The Way Ahead in Grading and Reporting

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The Way Ahead in Communicating Student Achievement

Presented by
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"I have become fascinated with the power of storytelling as a form of personal and professional development. …

"People tell stories about events that have left an impression on their lives. …

"By listening, one places value in the experience of another."

Barth, *Lessons Learned* (2003)

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"War stories are *descriptions* of practice. …

"Craft knowledge is description of practice accompanied by *analysis* of practice. …

"By honoring storytelling in the workplace we can facilitate the revelation and exchange of craft knowledge."

Barth, *Lessons Learned* (2003)

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Grades are broken when they:

- **Include ingredients that distort achievement.**
- **Arise from low quality or poorly organized evidence.**
- **Are derived from inappropriate number crunching.**
- **Do not support the learning process.**

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"Terms (are) frequently used interchangeably, although they (should) have distinct meanings."

McTighe & Ferrara, "Assessing Learning in the Classroom," *Journal of Quality Learning* (December 1995)

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What Do These Terms Mean?

Mark(s)/Scores(s) (marking/scoring)

The number (or letter) "score" given to any student test or performance

7/10	4
	3
	2
	1

Grades(s) (grading)

The number (or letter) reported at the end of a period of time as a summary statement of student performance

A	91	4	E
B	78	3	G
C	64	2	S
D	57	1	N
F	42		

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The Way Ahead in Grading and Reporting

Depressed by questions on Ask the Grade Doctor
(access on www.oconnorgrading .com)

"The purpose of "Ask the Grade Doctor" is to answer substantive questions about grading and reporting philosophy, policy, procedures, and practices. I will not answer questions that are only about the calculation of grades.
Please do not post this type of question."

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"If I have a c in my class and I got 15 extra credit points how much of my c will go up??(My c is 85%) plus we have an end of the quarter project that will give us 200 points in my science class. So how much will I go up?"

"I have a 52 in an English class. I have 4 zeros, all homework grades. I completed two over-due essays and let's say i made a 60 on both of them, leaving me with only two zeros. What would my new average be?"

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"I need help calculating what I need to get in the final to pass
1st exam 38/54 which worth 19.05%
2nd exam 37/54 which worth 19.05%
3rd exam 35/51 which worth 19.05%
and I have finals which worth 21.43%
and lab which worth 21.42%
I need over all 75 or above to pass this class so far I have 69.17%.
What do you think I need to get in my finals to pass this class? Please help."

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"I have failed all three grade 11 terms, is there a chance that I will pass grade 11?"

"I got an F in first nine weeks. What do I have to do to turn it to an A or an B in the first semester?"

"I have a 16 average in english i have 2 weeks left of the 6 weeks what will be my final grade ??"

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"If you wanted to make just one change that would immediately reduce student failure rates, then the most effective place to start would be challenging prevailing grading practices."

Reeves, "Leading to Change: Effective Grading Practices,"
***Educational Leadership* (February 2008), p. 85**

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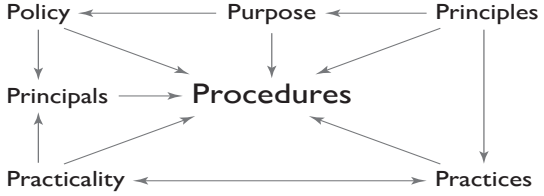
The 7 Ps of Grading



O'Connor, *The School Leader's Guide to Grading* (2013), p. 3 12

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Procedures

- What schools/districts require teachers to do
- Should be public, published
- In the past often limited or non-existent
- Now often developed by committee or task force
- Should be derived from policy and make mission statement "live"

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Policy

- Broad statements of general intent
- "Board policy shall set out the general direction for what the District seeks to accomplish. The superintendent shall be responsible for the implementation of board policy through administrative policies and procedures."

  —Des Moines Independent Community School District, IA
- Policy has legal or quasi-legal status.

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"The primary purpose of … grades … (is) to *communicate student achievement* to students, parents, school administrators, post-secondary institutions, and employers."

Bailey & McTighe, "Reporting Achievement at the Secondary School Level: What and How?" in Guskey [Ed.] *Communicating Student Learning: ASCD Yearbook 1996*, p. 120

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"The primary purpose of classroom assessment is

to inform teaching and improve learning,

not to sort and select students or to justify a grade."

McTighe, & Ferrara, "Performance-Based Assessment in the Classroom," *Pennsylvania Educational Leadership* (1994)

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Principles

- the set of values that orient and rule the conduct of an individual or organization;
- often expressed in mission/vision statements.

AIS? Mission

The American International School of ??????? prepares its students to be responsible global citizens and *inspires in each person a passion for knowledge and lifelong learning*. We are a *nurturing* and diverse community that *instills* respect for self and others, develops the whole child, and strives for academic excellence.

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Practices

#1: Professional Judgment
#2 Motivation
#3 Fairness

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Practice #1: Professional Judgment

"I define *professional judgment* as 'decisions made by educators, in light of *experience*, and with reference to *shared public standards* and *established policies and guidelines*.'"

Cooper, *Redefining Fair* (2011), p. 13

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Practice #2: Motivation

Maximize intrinsic motivation.

and

Minimize extrinsic motivation.

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Practice #3: Fairness
What Does FAIR Mean?

All students are given an *equal opportunity* to demonstrate what they know and can do as part of the assessment process. Adaptations to assessment materials and procedures are available for students including *but not restricted to* students with learning disabilities, to allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, provided that the adaptations do not jeopardize the integrity or content of the assessment.

Adapted from Manitoba Education and Training at http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/metks4/curricul/assess/aepolprod/purpos~2.html

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The Essential Questions

To what extent are your policy, procedures and practices aligned with your purpose(s) and principles?

What are you going to do about any identified lack of alignment?

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Givens

- **Quality assessment (doing it right)**
- **Student involvement (using it well)**

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Quality Assessment

- **Appropriate and clear targets**
- **Clear purpose**
- **Sound design**
  - **Right method**
  - **Well written**
  - **Well sampled**
  - **Bias avoided**

Adapted from Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, & Chappuis, *Classroom Assessment* for *Student Learning*, 2004, p. 124

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Student-Involved Assessment

Rick Stiggins believes student-involved assessment is the route to follow. It includes:

- **Student involvement in constructing assessments and particularly in developing criteria for success**
- **Students keeping records of their own achievement and growth through such strategies as portfolios**
- **Students communicating their achievement through such vehicles as student-involved/led parent conferences**

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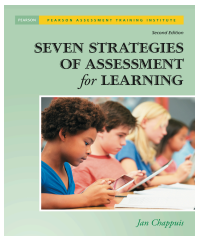
The best resource for student involvement ideas:

***Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning by* Jan Chappuis, Second Edition. Published by Pearson ATI (2014)**



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Six Musts

- **Standards-based—limited single-subject grades**
- **Performance standards—no percentages**
- **Achievement separated from behaviors—late, missing, academic dishonesty, attendance**
- **Summative only—no-mark, comment-only formative assessment**
- **More recent emphasized—some, not all evidence**
- **Number crunching—no means, no zeros**

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For Each Must

- **What do you think?**
  - **PMI (+ , − , interesting)**
- **Where are you/your school/your district now?**
- **Where do you want to go (you/school/district)?**

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1. Base grades on, and provide grades for, the intended learning outcomes, which means very limited use of single-subject grades.

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Part of a Traditional Report Card

English	**B**
Mathematics	**C**
Science	**F**
Social Studies	**A**
Phys. Ed.	**A**
Music	**D**

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"The principal limitation of any grading system that requires the teacher to assign one number or letter to represent … learning is that one symbol can convey only one meaning. *… One symbol cannot do justice to the different degrees of learning a student acquires across all learning outcomes.*"

Tombari & Borich, *Authentic Assessment in the Classroom* (1999), p. 213

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Evaluation Category	*Expected % Range*
1. Quizzes/Tests/Exams	**20–30%**
2. Written Assignments Creative or explanatory paragraphs, essays, notes, organizers, writing folios or portfolios	**15–25%**
3. Oral Presentations or Demonstrations Brief or more formal presentations or demonstrations, role-playing, debates, skits, etc.	**15–25%**
4. Projects/Assignments Research tasks, hands-on projects, video or audio tape productions, analysis of issues, etc.	**10–20%**
5. Cooperative Group Learning Evaluation of the process and skills learned as an individual and as a group member	**5–15%**
6. Independent Learning Individual organizational skills, contributions to class activities and discussions, homework, notebooks	**5–15%**
	70–130%

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Common Core Math Grade 5

Student: _____

Strands	ACHIEVEMENT EVIDENCE: Assessments							Summary
	10/1 Test	10/15 PA	11/7 PA	11/18 PA	12/8 PA	12/17 Test	Strengths, Areas for Improvement/ Observations	
Operations and Algebraic Thinking (3)	3 (17/20)	3		3	3	3 (17/20)		3
Number and Operations in Base Ten (7)					1			NA
Number and Operations – Fractions (7)	2 (15/20)		4	2	2	2 (15/20)		2
Measurement and Data (5)	4 (19/20)	4	4	1		4 (19/20)		4
Geometry (4)		1	2	3	4	4 (20/20)		4

Comments:

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2. Use performance standards with a limited number (2–7) of clearly described levels, which means no use of a percentage scale.

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"Performance standards specify 'how good is good enough.' They relate to issues of assessment that gauge the degree to which content standards have been attained. … They are indices of quality that specify how adept or competent a student demonstration should be."

Kendall & Marzano, *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K–12 Education* (1997), pp. 16–17

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Performance Standards

How good is good enough?

O' Connor, K., *How to Grade for Learning*, Third Edition, Corwin, 2002, 712

Traditional School approaches

A	**90-100% - Outstanding**	**Excellent**
B	**80-89% - Above Average**	**Good**
C	**70-79% - Average**	**Satisfactory**
D	**60-69% - Below Average**	**Poor**
F	**<60% - Failing**	**Unacceptable**

Standards-based approach

(Should be described by levels and linked to a symbol)

Advanced	**Above standard/Excels**
Proficient	***Meets standard***
Developing	**Below but approaching standard**
Beginning	**Well below standard**

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For Classroom Assessment

Performance Standards

=

Overall — **descriptors of 2–7 levels**

which form the base for

Subject/ Grade Level/ Task Specific — **scoring tools (rubrics, etc)**

+

work samples (exemplars)

+

commentaries on the work samples

Adapted from *New Standards Sampler*, National Center on Education and the Economy, www.ncee.org 37

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3. Limit the student attributes included in grades to individual ACHIEVEMENT, which means no penalties and no bonuses.

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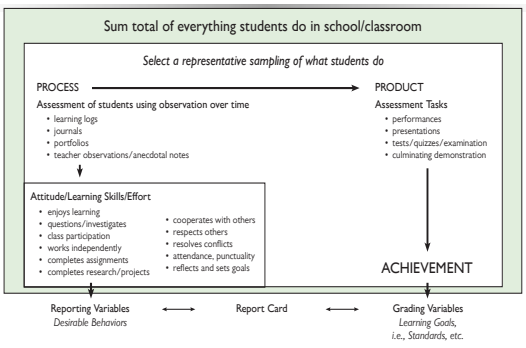

O'Connor, *How to Grade for Learning*, Third Edition. 2009, 40 39

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Eliminate

Late work mark penalties
Extra Credit
Bonus points
Academic dishonesty mark penalties
Attendance as part of grades
Group scores

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4. "Grade performance, learn from practice," which means "comment-only, no-mark" formative assessment and homework has little or no place in grading.

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"The ongoing interplay between assessment and instruction, so common in the arts and athletics, is also evident in classrooms using practices such as non-graded quizzes and practice tests, the writing process, formative performance tasks, review of drafts, and peer response groups. The teachers in such classrooms recognize that ongoing assessments provide feedback that enhances instruction and guides student revision."

McTighe, "What Happens Between Assessments," *Educational Leadership* (Dec. 1996–Jan. 1997), p. 11 42

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Students should be assessed or checked on everything (or almost everything) they do …

BUT

… everything that is assessed and/or checked does not need a score …

AND

… not every score should be included in the grade.

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Summary of Black and Wiliam's Research

The research indicates that improving learning through assessment depends on five, deceptively simple, key factors:

- The provision of effective feedback to students
- The active involvement of students in their own learning
- Adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment
- A recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of students, both of which are crucial influences on learning
- The need for students to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve

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5. Grade in pencil, which means new evidence replaces old evidence and grades cannot be determined only numerically.

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"The key question is, '*What information provides the most accurate depiction of students' learning at this time?*' In nearly all cases, the answer is '*the most current information*.' If students demonstrate that past assessment information no longer accurately reflects their learning, that information must be dropped and replaced by the new information. Continuing to rely on past assessment data miscommunicates students' learning."

Guskey [Ed.], *Communicating Student Learning: The 1996 ASCD Yearbook*, p. 21

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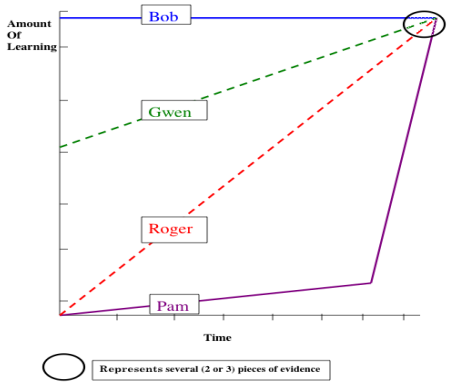

O'Connor, *A Repair Kit for Grading* (2011), p. 123

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6. Don't be a mean teacher—"crunch" numbers carefully, if at all, which means no zeros, no percentages, and acknowledging that grading is primarily an exercise in professional judgment.

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"Educators must abandon the average, or arithmetic mean, as the predominant measurement of student achievement."

Reeves, "Standards Are Not Enough: Essential Transformations for School Success," *NASSP Bulletin* (December 2000), p. 10

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Letter to the Editor
Toronto *Globe and Mail*
October 15, 2003

"Whenever I hear statistics being quoted I am reminded of the statistician who drowned while wading across a river with an average depth of three feet."

Gordon McMann, Campbell River, B.C.

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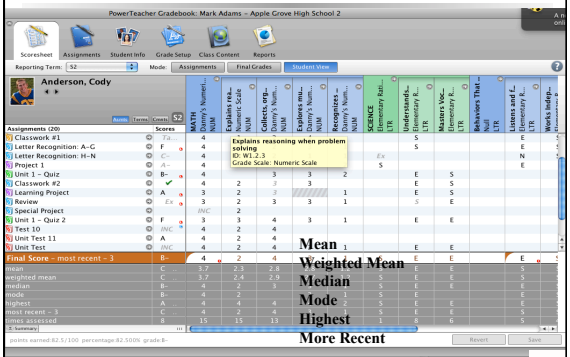

Mean
Weighted Mean
Median
Mode
Highest
More Recent

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"Data should be used to *inform*, not determine decisions."

Management consultant, The Hay Group, personal conversation (January 2002)

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Why Standards-Based Grading and Reporting?

1. **Mandate**
2. **Supports learning**
3. **Improves communication**
4. **Consistency/fairness**
5. **Traditional grading is broken.**

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Grades …

… should come from

a body of evidence + performance + guidelines + standards

i.e., professional judgment, NOT just number crunching.

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The Way Ahead on Related Issues

GPA

- 11/12 only on average of best 6 subjects each year

Class rank

- eliminated

Athletic eligibility

- based on attendance and "behavior"

Valedictorian

- Determine criteria for multiple honorees

Parent portals

- Summarizing function turned off except for a few days each grading period

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"while *SBG-traditional letter grade hybrids* are *generally considered to be necessary* political olive branches, additional research and thinking need to be devoted to whether such *uneasy truces* are more or less likely than *complete departures* from traditional formats to advance the cause of student learning."

Peters, R. and T. Buckmiller. 2014. "Our Grades Were Broken: Overcoming Barriers and Challenges to Implementing Standards-Based Grading.' *Journal of Educational Leadership in Action*. Vol. 2 Issue 2. Accessed on 11/25/15 at http://www.lindenwood.edu/ela/issue04/buckmiller.html

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Uneasy truces

- Subject grades 11-12, probably 9-10
- Determining pass/fail, HS credit
- Symbol system
- Honor rolls – modified
- Report cards
- Conferencing – parent-teacher, student-led, e-portfolios

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Complete departures (from traditional)

- No subject grades K-8 (preferably also 9-10)
- No averaging
- No penalties, zeros; use Incomplete
- No % - 2-7 levels
- Behaviors separated from achievement
- No group scores
- No bell curves
- No "learning/work" in grade
- Maximize intrinsic motivation

No uneasy truces on these except as transitions with the end in mind.

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Resources

Rick Wormeli "Calling for a Timeout on Rubrics and Gradng Scales." AMLE website Accessed on 12/2/15 @ *https://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/539/Rubrics-and-Grading-Scales.aspx#.Vl4KxIovjBY.twitter*

Facebook group

Standards-Based Learning and Grading

Twitter Chats

#sblchat Wednesdays at 6 PT, 9 ET

(http://garnethillman.com/links/)

#colchat Mondays at 6 PT, 9 ET

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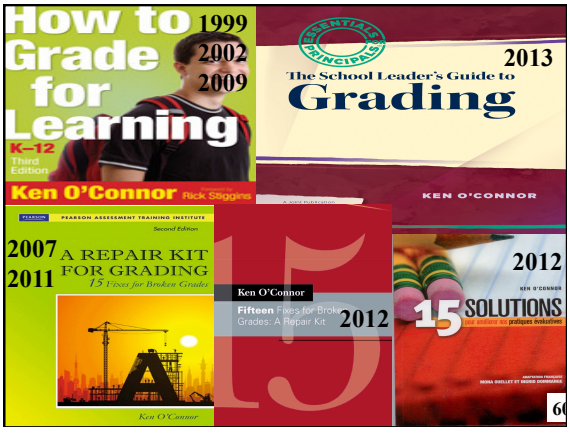
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