 Due Date	Date 08/24/2022 Assigned Date	Score	In Turned	Prese AT Prese	Comments
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Topic Score  Category: BODY OF EVIDE  Name  HISI-A Analyzing a Source  HISI-B Analyzing Multiple Sources  Nat Turner Historical Mar  Interpretations of the Constitution  Jackson Primary Sources  Mexican-American War Si  1 Key Concepts D  Category: TOPIC SCORE  Name  Topic Score  Category: BODY OF EVID  Name	0 NCE  1 0 0 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 1	1/18/2023  Due Date  1/13/2023  1/13/2023  1/08/2023  1/08/2022  1/08/2023  Due Dat  01/18/20	Date 08/24/2022  Assigned Date 08/24/2022 08/24/2022 12/01/2022 11/11/2022 12/05/2022 12/05/2022 12/05/2022 12/05/2022 12/05/2022 12/05/2022 12/05/2022	Score  Score  AT  AT  AT  Score  AT  AT  AT  AT  AT  AT  AT  AT  AT  A	Turned In	Presson AT AT AT AT AT AT Presson AT	Comments entation PT, Jackson AT, Nat Turne entation PT, Constitution AT, son AT  Comments  Comments
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Our semester grades are accurate—they generally predict how a student will do on a standardized assessment such as an AP test; now we are working to make student progress during the semester more transparent, so students and families know where to focus their efforts.

#### **GRADE POINT AVERAGE**

As scores for the broad topics of study in a course are entered by the teacher, the computer averages them and assigns a semester grade for the class according to the conversion table to the right. In the example above, the student has scores for all 5 topics of study: 3.5, 4.0, 3.0, 2.5, 3.0 for an average of 3.20 across all the topics which is an "A" for the semester.

Grade	Normal Conversion Range
	Average of Topic Scores
A(H)	3.50 - 4.00
Α	3.00 - 3.49
В	2.50 - 2.99
C	2.00 - 2.49
D	1.50 - 1.99
F	0.00 - 1.49

The Grade Point Average (GPA) is a way to express the student's semester grades across many classes and all semesters. So, an A in one class is averaged with semester grades from other classes to create the student's GPA.

#### How do semester grades convert into a Grade Point Average?

In many high school classes, each letter grade is assigned points—more points for higher grades. Any A or A(H) grade is worth 4 points, B = 3 points, C = 2, D = 1, E = 0. So, if a student earns an A for English, a B in Math, an A(H) in Science, and a B in Social Science, their GPA for the semester is 3.5.

The high school GPA is cumulative each year. So, in the first year of high school, if a student takes 7 classes in the first semester and 7 in the second semester, they have earned 14 grades. So, the grades are converted to points (A(H) or A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0) and divided by 14 total classes to find the GPA.

Course	Grade	Points
English	Α	4
Math	В	3
Science	A(H)	4
Soc. Sci	В	3
	Total	14
	points	14
	Total	
	Semester	4
	grades	

GPA = 14 points/ 4 grades =3.5

The next year the student takes another 14 classes for a grand total of 28 classes. Now the total for all the points earned—last year and this year—are divided by 28 classes to get the GPA. Every time the student takes additional classes, the sum of all points earned is divided by a larger number of classes. The more classes a student has under their belt, the more stable the GPA because each individual grade has a smaller influence on the average.

For example, an A and a C average to 3.0 ((4 + 2)/2 classes = 3.0). But the average for A, C, A, A = 3.5 ((4 + 2 + 4 + 4)/4 = 3.5).

The C has a smaller impact on the GPA in the second example because there are more classes that are being averaged.

#### But what about weighted classes?

Any class that earns College Credit and/or is an AP class is weighted in the GPA. You can tell if a class is weighted because the course name starts with an asterisk (\*). For example, \*AP Physics 1 is weighted.

Weighted grades earn more points than unweighted grades. Now, an A = 5 points, B = 4, C = 3, D = 2, F = 0. The GPA is calculated the same way as before, except passing grades in weighted classes earn an extra point. In the example above, if the last A was weighted, the GPA is higher. A, C, A, \*A = (4 + 2 + 4 + 5)/4 = 3.75.

#### Do middle school grades count in students' GPA?

Middle school grades do not count in the student's GPA UNLESS the student is taking a high school level class. All the courses in our 8<sup>th</sup> grade Academy earn high school credit except for Academy Math 8, which is an accelerated version of the middle school course.

Students earn 0.5 high school credit for EACH of the high school academic courses taken at Academy during the semester. These credits will be on the student's high school transcript. Parents have two choices as to how the passing grades will appear on the high school transcript: the **regular letter grade** (calculated in high school GPA) OR **pass/no pass** (NOT calculated in high school GPA)

Parents must register the decision with the school within a month after the end of the semester. At Academy, we send out a survey link to collect parent's decisions. If parents don't make a decision, we will include A's and B's in students' GPAs and not C's, D's and F's by default.