How to Grade for Learning

Standards-Based Grading and Reporting

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Why Standards-Based Grading and Reporting?

1. Mandate
2. Supports learning
3. Improves communication
4. Consistency/Fairness

The Essential Question
How confident are you that the grades students get in your school are:
• accurate
• consistent
• meaningful, and
• supportive of learning?

If grades do not meet these four conditions of quality they are "broken," i.e., ineffective.

Enduring Understandings
1. There are no right grades only justifiable grades.
2. Nothing really changes till the grade book and the report card both change.

Underpinning Issues
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Underpinning Issue #1: FAIRNESS

“Fair does not mean equal; yet, when it comes to grading, we insist that it does.”

Patterson, William "Breaking Out of Our Boxes," Kappan, April 2003, 572

Underpinning Issue #2: MOTIVATION

“Drive” by Daniel Pink

Motivation 1.0 - the ancient drive to survive
Motivation 2.0 - rewarding good work with pay, benefits and promotions - centres on "Type X behaviour" where people are motivated mostly by external rewards.

Pink believes it is time for a "full scale upgrade" to Motivation 3.0 - intrinsic rewards that play to the intrinsic satisfaction of the activity.

Motivation 3.0 is based on what Pink calls "Type I behavior," where the main motivators are the freedom to do what you want, the opportunity to take a challenge and fulfillment by the purpose of the undertaking.

Source - review by Richard Eisenberg in USA Today, January 25, 2010

Daniel Pink, 2009, Drive, Riverhead Books, New York, 174
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Underpinning Issue #2: MOTIVATION
According to Pink the keys to Motivation 3.0 are

Autonomy
Mastery
Purpose

Underpinning Issue #3: OBJECTIVITY AND PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

Traditional view
Objective good!
Subjective bad!!
Strive to be objective!

Underpinning Issue #3: OBJECTIVITY AND PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

“Even a score on a math quiz isn’t "objective": It reflects the teacher’s choices about how many and what type of questions to include, how difficult they should be, how much each answer will count, and so on. Ditto for standardized tests, except the people making those choices are distant and invisible.”


Underpinning Issue #5: OBJECTIVITY AND PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

“All scoring by human judges, including assigning points and taking them off math homework is subjective. The question is not whether it is subjective, but whether it is defensible and credible. The AP and IB programs (are) credible and defensible, yet subjective. I wish we could stop using that word as a pejorative! So-called objective scoring is still subjective test writing.”

Grant Wiggins, January 19, 2000 answering a question on chatserver.ascd.org

Underpinning Issue #5: OBJECTIVITY AND 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, D. 2011. Redefining Fair: Solution Tree, Bloomington, IN. 13
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Purpose(s)

"... 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, J. and Ferrara, S. "Performance-Based Assessment in the Classroom", Pennsylvania ASCD

Purposes for Grading

- Communicate the achievement status of students to parents, (students), and others.
- Provide information that students can use for self-evaluation.
- Select, identify, or group students for certain educational paths or programs.
- Provide incentives to learn.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs.
- Provide evidence of students’ lack of effort or inappropriate responsibility.


"the primary purpose for grading... should be to communicate with students and parents about their achievement of learning goals. ...

Secondary purposes for grading include providing teachers with information for instructional planning, ... and providing teachers, administrators, parents, and students with information for... placement of students. (5)

"It is very difficult for one measure to serve different purposes equally well." (21)

"The main difficulty driving grading issues both historically and currently is that grades are pressed to serve a variety of conflicting purposes." (31)

Brookhart, S., Grading, Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, Columbus, OH, 2004

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


"To be helpful, ... grades must communicate, simply and effectively, one or more of the following:

- Growth – how much improvement has occurred, measured forward from baseline data;
- Progress – how far a student has progressed toward an expected standard during an instructional period;
- Achievement – how well a student has performed at a moment in time, referenced to a known standard.

Cooper, D. 2011. Redifining Fair: How to Plan, Assess, and Grade for Excellence in Mixed-ability Classrooms, Solution Tree, Bloomington, IN, 154
Grow- from Progress – to Achieve - at

It is possible to make significant personal growth while making limited progress at a low level of achievement.
It is also possible to make little growth while making limited progress at a high level of achievement.

Key Questions in Defining Report Card Purpose
1. What information will be communicated?
2. Who is the primary audience?
3. How should the information be used?

“The purpose of this report card is to describe students’ learning progress to their parents and others, based on our school’s learning expectations for each grade level. It is intended to inform parents and guardians about learning successes and to guide improvements when needed.”