

# A Repair Kit: Fixes for Broken Grades

Fix #11

**“Averaging falls far short of providing an accurate description of what students have learned. . . . If the purpose of grading and reporting is to provide an accurate description of what students have learned, then averaging must be considered inadequate and inappropriate”.**

Guskey, Thomas R. (Editor), *Communicating Student Learning: The 1996 ASCD Yearbook*, ASCD, Alexandria, VA, 1996, 21

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Fix #11

**“Grades based on averaging have meaning only when averaging is done on repeated measures of similar content. Teachers average (marks for) tests on fractions, word problems, geometry and addition with marks for attendance, homework and notebooks - and call it Mathematics. (Similar examples could be given for other subjects.) In Mathematics we teach that you cannot average apples, oranges and bananas but we do it in our grade books!”**

R. Canady, Workshop presentation, ASCD Annual Conference, Washington, D.C., April 1993

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Fix #11

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



Reeves, D., “Standards are Not Enough: Essential Transformations for School Success,” *NASSP Bulletin*, Dec. 2000, 10

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Fix #11

**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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## Alberta Written Test for Drivers License

17/20 85% required to pass

**First attempt**

$$10 = 50\%$$

**Second attempt**

$$\frac{10}{20} + \frac{17}{20} = \frac{27}{40} = \frac{13.5}{20} = 67.5\%$$

**Third attempt**

$$\frac{10}{20} + \frac{17}{20} + \frac{18}{20} = \frac{45}{60} = \frac{15}{20} = 75\%$$

**Fourth attempt**

$$\frac{10}{20} + \frac{17}{20} + \frac{18}{20} + \frac{19}{20} = \frac{64}{80} = \frac{16}{20} = 80\%$$

**Fifth attempt**

$$\frac{10}{20} + \frac{17}{20} + \frac{18}{20} + \frac{19}{20} + \frac{20}{20} = \frac{84}{100} = \frac{16.8}{20} = 84\%$$

**Sixth attempt**

$$\frac{10}{20} + \frac{17}{20} + \frac{18}{20} + \frac{19}{20} + \frac{20}{20} + \frac{20}{20} = \frac{104}{120} = \frac{17.3}{20} = 86.5\%$$

Source: Richard Brown, Alberta high school teacher

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PowerTeacher Gradebook: Mark Adams - Apple Grove High School 2

Scorebook Assignments Student Info Grade Setup Class Content Reports

Reporting Term: S2 Mode: Assignments Final Grades Student View

Anderson, Cody

Assignments (20)	Math	Science	History	Language Arts	Physical Education	Art	Music	Health	Career/Technical Education	Foreign Languages	Other
Classwork #1	4										
Letter Recognition: A-G	4										
Letter Recognition: H-N	4										
Project 1	4										
Unit 1 - Quiz	4										
Classwork #2	4										
Learning Project	3	2	3	1							
Review	3	2	3	1							
Special Project	4										
Unit 1 - Quiz 2	3	3	4	3	1						
Test 10	4	2	4								
Unit Test 11	4	2	4								
Unit Test	4	2	4	3	1						
<b>Final Score - most recent - 3</b>	<b>B+</b>	4	2	4	3	1					
Weighted mean	C	3.7	2.4	2.9	2.7	1.2					
Median	B	4	2	3	1						
Mode	B	4	2	3	1						
Highest	A	4	4	4	4	2					
most recent - 3	C	4	2	4	3	1					
times assessed	B	15	15	13	11	9					
Summed											

points earned 82.5/100 percentage 82.500% grade B+

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# A Repair Kit: Fixes for Broken Grades

Mean  
Weighted Mean  
Median  
Mode  
Highest  
Most Recent – **default**  
**Times assessed**

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Damian Cooper defines

**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. 3

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Grades  
should come from  
a body of evidence + performance + fixes standards  
i.e., professional judgment  
**NOT**  
just number crunching

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An ASSESSMENT PLAN should start with the

- desired results (learning goals, standards, etc), then the
- summative assessments that are going to be used to determine whether the student ‘knows and can do,’ next should be the
- diagnostic assessment(s) that are going to help to determine the what and how for teaching and learning, then should come the
- formative assessments that are going to help students achieve the learning goals and that are going to cause the teacher to adjust teaching and learning activities.

homework, quizzes to prepare for	tests
practices leading to	performances
first draft, second draft before	product(s)

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A vital part of the ASSESSMENT PLAN is  
how much evidence and  
which assessments  
are critical to being able to determine student achievement/grades, e.g., there will be 9 summative assessment opportunities, of which at least six, (including the third, fifth and ninth) must be done.

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## *Time to Talk/Reflect*

**Should grades be calculated or determined?**

**What is the role of professional judgment in assessment, grading, and reporting?**

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# A Repair Kit: Fixes for Broken Grades

## The ‘Hot Button’ Issues

- late submission of assessments
- missing evidence
- academic dishonesty

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## Late submission of assessments

1. Support not penalties
2. Behaviors/Learning Skills
3. Clarity/Communication
4. Consequences

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## Missing Evidence/Academic Dishonesty

Don't include zeros in grade determination when evidence is missing or as punishment for misbehavior; use appropriate consequences and alternatives, such as reassessing to determine real level of achievement and/or use "I" for Incomplete or Insufficient evidence.

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Fix #12

## *The Last Word on Zeros*

"A zero has an undeserved and devastating influence, so much so that no matter what the student does, the grade distorts the final grade as a true indicator of mastery. **Mathematically and ethically this is unacceptable.**"



Rick Warmeli quoted in  
O'Connor, K., *A Repair Kit for Grading*, ETS/ATI, Portland, 2007, 92

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## *Time to Talk/Reflect*

How do you deal with the "hot button" issues?

How do you think that they should be dealt with?

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## Implementation Issues for Standards-Based Reporting

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# A Repair Kit: Fixes for Broken Grades

- 7. Understandable by students and parents:**
- language readily understood;
  - format and design that enhances comprehension (ideally one page, two sides, 'clean').
- 8. Easy for teachers to use:**
- electronic template with pop-up menus;
  - easy to duplicate (8.5 x11 or 11x14);
  - flexible enough to meet diverse needs;
- 9. Frequent enough to provide timely information but not so frequent that reporting overwhelms parents and overburdens teachers (not more than 3 times per year).**

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- 10. Information on lates/tardies and absences for school and each class.**
- 11. Opportunities for parents, students, and teachers to be involved: - comments focused on strengths and areas for improvement;**
- student self assessment/reflection;
  - parental action and response;
  - next steps for parents, teachers, and students.

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X (Please complete, sign, and detach the form below, and return it to your child's teacher.) X

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ OEN: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_

**Student's Comments**

- My best work is:

• My goal for improvement is:

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ X

**Parent's/Guardian's Response**

☐ I have received this report card. ☐ I would like to discuss this report card. Please contact me.

Parent's/Guardian's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (day): \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (evening): \_\_\_\_\_

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X Elementary Provincial Report Card (Please complete, sign, and detach the form below, and return it to your child's teacher.) X

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ OEN: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent's/Guardian's Comments**

- My child has improved most in:

• I will help my child to:

☐ I have received this report card. ☐ I would like to discuss this report card. Please contact me.

Parent's/Guardian's name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (day): \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (evening): \_\_\_\_\_

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## Summary

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### Guidelines for Standards – based Expanded Format Report Cards

1. Part of an overall communication system that includes formal and informal opportunities to communicate student achievement, progress and behaviors (postcards, phone calls, conferences, etc.)
2. Focus on primary purpose – communication about achievement of specific standards.
3. Separate achievement from behavior/work ethic/habits of mind.
4. De-emphasize overall subject grades; emphasize achievement of specific standards/benchmarks.
5. Clearly describe the performance standards appropriate for each characteristic (achievement of standards, progress, work habits, etc.)
6. Distinguish clearly between achievement, growth, and progress.
7. Understandable by students and parents:
  - language readily understood;
  - format and design that enhances comprehension (one page, two sides, 'clean').
8. Easy for teachers to use:
  - a. electronic template with pop-up menus
  - b. easy to duplicate (8.5x11 or 11x14)
  - c. flexible enough to meet diverse needs;
  - d. readily available, preferably cross platform software.
9. Frequent enough to provide timely information but not so frequent that reporting overburdens teachers – not more than 3 times per year
10. Information on lates/tardies and absences for school and each class.
11. Opportunities for parents, students, and teachers to be involved:
  - comments focused on strengths and areas for improvement;
  - student self assessment/reflection;
  - parental action and responses; and
  - next steps for parents, teachers, and students

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Student: _____	English Language Arts	1	2	3	4	Science	1	2	3	4
Teacher: _____	Reading/Literature					Science Connections				
Principal: _____	Writing					Nature of Science				
School: _____	Oral Language					Science Inquiry				
Quarter: _____	Language					Science Applications				
	Media and Technology					Science in Personal and Social Perspectives				
	Research and Inquiry					Physical Science				
Total Days	Teamwork/ Cooperation					Earth and Space Science				
	Initiative/ Effort					Life Science				
Total Days Absent	Interpersonal Skills					Developmental Science				
	Responsibility/ Time management					Teamwork/ Cooperation				
Total Days Tardy	Decision Making					Initiative/ Effort				
	Respect (for self and others)					Interpersonal Skills				
	Mathematics					Responsibility/ Time Management				
	Mathematical Processes					Decision Making				
	Number operations and Relationships					Respect (for self and others)				
	Geometry					Social Studies				
	Measurement					Geography				
	Statistics and Probability					History				
	Algebraic Relationships					Political Science and Citizenship				
	Teamwork/ Cooperation					Economics				
	Initiative/ Effort					Behavioral Sciences				
	Interpersonal Skills					Teamwork/ Cooperation				
	Responsibility/ Time Management					Initiative/ Effort				
	Decision Making					Interpersonal Skills				
	Respect (for self and others)					Responsibility/ Time Management				
						Decision Making				
						Respect (for self and others)				

Based on Wisconsin Content Standards

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Givens - quality assessment  
- student involvement

## SIX MUSTS/DEMANDS

- standards-based - *no single subject grades*
- performance standards - *no %*
- 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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## Radical? Realistic??

No summary grades except 11/12  
No % - limited number of proficiency levels for scoring and grading  
No class rank  
No more than 3 achievement report cards per year, i.e., high quality SB EF  
Web based - summarizing function turned off for at least 6 weeks  
Collaboration required across grade level, courses leading to 'one pagers'  
No zeros - ZAP  
Assessment Plans

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## Time to talk/Reflect

Where do 'you' need to go from here to improve the communication of student achievement in your classroom/school/

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