

How to Grade for Learning

How to Grade for Learning Using 15 Fixes for Broken Grades

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**“The real voyage of
discovery consists not of
seeking new landscapes,
but in having new eyes.”**

Marcel Proust

Affirm or Fine Tune or Challenge

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**“Terms (are) frequently used
interchangeably, although
they (should) have distinct
meanings.”**

McTighe, J., and Ferrara, S., “Assessing Learning in the Classroom”,
Journal of Quality Learning, December 1995, 11

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What Do These Terms Mean?

MARK(S)/SCORE(S) (marking/scoring)
the number (or letter) "score" given to
any student test or performance

$\frac{71}{10}$ 4
3
2
1

GRADE(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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Standards
=
Expectations
=
Outcomes
=
Learning Goals
=
Competencies

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**“Why . . . Would anyone want to change
current grading practices?”**

**The answer is quite simple: grades are so
imprecise that they are almost meaningless.”**

Marzano, R. J., *Transforming Classroom Grading*, ASCD, Alexandria, VA, 2000, 1

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“In a perfect world there would be *no grades* – at least, not as we know them now, (i.e., traditionally).”

Brookhart, S. *Grading*. Pearson Merrill, Upper Saddle River, NJ. 2009. 2

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“It takes courage to face the truth that the (traditional) A-F grading scheme is doing a disservice to our children and thwarting the efforts of educators to produce greater improvements in academic achievement.”

Source: Sturgis, C. *Progress and Proficiency: Redesigning Grading for Competency Education*, iNACOL, 2014, 36

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“... (grading) practices are not the result of careful thought or sound evidence, ... rather, they are used because teachers experienced these practices as students and, having little training or experience with other options, continue their use.”

Guskey, Thomas R. (Editor), *Communicating Student Learning: The 1996 ASCD Yearbook*, ASCD, Alexandria, VA, 1996, 20

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Essential Question #1

How confident are you that the grades students get in your school are:

- accurate
- consistent
- meaningful, and
- supportive of learning?

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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.”

Roland S. Barth, *Lessons Learned*, Corwin, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2003, 2

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“War stories are *descriptions* of practice.

...

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

...

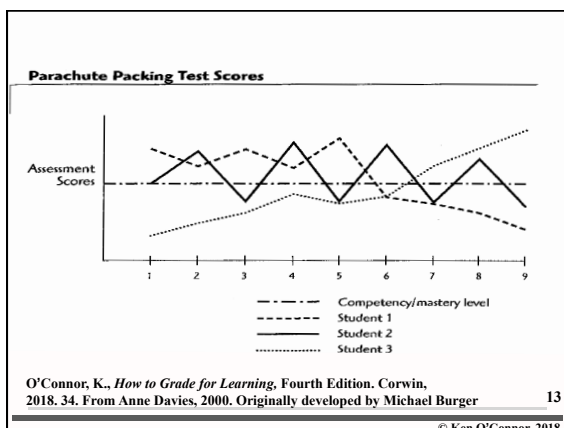
By honoring storytelling in the workplace we can facilitate the revelation and exchange of craft knowledge.”

Roland S. Barth, *Lessons Learned*, Corwin, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2003, 2

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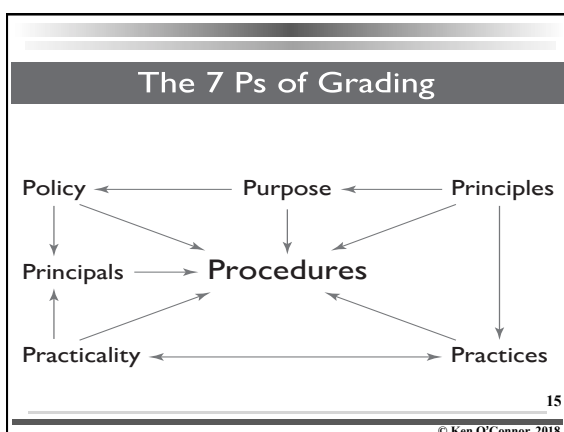
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1995 Interim Report Card for a High School Science Course.

Task	Score/total possible	Percentage
Tests (50%)		
Symbols	16/20	80
Matter	0/68 (absent)	0
Reactions	35/50	70
Daily Work (25%)		
Assignment	10/10	100
Homework	9/10	90
Homework	9/10	90
Atom quiz	9/10	90
Moles quiz	5/8	62.5
Homework	9/10	90
Lab Work (25%)		
MP/BP	18/20	90
Supperation	20/24	83.3
Reactions	7/10	70
Periodicity Check	10/10	100

O'Connor, K., *How to Grade for Learning*, Fourth Edition. Corwin, 2018, 31.



<u>What we BELIEVE</u>	<u>What we DO</u>
Principles	Policy
Purpose	Procedures
	Practices
	(Principals
	Practicality)

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Principles Lexington School District One, SC
Where children and learning are One.

Therefore, we will provide:

- An array of exceptional learning experiences in a high-performance culture of excellence that sets high expectations for every student.
- Opportunities to develop talents, interests, and skills through choices from a comprehensive system of 21st century learning experiences in the arts, academics, and athletics.
- Various innovative learning delivery and support systems to personalize learning and to ensure that our students are learning sophisticated 21st century skills, knowledge, and attitudes.
- Opportunities to practice leadership and citizenship in a global context.
- Access by the community to a range of learning and participatory community experiences throughout life.
- *A learning environment and professional culture of caring and support.*

Source: Lexington School District One website. Accessed May 1, 2015

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Personal Principles

#1 Students don't need grades to learn well and teachers don't need grades to teach well.

#2 Schools should have a learning culture, not a grading culture.

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Purpose

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

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

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Purpose

**“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. & Ferrara, S. “Performance-Based Assessment in the Classroom,” *Pennsylvania Educational Leadership*. 1994

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Policy

- Broad statements of general intent
- “Board policy shall set out the general direction for what the (Director) seeks to accomplish. The (Director) 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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Procedures

- What schools 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 your mission statement “live”

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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, D. *Redefining Fair*. Solution Tree. 2011. 13

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Practice #2: Motivation

**Maximize intrinsic motivation.
and
Minimize extrinsic motivation.**

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EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY Practice #3: Fairness

In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.

In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.

In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

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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,
and when they
- do not support the learning process.

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Fixes for ingredients that distort achievement

1. Don't include student behaviors (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc.) in grades; include only achievement.
2. Don't reduce marks on 'work' submitted late; provide support for the learner.
3. Don't give points for extra credit or use bonus points;
4. seek only evidence that more work has resulted in a higher level of achievement.
4. Don't punish academic dishonesty with reduced grades; apply other consequences and reassess to determine actual level of achievement.
5. Don't consider attendance in grade determination; report absences separately.
6. Don't include group scores in grades; use only individual achievement evidence.

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Fixes for low quality or poorly organized evidence

7. Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods or simply summarize into a single grade; organize and report evidence by standards/ learning goals.
8. Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations.
9. Don't assign grades based on student's achievement compared to other students; compare each student's performance to preset standards.
10. Don't rely on evidence gathered from assessments that fail to meet standards of quality; rely only on quality assessments.

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Fixes for inappropriate number crunching

11. Don't rely on the mean; consider other measures of central tendency and use professional judgment.
12. Don't include zeros in grade determination when evidence is missing or as punishment; use alternatives, such as reassessing to determine real achievement or use "I" for Incomplete or Insufficient evidence.

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Fixes to support the learning process

13. Don't use information from formative assessments and practice to determine grades; use only summative evidence.
14. Don't summarize evidence accumulated over time when learning is developmental and will grow with time and repeated opportunities; in those instances emphasize more recent achievement.
15. Don't leave students out of the grading process. Involve students - they can - and should - play key roles in assessment and grading that promote achievement.

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Fix #1

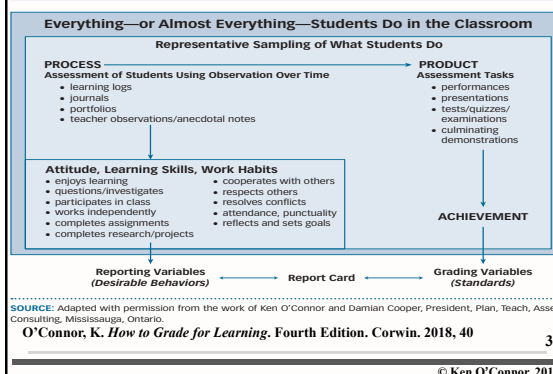
Don't include student behavior (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc.) in grades; include only achievement.

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Fix #1

FIGURE 0.13 Sum Total of Everything Students Do in School/Classroom



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Fix #2 A hot button issue

Don't reduce marks on "work" submitted late; provide support for the learner.

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Fix #2

Dealing with Late Work

1. Make expectations clear
but when they don't meet the timelines
2. Support not penalties
3. Behaviors/Learning Skills
4. Clarity/Communication
5. Consequences

O'Connor, K. *How to Grade for Learning*. Fourth Edition. Corwin, 2018, 108

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Fix #3

Don't give points for extra credit or use bonus points; seek only evidence that more work has resulted in a higher level of achievement.

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Fix #4 A hot button issue

Don't punish academic dishonesty with reduced grades; apply other consequences and reassess to determine actual level of achievement.

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Fix #4

Dealing with Academic Dishonesty

1. Educate/Communicate
2. Behavioral consequences
3. Do it again, honestly

O'Connor, K., *How to Grade for Learning*. Fourth Edition. Corwin. 2018. 179 37

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Fix #5

Don't consider attendance in grade determination; report absences separately.

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Fix #6

Don't include group scores in grades; use only individual achievement evidence.

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Fix #7

Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods or simply summarize into a single grade; organize and report evidence by standards/learning goals.

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Fix #7

2017 Science Standards-based Gradebook

Student:	ACHIEVEMENT EVIDENCE							
Standards	Assessments						Strengths, Areas for Improvement/ Observations	
	9/15 Test	9/22 Lab	9/30 Lab	10/02 Test	10/8 Lab	10/12 Test		
Structure and Properties of Matter (HS-PS1-2)		1	2		2	2 (10/20)	2	
Explaining Reaction Rates (HS-PS1-5)		M		M	1		1	
Properties and Periodicity (HS-PS1-1)	3 (8/10)				1		NA	
Chemical Equilibrium (HS-PS1-6)		1	2 (20/24)			2 (10/20)	2	
Mole Calculations (HS-PS1-7)		1	2	M	2	2 (20/20)	2	
Scientific Inquiry (HS-PS1-3)	2 (8/10)	2	3	M	2	2 (5/5)	2	
Comments: M = Missing; I = Insufficient Evidence; NA = Not Assessed; I = Incomplete							Overall Grade: 1	
Kean Meeting: science teacher at Rockcastle County (KY) Middle School provided advice to the author on the Next Generation Science Standards and clarification for								

Comments: *NA = Missing; IE = Insufficient Evidence; NA = Not Assessed; I = Incomplete*
Ken Mattingly, science teacher at Rockcastle County (KY) Middle School provided advice to the author on the Next Generation Science Standards and classification for this gradebook.

O'Connor, K., *How to Grade for Learning*. Fourth Edition. Corwin. 2018. 55 41

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Fix #7

"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, M and Borich, G. *Authentic Assessment in the Classroom*, Prentice Hall, 1999, 213

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Fix #8

Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations.

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Fix #8

"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, J., and R. Marzano, *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education*, First Edition, McREL, 1997, 16-17

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Fix #8

Wow!

Got it!

Nearly there!

Oh no! Oops!

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Fix #9

Don't assign grades based on student's achievement compared to other students; compare each student's performance to preset standards.

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Fix #10

Don't rely on evidence from assessments that fail to meet standards of quality; rely only on quality assessments.

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Fix #10

Quality Assessment

- appropriate and clear targets (*Fixes #7 & 8*)
- clear purpose (*Fix #13*)
- sound design
 - right method
 - well written
 - well sampled
 - bias avoided

Adapted from Stiggins et al – *Classroom Assessment FOR Student Learning*, Assessment Training Institute, 2004, 124

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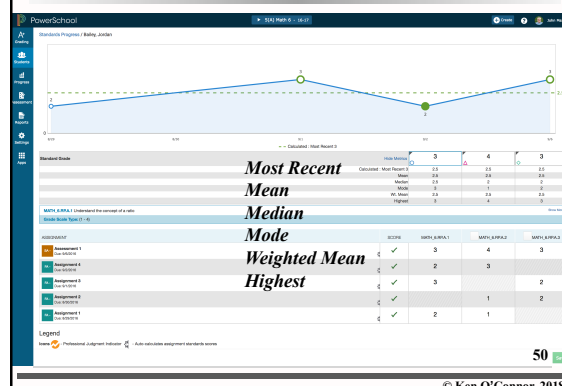
Fix # 11

Don't rely on the mean; consider other measures of central tendency and use professional judgment.

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Fix #11



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Fix #12

Don't include zeros in grade determination when evidence is missing or as punishment; use alternatives, such as reassessing to determine real level of achievement or use "1" for Incomplete or Insufficient evidence.

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Fix #13

Don't use information from formative assessments and practice to determine grades; use only summative evidence.

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Fix #13

"The thrust of formative assessment is toward improving learning and instruction. Therefore, the information should not be used for assigning "marks" as the assessment often occurs before students have had full opportunities to learn content or develop skills."

Manitoba Education and Training, *Reporting on Student Progress and Achievement: A Policy Handbook for Teachers, Administrators and Parents*, Winnipeg, 1997, 9

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Fix #14

Don't summarize evidence accumulated over time when learning is developmental and will grow with time and repeated opportunities; in those instances emphasize more recent achievement.

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Fix #14

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

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Fix #15

Don’t leave students out of the grading process. Involve students; they can - and should - play key roles in assessment and grading that promote achievement.

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Fix #15 *Motivating Students Towards Excellence*

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

- * student involvement in the construction of assessments and in the development of criteria for success;
- * students keeping records of their own achievement and growth through such strategies as portfolios; and
- * students communicating their achievement through such vehicles as student-involved parent conferences

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From a presentation by Dylan Wiliam - *Assessment and Learning*

“The test of a successful education is not the amount of knowledge that a pupil takes away from school, but his appetite to know and his capacity to learn. If the school sends out children with the desire for knowledge and some idea about how to acquire it, it will have done its work. Too many leave school with the appetite killed and the mind loaded with undigested lumps of information.”

Sir Richard Livingstone, President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, **1941**

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Essential Question #2

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

Identify the key words in your mission/vision statements.

What are the implications for assessment, grading and reporting?

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Key Words in Mission/ Vision Statements	Implications for Action in Assessment, Grading and Reporting
<p>e.g., “culture of caring and support”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>we are united by a common journey</i> • <i>we have growth as our destination</i> 	<p>No mark penalties, no zeros: reassessment</p>

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