Learning Targets

1. Know the advantages and shortcomings of different grading strategies.
2. Explore strategies for using professional judgment to ensure fair, accurate, and meaningful sound.
3. Develop guidelines for implementing effective standards-based grading policies and practices at all grade levels.

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What do we know about effective grading and reporting?

1. We have a long history of research on grading!

**Study 1**

Authors: Daniel Starch & Edward Elliott
Title: “Reliability of the Grading of High School Work in English”
Results: Paper #1: 64-98%
         Paper #2: 50-97%
Published: 1912!
Study 2
Author: Hunter Brimi
Title: “Reliability of Grading High School Work in English”
Teachers trained 18+ hours in “Traits of Writing”
Results: Paper #1: 50-96%
Published: 2011 !

2. Research has little impact on practice!

How did you choose your grading methods?
We do what was done to us!

3. We don’t agree on why or how we grade.

Important Questions

1. Why do we assign grades to students’ work and use report cards?

2. What evidence should be used in determining students’ grades?
   (For example, major exams, compositions, formative assessments, homework, class participation, etc.)
Surveys of educators identify six purposes of grading:

1. Communicate achievement status to parents
2. Provide information to students for self-evaluation
3. Select, identify, or group students for instruction
4. Provide incentives for students
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs
6. Document students' effort or responsibility

Grading Elements:

- Major exams or compositions
- Formative assessments
- Reports or projects
- Student portfolios
- Exhibits of students' work
- Laboratory projects
- Students' notebooks or journals
- Classroom observations
- Oral presentations
- Homework completion
- Homework quality
- Class participation
- Work habits and neatness
- Effort
- Class attendance
- Punctuality of assignments
- Class behavior or attitude
- Progress made

4. Grading systems consist of three elements.
### Elements of a Grading System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Gradebook</th>
<th>Report Card</th>
<th>Permanent Record / Transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does it include?</td>
<td>Scores</td>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>Summary Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose?</td>
<td>Ongoing record of performance</td>
<td>Interim summary of performance</td>
<td>Summary judgments of performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who has access?</td>
<td>Families &amp; Students</td>
<td>Families &amp; Students</td>
<td>Families, Students, &amp; 3rd Parties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Grading is **NOT** essential to the instructional process!

- Teachers can teach without grades.
- Students can learn without grades.

Checking **is** Essential!

- Checking is **Diagnostic**
  - Teacher is an **Advocate**
- Grading is **Evaluative**
  - Teacher is a **Judge**
6. The *appropriateness* of a grading method depends on the *purpose*!

Suppose our purpose is to accurately and meaningfully *describe* students' performance.

**Letter Grades**  
*Labels attached to categories of performance*

**Positives:**
1. Describe the adequacy of performance
2. Generally understood

**Shortcomings:**
1. Require integration of diverse information
2. Arbitrary cut-offs
3. Easily misinterpreted
Percentage Grades
(Numbers attached to calculations)

Questionable Positives (???):
1. Provide finer discrimination
2. Increase variation in grades

Shortcomings:
1. Require integration of diverse information
2. Increase the number of arbitrary cut-offs
3. Accentuate the influence of subjectivity

Typical Letter Grading Scale:

Passing  Failure
A B C D F

Percentage Grading Scale:

Passing  Failure
100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

Percentages applied to performance are often **inaccurate**!
Does 80% correct mean mastery?

It depends on the standard!

Is 80% sufficient for:
- Crossing the street safely?
- Being honest?
- Landing a plane safely?
- Using machinery in shop?
- Football pass completions
- Scoring in basketball?
- Getting a hit in baseball?

It depends on the assessment!
Record grades in rubrics, **NOT** percentages!

**Standards-Based**
*Labels attached to categories of performance*

**Positives:**
1. Offers a clear description of achievement
2. Useful for diagnosis and prescription

**Shortcomings:**
1. Involves extra work for teachers
2. May not be supported by gradebooks

**Levels of Student Performance Labels**

1. **Levels of Understanding / Quality**
   - Model
   - Intermediate
   - Proficient
   - Superior

2. **Levels of Mastery / Proficiency**
   - Basic Basic
   - Basic Basic
   - Advanced

3. **Frequency of Display**
   - Rarely
   - Occasionally
   - Consistently

4. **Degree of Effectiveness**
   - Ineffective
   - Moderately Effective
   - Highly Effective

5. **Evidence of Accomplishment**
   - Little or No Evidence
   - Partial Evidence
   - Sufficient Evidence
   - Extensive Evidence
Crucial Development Questions

1. What is the purpose of the report card?
2. How often will report cards be completed?
3. Will a report card include individual standards for each grade level, or strands applicable across several grade levels?
4. How many standards/strands will be included for each subject area or course?
5. Will they be end-of-year or end-of-grading-period standards?
6. What product strands will be reported?
7. What process standards will be reported?
8. Will progress be reported?
9. How many performance levels will be reported per standard?
10. How will the levels be labeled?
11. Will teachers’ comments be included? Class and student?
12. How will information be arranged on the report?
13. What are parents/families and students expected to do with the information?
14. What policies need to be revised to support the new report card?
15. How will parents/families be involved in revising the report card?

Examples of Process Skills/Behaviors

1. Attitude in Class
2. Behavior in Class
3. Citizenship
4. Class attendance
5. Class participation
6. Class quizzes or “Spot-Checks”
7. Collaboration
8. Compassion
9. Conscientious
10. Cooperation with classmates
11. Daily class work
12. Effort
13. Empathy
14. Engagement
15. Formative assessments
16. Habits of mind
17. Homework (Completion / Quality)
18. Initiative
19. Interaction
20. Integrity
21. Motivation
22. Neatness of work
23. Notebook / journal completion
24. Organization
25. Persistence / perseverance
26. Punctuality in assignments
27. Punctuality to class
28. Respect
29. Responsibility
30. Study skills
31. Tolerance
32. Work habits
Narratives
(Written descriptions of performance)

Positives:
1. Offer a clear description of achievement
2. Useful for diagnosis and prescription

Shortcomings:
1. Time-consuming for teachers to develop
2. May not communicate the adequacy of progress
3. Comments often become standardized

Combine methods to enhance communicative value!

Grades with comments are better than grades alone!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Standard Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent! Keep it up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good work. Keep at it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Perhaps try to do still better?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Let’s bring this up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Let’s raise this grade!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Grading and reporting will always involve some degree of subjectivity!

What is a Grade?

“A grade can be regarded only as an inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has attained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite material.”

Paul Dressel (1957)

In general, reporting is more subjective with:

- More detailed or analytic reporting.
- More categories or levels in the grading scale.
- The more ‘effort’ or ‘behavior’ are considered.
However, more detailed and analytic reports are better learning tools!

Challenge: Balance reporting needs with instructional purposes!

8. Informed professional judgment can be better than mathematical algorithms!
Premise: Score and record assessment results with **rubrics**, not percentages!

Arriving at Grades on Standards/Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Target #1</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>1 1 1 1</td>
<td>4 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mathematical algorithms:**
- Average: 2
- Median: 1
- Mode: 1
- Trend: 2.7

**Professional judgment:**
- What best describes the student's level of proficiency at this time?
- Score: 4

Arriving at Final Grades on Standards/Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Target #1</th>
<th>Target #2</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>1 1 1 1</td>
<td>4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph</td>
<td>2 1 2 3</td>
<td>3 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>2 2 4 4</td>
<td>4 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>3 1 3 2</td>
<td>3 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>2 3 2 3</td>
<td>4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You are thoughtful and informed professionals!

Trust your **mind** instead of your **machine**!

9. Grades have some value as *rewards*, but **NO** value as *punishments*!
Message: Don’t use grades as weapons!

10. Grading and reporting should always be in reference to learning criteria; never “norm-based” criteria.

Results from Norm-Based Grading (Grading “On the Curve”)

1. Tells nothing about learning
3. Discourages student collaboration.
4. Diminishes relationships between students and teachers.
Results from Criterion-Based Grading

1. Accurately describes student learning.
2. Students compete against the curriculum; not each other.
3. Encourages student collaboration.
4. Puts teachers & students on the same side to master learning goals.

Essential Question:

Is my purpose as an educator to select talent, or to develop talent?

State of College Admission Survey (2016)
National Association for College Admission Counseling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades in College Prep Courses</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades in All Courses</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Curriculum</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions Test Scores (SAT, ACT)</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay or Writing Sample</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor Recommendation</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student's Demonstrated Interest</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Recommendation</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Rank</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Test Scores (SAT II)</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT II scores</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Point Average</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three Types of Grading Criteria:

1. **Product** (Achievement of learning goals)
2. **Process** (Behaviors that enable learning)
3. **Progress** (Improvement or learning gain)
11. Report cards are but **one way** of communicating with parents!

Forms of reporting to parents include:

- Report cards
- Notes with report cards
- Standardized assessment reports
- Weekly / Monthly progress reports
- Phone calls
- School open houses
- Newsletters
- Email
- Personal letters
- Homework
- Evaluated assignments or projects
- Portfolios or exhibits
- School web pages
- Homework hotlines
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Student-led conferences

In reporting to parents:

1. Include **positive comments**.
2. Describe **learning goals or expectations** (include samples of the student’s work).
3. Provide **suggestions** on how parents can help.
4. Stress **parents’ role as partners** in the learning process.
Guidelines for Better Practice

1. Begin with a clear **Statement of Purpose**.
   - Why use grading and reporting?
   - For whom is the information intended?
   - What are the desired results?

2. Provide **accurate** and **meaningful** 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
- Improve efforts to help students

Important Distinction:

*Managers* know how to do things right.

*Leaders* know the right things to do!

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