

Grading Practices that Increase/Decrease the Odds for Student Success

General Grading Information Packet

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Co-author with M.D. Rettig: 1995. *Block scheduling: A catalyst for change in high schools*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education. www.eyeoneducation.com

Co-author with M.D. Rettig: 1996. *Teaching in the block: Strategies for engaging active learners*. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education. www.eyeoneducation.com

Co-author with M.D. Rettig: 2000. *Scheduling strategies for middle schools*. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education. www.eyeoneducation.com

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School Practices/Policies That May Contribute to School Failure for Selected Students

1. Grading/school policies have been based primarily on a SORTING and SELECTING model of education. A huge paradigm shift is needed. (See handout on this topic.) Use of COMPUTERS has MADE the grading PROBLEM WORSE!
2. Historically schools were organized and operated on the ASSUMPTION that STUDENTS HAD A SUPPORT SYSTEM AT HOME; it is easier for students born on 3rd base to reach home plate (achieve school success) than for those born on 1st base or for some not even born in the ball field!
3. Historically, we have operated schools on the assumption that IF STUDENTS HAD TO HAVE SUPPORT (e.g. extra time to complete a course, re-take tests, re-do papers, etc.), then THERE HAD TO BE A PENALTY, such as averaging their low grade with the new grade. This assumption was based on the belief that “fairness is equated with sameness” and schools were responsible for preparing students for the “real” world. One might ask: Is the primary purpose of middle and high schools to be the gatekeeper for future employers? If so, how should school personnel best perform this task and report results?
4. We have built grading policies and practices primarily on the THEORY that “FEAR OF FAILURE” WILL MOTIVATE students.
5. Often we use a “DEFICIT MODEL” OF EVALUATION – that is, we focus more on what students did not do than what they did; for example, consider grading scales with a range of zero to 70 for failing and a 30-point range for passing.
6. TO GAIN ADDITIONAL LEARNING TIME, historically students have HAD TO FAIL FIRST. Essentially we institutionalized a “take class, fail class, repeat class” model of instruction.

Beliefs Relative to School Policies and Grading Practices

- The THREAT OF A LOW GRADE is more likely to motivate high achieving students than low achieving students.
- Historically schools have tended to buy into a DEFICIT MODEL OF EVALUATION; that is, to focus more on sorting and selecting practices than on teaching and learning strategies.
- Before current accountability measures were introduced into education, schools often let TIME BE THE CONSTANT FACTOR IN THE DESIGN OF LEARNING and in that process LEARNING BECAME THE VARIABLE.
- Human beings MAKE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES in their lives ONLY when they are in an environment where they FEEL genuinely CARED ABOUT.
- A large percentage of students in American Schools experience FAILURE AT AN EARLY AGE; for example, approximately 27% of students have given up academically by the end of Grade 5, and it is close to 45% by end of Grade 9. . . . Nationally, less than 69% of the students who enter kindergarten in U. S. schools graduate from high school. (See McNulty, Ray. ASCD Education Update, Vol. 45, No. 5, August, 2003). . . . In some urban areas less than 50% of the students who enter Grade 9 graduate from high school.
- SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS are more important to the SUCCESS OF SOME STUDENTS than other students.
- There is little or NO EVIDENCE that REPEATED FAILURE makes people MORE RESPONSIBLE.
- There is a major difference in MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR STUDENTS TO FAIL from MAKING IT EASY FOR STUDENTS TO GET GOOD GRADES without much work and re-work.
- One of the easiest ways for human beings to AVOID the RESPONSIBILITY of FAILURE is to QUIT TRYING!

Remember: “If the only tool [we] have is a hammer [sometimes grades can be used as hammers], [we] tend to see every problem as a nail.” – Abraham Maslow

Teacher Grades May be Based on Any One or All Three of the Following Factors:

Product Factors: At a selected/specific point in time, did the student: demonstrate an acceptable level of mastery of selected material; meet established expectations of the course; sufficiently perform a skill; complete an acceptable project(s); and/or pass the test(s) with sufficiently high scores? Most product grades on report cards represent a sample of student learning rather than a comprehensive assessment of what the student has learned or can demonstrate. Product grades often are determined and sometimes communicated by using a hundred-point scale, even though it is very difficult, if not impossible, to assess student learning reliably in 100 increments of 1 point each. Questions/concerns/issues related to product grades are (1) the problem of averaging, (2) the problem of invalidating the product grade by including assessments of factors other than what the student has been taught or learned (i.e. procedural/policies factors), and (3) the unfounded belief among some teachers that their ability to manipulate student grades is a positive motivator for all students. With product assessments, it is very important that teachers inform students as to what they are expected to learn and what teachers will accept as evidence that the learning has occurred. By eliminating secrecy from assessments, chances are increased for students to improve their performance.

Procedural/Policy Factors: These factors typically are an evaluation of “non-academic” behaviors of students; for example, did the student: follow directions; complete all assignments on time; attend required number of classes; participate adequately in class; follow rules of expected behavior; show acceptable attitude toward the teacher and fellow students; and/or come to class on time? The influence of Procedural/Policy Factors on student summative grades can vary tremendously among teachers. Even with written policies, some teachers enforce the policies while others do not, or they may be enforced with some students and not others. Procedural/Policy Factors may relate to power and control issues within the classroom and/or school, under the name of “teaching students to be responsible”. Questions/concerns/issues with assessments of procedural/policy factors may be that for some students the assessments are independent of what the student has done, but may be more dependent upon what his/her support system provided the student. Also, these assessments may be meaningless and inherently unfair for some students unless the teacher/school has intentionally *taught* the skill/behavior that is being evaluated. Procedural/policy evaluations often are very subjective because they are poorly defined; for example, how does one define “adequate class participation” sufficiently for students to understand how it will be measured? Is it how many times students raise their hands? The depth of understanding represented in student responses? Student attitude expressed before, during and after class? Often there are no criteria that adequately define some of the procedural/policy factors being graded. Procedural/policy factors (i.e. organizational skills, following directions, etc.) are most valuable to students, both in school and in the working world, if the skill or attitude being

evaluated is well-defined, taught and practiced with feedback, just like other skills being taught in the classroom.

Progress Factors: Progress Factors primarily are related to measuring improvement; they represent factors that schools **can use to foster student growth**. For example, did the student: demonstrate improved performance from one established point in time to another point in time, such as from one written paper (or art creation) to another paper or from one lab experiment to another; show increased scores from one test to another test of similar content; change from unacceptable behavior to acceptable behavior? The influence of Progress Factors on student grades may vary depending upon level of school (elementary vs. high school) and/or whether or not a mastery learning philosophy is accepted. A grade based on the progress of an individual student potentially can be a powerful teaching/learning tool, as it provides a framework for each student to set learning goals and to monitor progress. It can be argued that grades based on each student's individual progress may be the fairest and the most meaningful evaluation available to schools, but what is adequate progress for an individual student? Does it vary from student to student? With imposed accountability standards, Progress Factors almost have to be considered for some students when acceleration of a student's progress is necessary if the student is to have any chance of meeting a mandated testing deadline; therefore, the time variable may need to be manipulated and policies may have to be altered. When Progress Factors and mastery learning beliefs are built into grades, students tend to receive higher grades; thus, school personnel may be accused of inflating grades when in reality improved grades occurred because the teacher/school implemented research-based teaching and learning strategies and relied less on sorting and selecting grading practices.

Questions for reflection: What is the purpose of teacher grades? Upon what factors should teacher grades be based? How have courts ruled on this issue? Can one grading symbol adequately convey meaning related to all the factors listed above? Does the purpose of grading change when accountability, with consequences to the student, teacher and school, is a factor? Historically have upper-level-achieving students received grades based more on product factors and possibly procedural/policy factors while lower-level-achieving students received grades based more on progress and procedural/policy factors? If students of varying levels of achievement have been assessed based on different factors, how does accountability affect such practices? Is it consistent with good teaching practice to assess students on skills/behaviors we think they should have? If students are going to be graded on selected procedural/policy factors, is it reasonable to expect those skills/behaviors to be taught in ways that allow students to learn and to develop them? Some researchers who have focused on improving student achievement for lower-achieving-students argue that students are continuing to learn when teachers use practices such as allowing (insisting) students make corrections and resubmit work, re-take tests, complete late assignments, and rewrite papers. Why do some teachers, administrators, students and parents perceive such practices as being "unfair" and helping students become less responsible? How should school personnel respond to this charge?

Appreciation is expressed by Robert Lynn Canady to the following for providing input and a critique of these ideas: Dr. Thomas R. Guskey, Professor Emeritus, University of Kentucky, Dr. Laura L. McCullough, Former Director of Student Achievement and Program Evaluation, Charlottesville, VA, City Schools, Dr. Brenda Tanner, Retired Superintendent, Madison Co. VA Schools and Dr. Nancy Iverson, Asst. Dean, UVA School of Continuing and Professional Studies.

The Problem with Averaging a Zero in Determining a Valid Summative Grade

Suppose that you are developing a brochure for the Chamber of Commerce and your goal is to report what is a reliable average temperature for a week in September in Charlottesville, Virginia. The temperatures for the week selected at noon each of the following days were:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
92	91	90	80	84	85	82

Minimum score for F makes sense

As a 41-year veteran of teaching, I would like to lend my support to proponents of a minimum-50 policy in grades ("Failure goes from zero to 50," News, May 19).

We teach in math that the mean is an inappropriate measure of central tendency when there are outlier scores. Zero is the ultimate outlier, but we include zeros and calculate the mean to determine grades. We also teach in math about equal difference and ratio, but we most commonly use a scale that has 11 points for an A (90-100), 10 for each of B (80-89), C (70-79) and D (60-69) and 60 points for an F (0-59).

If we teach these concepts in math, it seems to me that teachers have a responsibility to follow these mathematical principles in their grade books. This means that if we use a percentage scale, we must make it an equal difference scale by using 50 as a floor. This does not mean that a student knows or understands 50%; it is just a symbolic representation to make the math make sense.

Another — and better — alternative is not to use a percentage scale at all, but to use a scale with one point between each point on the scale — such as the grade-point-average scale that colleges use.

Ken O'Connor, author
A Repair Kit for Grading
and *How to Grade for Learning*
Toronto

If we divide 604 by 7, we get an average of 86. Let's suppose, however, that we did not have a temperature reading for Wednesday, and we put a zero for Wednesday and still divide by 7: then we get an average of 74.

Suppose we treated Wednesday simply as missing data and divided the total by 6 and not 7: then we would get an average of 87.

Which summative average is the most reliable average temperature to report to the Chamber of Commerce brochure? 74 or 87?????

We accept that the zero is a problem, for example, if it represents work not done, and we must develop ways of dealing with that issue; however, we contend to include the zero in the averaging process is not a valid way to determine a summative grade.

As an Educator, What Factors Should I Consider in Deciding “How Far Do I Go?” or “How Long Do I Wait?” in Accommodating a Student, Child, or Teacher?

In response to the above question, I suggest each of us ultimately must wrestle with the following issues, questions, and dilemmas. Also, I must accept the fact that we likely will reach different conclusions, possibly to some extent based on our various and different experiences (as parents, teachers, administrators, counselors), the type of school in which we work (high/low socio-economic), the culture of the school (How are others in my department, grade level, school responding?) and the type of students with whom we primarily work. I hope today's presentation, at the very least, will provide us with “serious thought” as each of us develops a pattern of response.

1. First let us again examine four of our original nine **belief statements**: (a) **the threat of a low grade is more likely to motivate a high achieving student than a low achieving student** (If we accept this statement, what are the likely implications of providing or not providing the accommodation(s) being considered? Is the likely implication or consequence something positive for the student, teacher, school, and/or learning goals of the student, class or institution?); (b) **there is little or no evidence that repeated failure makes people more responsible** (If we do or do not provide/allow the accommodation, is any real, desired change likely to occur? Is the likely change something positive for the student, teacher or school? Does that matter to us?); (c) **human beings make significant changes in their lives only when they are in an environment where they feel genuinely cared about** (Important points to consider here might be: How does the student interpret/internalize the accommodation(s)? Does it appear to be a game with him/her? Are we just being used? Does our attempt to help become enabling? When should we evoke the BOD (benefit of doubt) rule? Do the same accommodations have to be made repeatedly? Is the student showing progress by moving to greater independent and responsible behavior, etc.?); (d) **one of the easiest ways for human beings to avoid the responsibility of failure is to quit trying** (Will the accommodation(s) play into the student's game plan? Are we giving the student what he/she wants? What is likely to be gained by accommodating or not accommodating the student?)
2. As a parent, administrator and teacher, I believe there is a “fine line” between helping and crippling a person; for example, as a parent, I often have been faced with this dilemma whether it is an issue relating to providing financial resources, establishing rules and consequences, helping with homework, and/or various other accommodating/rescuing efforts. As a parent, at times I also have found it necessary to treat my four children differently. I admit this is not always easy!
3. How do I deal with the fairness issue (possibly the perceived fairness issue)? Does the concept of differentiation of instruction raise fairness issues? Is fairness the same as “sameness”? For some students, can fairness be defined as providing them what they need at a particular moment or stage of development? If I provide accommodations (for example, accept late work, permit repeat examinations, etc.) for some students and not others, am I being unfair? Are there legal implications or consequences to my differing treatments? On the other hand, I am faced with the problem of knowing it is easier for

students “born on third base” to score home runs than for those students who must run all the bases! How do we deal with the fairness question when we know, for example, some students have parents who do much of the work on their child’s science fair project versus those students who do not even have a place to study at home or parents/a parent to help them?

4. For myself, at least in many instances, I hope as a teacher or parent that I have kept “the ball in the child’s/student’s court” as long as possible. Although I realize that some school policies may give us little choice, I believe that it is important to remember that once “I close the door” and say: “You had your chance; I have done my job,” it seems to me that at that point in time, to some extent, I assumed the responsibility for the person by taking the responsibility away from him/her. This is not to say that these instances can always be avoided. Now, for those persons who do not care and who have already “given up” (again review our belief statements), what has been gained? We also might ask: “When the ball is in the student’s court, and he will not even try to hit it, do we then give up? Should we toss him another ball – maybe a little higher or lower? Some teachers, with some students, appear to keep tossing until the student does not continue to ignore the teacher, but is this practice fair to other students?
5. If we are to be successful in teaching and changing behaviors of certain students, now particularly important with the accountability measures that have been placed in schools, we may have to give up the “sorting and selecting” practices so very prevalent in schools of the past and move toward a “teaching and learning” paradigm. Such a change means, among other things, we must be willing to accept incremental growth in human beings. Historically we seem to have been able to do this more easily with academics than with non-academics. For example, few of us expect all students to learn long division the first time it is taught. With academic content we seem to be able to allow growth over time. We sometimes find incremental growth in non-academic (for example, coming to class on time) areas more difficult to accept. If we are trying to change both academic and non-academic behaviors, it may be critical that we be willing to continue to lead students toward desired changes in similar ways. For example, do we teach many of the non-academic behaviors/skills we build into academic grades or do we just expect students to have them when they arrive in our class?
6. For me, I hope as a teacher, administrator and parent that I can continue to accommodate, support, nag, and/or cajole those persons for whom I have the responsibility to teach, mold and/or change until they can “experience the feel of success”. There is some evidence that once a person knows what success feels like that he/she then will want more of it and will work toward that end. If/when this point is reached, we have increased the odds that over time those persons will need fewer accommodations and supports. One way to think of “accommodations” in the text of this presentation is to consider them as providing “roots” until adequate “wings” are developed, and for some I must accept the fact that it may take years for us to know if we helped or crippled.
7. Finally, as each of us continues to wrestle with these issues, there may be times we will need to ask ourselves: Given the “givens”, how would I want to be treated? How would I want a school administrator to treat me? A superintendent? A parent? A teacher? or How would I want my child treated?

Visit www.robertlynncanady.com for additional information and to view schedules. For additional study of this topic, the following references are suggested:

Arantani, L. (2006, September 24). Montgomery grading system gets mixed marks. *Globe and Mail*, p. C06.

Bailey, J., & McTighe, J. (1996). Reporting achievement at the secondary level: What and how. *In Guskey 1996*, 119-140.

Butler, SM & McMunn, ND (2006). *A teacher's guide to classroom assessment*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.

Canady, R.L. & Hotchkiss, P.R. (1989). It's a good score! Just a bad grade. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71(1), 10-14.

Note: This manuscript has been published in numerous books on assessment. It may be available online.

Clark, F. & Follmer, S. (2007, March 16-19). Standards based grading: Concept mastery vs. effort, behavior and cuteness. Paper presented at ASCD Annual Conference. Anaheim, CA. Contact: fclark@upsd.wednet.edu.

Donen, T., Anton, J., Beard, L., Stinson, T. & Sullivan, G. (Fall 2010) *Grades Don't Matter: Using Assessment to Measure True Learning*.

Website: www.thegradesgame.com Email: tonydonen@thegradesgame.com

Friess, S. (2008, May 19). Failure goes from zero to 50: Minimum 'F' grading policy ignites impassioned debate. *USA Today*, p. 1-A.

Friess, S. (2008, May 19). Great education debate: Reforming the grade system. *USA Today*, p. 5-D.

Guskey, T. R. (2004). Zero alternatives. *Principal Leadership*, 5(2), 49-53.

Note: This manuscript is available online at <http://www.aac.ab.ca/public/guskey.pdf>

Guskey, T. R., & Jung, L. A. (2010). Grading Exceptional Learners. *Educational Leadership*, 67(5), 31-35.

Note: This manuscript is available online at:

www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/feb10/vol67/num05/Grading_Exceptional_Learners.aspx

Hill, D. & Nave, J (2009). *Power of ICU (Intensive Care Unit): The end of student apathy ... reviving engagement and responsibility*. Maryville, TN: NTLB, the Educational Imprint of Southland Books. ISBN 978-0-9823984-3-2

Kohn, A. (2006). *The homework myth: Why kids get too much of a bad thing*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

O'Connor, K. (2007). *A repair kit for grading: 15 fixes for broken grades*. Portland, OR: Educational Testing Service.

Reeves, D. B. (2006). Leading to change: Preventing 1,000 failures. *Educational Leadership*, 64(3), 88-89.

Rettig, MD, & Canady, RL (1998). High failure rates in required mathematics courses: Can a modified block schedule be part of the cure? *NASSP Bulletin*, 596. 56-65.

Stiggins, R. (2007). Assessment through the student's eyes. *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 64, No. 8, 22-26.

Vatterott, C. (2009). *Rethinking homework*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Wormeli, R. (2006). *Fair isn't always equal: Assessing and grading in the differentiated classroom*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers. *Note: I highly recommend Chapters 11 through 14.*

Wright, R. G. (1994) Success for all: The median is the key. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 75(9), 723-725.

Note: This article is available online at <http://www.ebsinstitute.com/ebs.median.html>

For additional information on the relationship of homework and student achievement, see studies by Harris Cooper, Duke University, and studies related to junior high math students by Penn State University researchers David Baker and Gerald LeTendre.

The Power of “I” or Zap

High School Recommendation

Require all students to complete their work at least at the basic level (*if it's a higher performing school, put at the proficient level*). Consider implementing a program/policy such as the Power of “I” or Zeros Aren’t Possible (ZAP). When students do not turn in assignments or turn in work that is far below the standard, record a grade of “I” instead of a zero or a failing grade. Require students to attend extra help so that they can get assistance in completing or redoing the work to at least a C level. If the work is not completed or redone to satisfaction, the report card should report a grade of “I.” Carry the “I” grade all the way through the semester and beyond so that the students get the message that they will not be let off the hook for completing their work at high levels. This policy can be implemented in teacher classrooms, departments, high-failure-rate courses or the whole school. Work to provide the extra help opportunities needed for students to be successful with this new policy. Contact parents, have parent/teacher/student conferences that explain the policy and contract with the parties to agree on a make-up/redo timeline and extra help plan. Although the policy might not work for all students, most students will respond if held to these higher expectations. Contact Toni Eubank at SREB (404-678-5610) for more information on the Power or “I” grading policies and names of schools that have successfully implemented similar plans.

Middle Grades Recommendation

Require all students to complete their work at least at basic level (*if it's a higher-performing school, put at proficient level.*) Consider implementing a program/policy such as the Power of “I” or Zeros Aren’t Possible (ZAP). When students do not turn in assignments or turn in work that is far below the standard, record a grade of “I” instead of a zero or a failing grade. Require students to attend extra help so that they can get assistance in completing or redoing the work to at least a C level. If the work is not completed or redone to satisfaction, the report card should report a grade of “I.” Carry the “I” grade all the way through the semester and beyond so that the students get the message that they will not be let off the hook for completing their work at high levels. Teachers, teams, departments or the whole school can implement this policy. In team meetings, work together on strategies that will provide the opportunities needed for students to be successful with this new policy. Contact parents, have parent/teacher/student conferences that explain the policy and contract with the parties to agree on a make-up/redo timeline and extra help plan. Although the policy might not work for all students, most students will respond if held to these higher expectations. Contact Toni Eubank at SREB (404-678-5610) for more information on the Power or I grading policies and names of schools that have successfully implemented similar plans.

Gender Differences Studied

Compared to girls, boys are:

- **Held back a grade at higher rates: 34% of boys are in grades below their age; 26% of girls are.**
- **More likely to be assigned to special education: 73% of students with learning disabilities are boys; 76% of those emotionally disturbed are boys.**
- **More likely to commit suicide: since 1970, the female rate declined from 4.2 per 100,000 to 3.3 per 100,000, while the male rate rose from 13.5 to 18.5.**
- **Less likely to attend college: From 1967 through 2000, the proportion of female high school graduates enrolled in college rose from 25% to 46%, while the percentage of males decreased from 45% to 41%.**

Source: Tom Mortenson, Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. Reported in USA Today, "Girls get extra school help while boys get Ritalin." USA Today, August 29, 2003, Section A, pg. A-8.

ISSUES RELATED TO AVERAGING IN DETERMINING STUDENT GRADES

Averaging can be a deficit model of evaluation. Unless caps are implemented, low scores are given greater power. The median reduces influence of extreme scores.

When averaging is used, it helps if the points/weights between scale scores are similar; i.e. in some grading scales the “A” may have a seven point range while the “F” may have a 75 point range.

Averaging assumes that students seldom “mess up,” when, in fact, we know some of us do. There are students who initially do not show mastery of a concept who later demonstrate mastery. How long should they “drag the baggage” of initial low grades?

When is a grade/score no longer relevant to mastery? What if the subject has sequence (i.e. math or the writing process)? If we can accept that averaging affects student motivation, we also might assume the practice affects learning. For example, we know that when students practice a skill over time, most get better at that skill. That’s the learning process; yet many teachers grade too early in the learning cycle to obtain a valid indicator of the student’s skill mastery.

It appears that teachers may do this because they believe the promise (or threat) of a grade is what motivates students to do the work; however, this practice works primarily for students who are going to receive good grades anyway.

Should we grade in pencil as long as possible?

If we can answer the above question YES, then it is reasonable to conclude that averaging reduces motivation for students to keep working. Students (especially potential dropouts) must believe there is “pay off” for coming to school and for completing and re-doing their work.

What if, for each student, we placed only one grade in the grade book for each skill or standard and that grade could be continually erased and revised as each student showed greater mastery of the skill? After a period of time, the grade would be an indicator of how far the student had come and also reflect his/her highest level of mastery at that period in time.

A grading system like this also would lend itself to allowing students to set goals for themselves and work towards those goals. We have evidence that this approach positively impacts learning (Marzano).

Unless we average “repeated measures of similar content,” a grade based on averaging loses its ability to predict, which is a major problem of End-of-Course (EOC) testing and other norm-referenced measures related to educational accountability, such as (AP/IB/ACT/SAT scores, and national test standards, etc.)

Averaging is **not typical** of the working world; for example, we do not average praxis scores when teachers re-take tests or when lawyers re-take the bar examination.

Averaging hurts some students more than others; for example, those born on 1st base and those not born in the ball park typically demonstrate less consistency in their work, especially if they have little or no support outside of school. A few extreme scores can change the picture drastically!

When averaging was initially instituted, school populations were more homogeneous (neighborhood schools); today schools are more diverse.

If 70 is required as a passing grade, and grades are based on averaging, which of the following students is likely to be more successful in Algebra II? Student A did poorly during Semester I (had a baby; parents divorced; started working 30 hours per week, etc.) and ended the semester with a score of 64, but at the end of Semester II, he/she had an average of 88 if only Semester II work were considered. Student B maintained an average score of 72 throughout the year.

What does a grade, based on averaging, really mean/predict? Does it depend on “what” is averaged and the subject? If so, should each teacher, school and school district determine the factors to be averaged?

Today what is the primary reason students need teachers? If only to dispense information, some argue dispensing content may be done as well or better with computer programs!

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON GRADING PRACTICES

To Encourage Redos or NOT to Permit Redos???

“Teachers debate the merits of allowing redos in schools around the world. If we’re basing our decision on the ‘real’ world outside of school, then the answer is clear: Allow students to redo work. This may run counter to some teachers’ assumptions that in the real world you don’t get ‘do-overs.’

Yet we do. Pilots can come around for a second attempt at landing. Surgeons can try again to fix something that went badly the first time. Farmers grow and regrow crops until they know all the factors to make them produce abundantly and at the right time of the year. People mark the wrong box on legal forms every day only to later scribble out their earlier mark, check the correct box, then record their initials to indicate approval of the change.” Wormeli, p. 136.

To Record a Zero or a Sixty? A Fifty?

When we turn students’ zeros into sixties in our grade books, we are not giving students something for doing nothing. We’re adjusting the grade intervals so that any averaging we do is mathematically justified but, even more important, that any grade we determine from the pattern of grades is a valid indicator of mastery.” Wormeli, p. 137.

“Adjusting zeros to sixty is . . . adjusting the grading scale so that it is ethically justifiable, so that each grade has an appropriate amount of influence on the student’s summative evaluation and the grade can be used in decision making. Marking zeros as sixties still means the student failed; it’s just using the upper, more constructive and recoverable end of the F range. If grades are to be accurate – and they have to be accurate in order to provide feedback, document progress, and inform our instructional decisions – then we have to adjust all zeros accordingly. An F does not state that the student is misbehaving or a cognitive ‘loser.’ It means only that the student failed to demonstrate mastery. The cause isn’t important. . . , our response is the same; investigate and take action” (Wormeli, p.140), assuming we believe schools exist primarily for teaching and learning vs. sorting and selecting (Canady).

Wormeli, Rick, (2006) Fair Isn’t Always Equal: Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom. Portland, Maine: NMSA, Stenhouse Publishers. ISBN 1-57110-424-0

Teacher Grades Under Attack!!! Why?

ADDITIONAL accountability **MEASURES** are available today

GRADES now have greater **CONSEQUENCES**

Evidence exists that **GRADES VARY** among teachers even **WHEN MASTERY**, based on other measures, **IS SIMILAR**

It now is believed that **TEACHERS** and **SCHOOLS CAN BE A CRITICAL FACTOR** in determining the **SUCCESS** of **SOME STUDENTS** ; hence, a challenge to the sorting and selecting vs. teaching and learning paradigm

COURTS are becoming **INVOLVED** with **TEACHER GRADES**

Issues:

- 1. Is a grade considered a property right?**
- 2. Can it be established that the grade has caused harm to the student?**
- 3. Were other students graded in a similar manner?**