

Grading and Reporting Student Learning

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Grading and Reporting Questionnaire

Guiding Questions

1. What are the major reasons we use report cards and assign grades to students' work?
2. Ideally, what purposes should report cards or grades serve?
3. What elements should teachers use in determining students' grades?
(For example, major assessments, compositions, homework, attendance, class participation, etc.)

Purposes of Grading

1. Communicate the Achievement Status of Students to Their Parents and Others
2. Provide Information for Student Self-Evaluation
3. Select, Identify, or Group Students for Certain Educational Programs
4. Provide Incentives for Students to Learn
5. Document Students' Performance to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Instructional Programs
6. Provide Evidence of Students' Lack of Effort or Inappropriate Responsibility

Grading Elements

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ✓ Major Exams or Compositions | ✓ Homework Completion |
| ✓ Class Quizzes | ✓ Homework Quality |
| ✓ Reports or Projects | ✓ Class Participation |
| ✓ Student Portfolios | ✓ Work Habits and Neatness |
| ✓ Exhibits of Students' Work | ✓ Effort Put Forth |
| ✓ Laboratory Projects | ✓ Class Attendance |
| ✓ Students' Notebooks or Journals | ✓ Punctuality of Assignments |
| ✓ Classroom Observations | ✓ Class Behavior or Attitude |
| ✓ Oral Presentations | ✓ Progress Made |

General Conclusions from the Research on Grading

#1 Grading and Reporting are *NOT* Essential to the Instructional Process

- ✓ Teachers can teach without grades.
- ✓ Students can and do learn without grades.

Checking *is* Essential !

- ➔ Checking is Diagnostic
 - Teacher is an *Advocate*
- ➔ Grading is Evaluative
 - Teacher is a *Judge*

#2 No One Method of Grading and Reporting Serves *All* Purposes Well !

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Architecture:

Form *Follows* Function.

Education:

Method *Follows* Purpose!

Solution:

Multiple Purposes Require a ***Multi-Faceted, Comprehensive Reporting System!***

Letter Grades

- ➔ **Advantages:**
 1. Brief Description of Adequacy
 2. Generally Understood
- ➔ **Disadvantages:**
 1. Require the Abstraction of Lots of Information
 2. Cut-offs are Arbitrary
 3. Easily Misinterpreted

Percentage Grades

- ➔ **Advantages:**
 1. Provide Finer Discriminations
 2. Increase Variation in Grades
- ➔ **Disadvantages:**
 1. Require the Abstraction of Lots of Information
 2. Increased Number of Arbitrary Cut-offs
 3. Greater Influence of Subjectivity

Standards-Based (Checklist of Skills)

- ➔ **Advantages:**
 1. Clear Description of Achievement
 2. Useful for Diagnosis and Prescription
- ➔ **Disadvantages:**
 1. Often Too Complicated for Parents to Understand
 2. Seldom Communicate the Appropriateness of Progress

Steps in Developing Standards-Based Grading

1. **Identify the major learning goals or standards** that students will be expected to achieve at each grade level or in each course of study.
2. **Establish performance indicators** for the learning goals or standards.
3. **Determine graduated levels of performance** (benchmarks) for assessing each goal or standard.
4. **Develop reporting forms** that communicate teachers' judgments of students' learning progress and culminating achievement in relation to the learning goals or standards.

Challenges In Determining Graduated Levels of Student Performance

1. **Levels of Understanding / Quality**

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Modest | Beginning | Novice | Unsatisfactory |
| Intermediate | Progressing | Apprentice | Needs Improvement |
| Proficient | Adequate | Proficient | Satisfactory |
| Superior | Exemplary | Distinguished | Outstanding |
2. **Level of Mastery / Proficiency**

| | | | |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------|------------|
| Below Basic | Below Standard | Pre-Emergent | Incomplete |
| Basic | Approaching Standard | Emerging | Limited |
| Proficient | Meets Standard | Acquiring | Partial |
| Advanced | Exceeds Standard | Extending | Thorough |
3. **Frequency of Display**

| | |
|--------------|---------|
| Rarely | Never |
| Occasionally | Seldom |
| Frequently | Usually |
| Consistently | Always |
4. **Degree of Effectiveness**

| | |
|----------------------|------------|
| Ineffective | Poor |
| Moderately Effective | Acceptable |
| Highly Effective | Excellent |
5. **Evidence of Accomplishment**

| |
|-----------------------|
| Little or No Evidence |
| Partial Evidence |
| Sufficient Evidence |
| Extensive Evidence |

Narratives

- ➔ **Advantages:**
 1. Clear Description of Progress and Achievement
 2. Useful for Diagnosis and Prescription
- ➔ **Disadvantages:**
 1. Extremely Time-Consuming for Teachers to Develop
 2. May Not Communicate Appropriateness of Progress
 3. Comments Often Become Standardized

**Methods can be
Combined to
Enhance their
Communicative
Value !**

***Grades with Comments are
Better than Grades Alone!***

| Grade | Standard Comment |
|-------|---------------------------------|
| A | Excellent ! Keep it up. |
| B | Good work. Keep at it. |
| C | Perhaps try to do still better? |
| D | Let's bring this up. |
| F | Let's raise this grade ! |

From: Page, E. B. (1958). Teacher comments and student performance:
A seventy-four classroom experiment in school motivation.
Journal of Educational Psychology, 49, 173-181.

Solution:

- 1. Determine the Primary Purpose of each Grading and Reporting Tool.**
- 2. Select or Develop the Most Appropriate Method for Each Tool.**
- 3. Develop a *Multi-Faceted, Comprehensive Reporting System!***

**#3 Grading and Reporting Will
Always Involve
Some Degree of
*Subjectivity!***

**In General,
Reporting is *More*
Subjective:**

- ✓ The More *Detailed* the Reporting Method.
- ✓ The More *Analytic* the Reporting Process.
- ✓ The More *'Effort'* is Considered.
- ✓ The More *'Behavior'* Influences Judgments.

**However, More
Detailed and *Analytic*
Reports are Better
*Learning Tools!***

Challenge:

To Balance Reporting Needs with Instructional Purposes

#4 Mathematic Precision Does *NOT* Yield *Fairer* or *More Objective* Grading!

Student Achievement Profiles:

Student 1 struggled in the early part of the marking period but continued to work hard, improved in each unit, and did excellently in unit 5.

Student 2 began with excellent performance in unit 1 but then lost motivation, declined steadily during the marking period, and received a falling mark for unit 5.

Student 3 performed steadily throughout the marking period, receiving three B's and two C's, all near the B - C cut-score.

Student 4 began the marking period poorly, failing the first two units, but with newfound interest performed excellently in units 3, 4, and 5.

Student 5 began the marking period excellently, but then lost interest and failed the last two units.

Student 6 skipped school (unexcused absence) during the first unit, but performed excellently in every other unit.

Student 7 performed excellently in the first four units, but was caught cheating on the assessment for unit 5, resulting in a score of zero for that unit.

Grading Formulae

| Student | Unit 1 | Unit 2 | Unit 3 | Unit 4 | Unit 5 | Average Score | Grade | Median Score | Grade | Deleting Lowest | Grade |
|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|-------|--------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 | 59 | 69 | 79 | 89 | 99 | 79.0 | C | 79.0 | C | 84.0 | B |
| 2 | 99 | 89 | 79 | 69 | 59 | 79.0 | C | 79.0 | C | 84.0 | B |
| 3 | 77 | 80 | 80 | 78 | 80 | 79.0 | C | 80.0 | B | 79.5 | C |
| 4 | 49 | 49 | 98 | 99 | 100 | 79.0 | C | 98.0 | A | 86.5 | B |
| 5 | 100 | 99 | 98 | 49 | 49 | 79.0 | C | 98.0 | A | 86.5 | B |
| 6 | 0 | 98 | 98 | 99 | 100 | 79.0 | C | 98.0 | A | 98.8 | A |
| 7 | 100 | 99 | 98 | 98 | 0 | 79.0 | C | 98.0 | A | 98.8 | A |

Questionable Practices:

- ✓ Averaging to Obtain a Course Grade
- ✓ Giving Zeros for Work Missed or Work Turned in Late
- ✓ Taking Credit Away from Students For Infractions

Alternatives to Averaging Inconsistent Evidence on Student Learning:

- ✓ Give priority to the most recent evidence.
- ✓ Give priority to the most comprehensive evidence.
- ✓ Give priority to evidence related to the most important learning goals or standards.

Alternatives to Giving Zeros :

- ✓ **Assign “I” or “Incomplete” Grades.**
Include specific and immediate consequences.
- ✓ **Report Behavioral Aspects Separately.**
Separate “Product” (Achievement) from “Process” and “Progress.”
- ✓ **Change Grading Scales.**
Use Integers (A=4, B=3, C=2, ...) instead of Percentages.

**Grading requires
*Thoughtful and
Informed
Professional Judgment!***

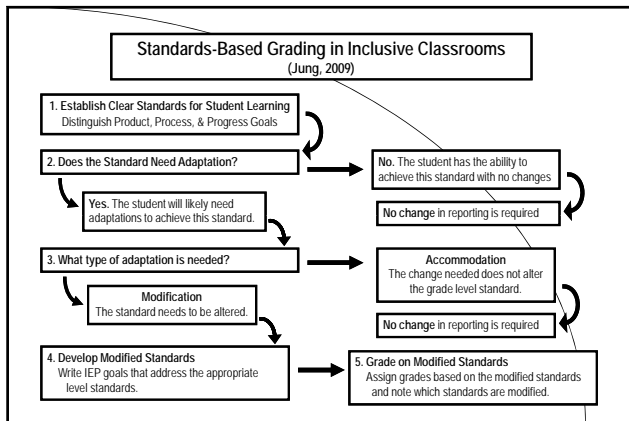
**#5 Grades have Some
Value as *Rewards*,
but *NO* Value as
*Punishments !***

Message:
**Do Not Use Grades
as *Weapons !***

**#6 Grading and Reporting
should *Always* be done
in reference to
Learning Criteria,
Never “On The Curve”**

Grading Criteria

1. ***Product Criteria***
2. ***Process Criteria***
3. ***Progress Criteria***



#7 Grade Distributions Reflect *Both*:

- ✓ 1. Students' Level of Performance
- ✓ 2. The Quality of the Teaching

#8 Report Cards are but *One Way* of Communicating with Parents !

Forms of Reporting to Parents Include:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ✓ Report Cards | ✓ Personal Letters |
| ✓ Notes with Report Cards | ✓ Homework |
| ✓ Standardized Assessment Reports | ✓ Evaluated Assignments or Projects |
| ✓ Weekly / Monthly Progress Reports | ✓ Portfolios or Exhibits |
| ✓ Phone Calls | ✓ School Web Pages |
| ✓ School Open Houses | ✓ Homework Hotlines |
| ✓ Newsletters | ✓ Parent-Teacher Conferences |
| | ✓ Student-Led Conferences |

In Reporting to Parents:

1. Include *Positive Comments*.
2. Describe *Specific Learning Goals or Expectations* (Include Samples of the Student's Work).
3. Provide *Specific Suggestions* on What Parents Can Do To Help.
4. Stress *Parents' Role as Partners* in the Learning Process.

#9 High Percentages are *NOT* the same as High Standards!

Guidelines for *Better* Practice

#1 Begin with a *Clear Statement of Purpose*

- ✓ Why Grading and Reporting Are Done?
- ✓ For Whom the Information is Intended?
- ✓ What are the Desired Results?

#2 Provide *Accurate and Understandable Descriptions of Student Learning*

- ✓ *More* a Challenge in Effective Communication
- ✓ *Less* an Exercise in Quantifying Achievement

#3 Use Grading and Reporting to *Enhance Teaching and Learning*

- ✓ Facilitate Communication Between Teachers, Parents, and Students
- ✓ Ensure Efforts to Help Students are Harmonious

An Important Distinction:

***Managers* know how
to do things right.**

***Leaders* know
the right things to do!**

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