Grading Reform is an Assessment Conversation

Tom Schimmer
Assessment Author and Associate

Email: tschimmer@live.ca
Twitter: @TomSchimmer #GFIO #atAssess
Facebook: Schimmer Education
www.allthingsassessment.info
KEYNOTE: Grading Reform is an Assessment Conversation

Three Big Ideas for Sound Grading:

1. Students should not be able to behave their way up or down the achievement scale.
2. Student grades should not be dependent upon who their teacher is.
3. Student grades should not be dependent on how their performance compares to their classmates.

“The more aware we are of our basic paradigms, maps, or assumptions, and the extent to which we have been influenced by our experience, the more we can take responsibility for those paradigms, examine them, test them against reality, listen to others and be open to their perceptions, thereby getting a larger picture and a far more objective view.”

-S. Covey, (1989)
Grading is Assessment

“The formative and summative purposes of assessment can be so intertwined that they are mutually supportive rather than conflicting. Unless this is done, formative assessment cannot achieve its full potential to improve learning,

-Paul Black (2013)

The Fractured Relationship between Instruction and Reporting:
- Standards vs. Task-Types
- Rubrics vs. Percentages
- More recent evidence vs. All evidence.
- Learning vs. Time
- Accuracy vs. Leverage
- Quality vs. Completion

Six Assessment Tenets & Grading

• Assessment Purpose
  o Balanced assessment system (i.e. practice versus games)

• Assessment Architecture
  o Grades are only as accurate as the assessments they’re based on.

• Accurate Interpretation
  o Accurate grades are the result of accurate inferences and interpretations by the teacher examining the evidence.

• Instructional Agility
  o Grading should result in teachers (and students) knowing what comes next in the learning.

• Communication of Results
  o Grades should elicit productive responses from students.

• Student Investment
  o Grading practices and processes need to be transparent enough to allow students to be fully invested before, during, and after.
“The accuracy of summative judgments depends on the quality of the assessments and the competence of the assessor.”

-Connie Moss (2013)

The Grading True North

The Grading True North (Schimmer, 2016)

- **ACCURACY**: Does that grading practice *increase or decrease* the accuracy of what ultimately gets reported about student achievement against curricular standards?

- **CONFIDENCE**: Do you think most students will emerge with *more or less* confidence about their eventual success after experiencing that grading practice?

“Validity is in question when the construct to be measured is not purely achievement but rather some mix of achievement and nonachievement factors.”

“Validity is in question when grades mean different things in different schools or subjects, in different teachers’ classes, and for different types of students.”


“Confidence guides many personal decisions about what to do next. Individuals run a mental calculation to determine *whether the system around them will support them or let them down*, whether their personal investment of time, energy, effort, ideas, or emotional commitment will produce *positive results or bring disappointment*.”


Performing Under Pressure (Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry, 2015)

- **STRESS**: Situation of too many demands and not enough resources.

- **PRESSURE**: Situation where something at stake is dependent on the outcome of your performance.

“When we confuse daily stressful situations for pressure moments, we react physically, mentally, and behaviorally in ways that are out of proportion to the circumstances. The danger lies in the fact that continually confusing stress for pressure habituates, and we lose the ability to think clearly. Misdiagnosing stress as pressure reduces our abilities needlessly.”

-Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry, 2015
The COTE of Armor (Weisinger & Pawliw-Fry, 2015)

- Confidence
- Optimism
- Tenacity
- Enthusiasm

Grading from the Inside Out (#GFIO)

Traditional Grading Practices
- Mean Average
- Single Grade
- Percentages
- Overlapping Tasks
- Punitive Responses
- Standards-Based Mindset
- Accuracy
- No Zeros
- Most Frequent Evidence
- No Penalties
- Standards-Based Grading
- Separation of Standards
- Separation of Attributes
- Separation of Competencies
- Levels of Performance
- The Standards-Based Mindset
- Give Students Full Credit
- Redefine Accountability
- Repurpose Homework
- Punishing irresponsibility doesn’t teach responsibility.
- Treat homework as practice; focus on feedback.

The combination of old and new evidence.
Their Worlds are Real!


“Current research shows that the parts of the brain responsible for impulse control (measured in the lateral prefrontal cortex) may not completely develop until early adulthood, while the parts of the brain that boost sensation-seeking (the ventral striatum and the orbitofrontal cortex) start growing just after puberty begins. Teenagers may cheat (or do drugs or drive too fast) partly because their sense of thrill outweighs their sense of risk.”

The cause is noble, but...

- Adults choose their professions.
- Students don’t have adult brains.
- Adults often cherry-pick issues to fixate on.
- Adult responses often distort accuracy.
- Students’ worlds are real!

What’s Next?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Able</th>
<th>Unable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willing</td>
<td>Move forward with your implementation effort.</td>
<td>Provide more opportunities to increase knowledge &amp; practice with new approach to assessment &amp; grading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwilling</td>
<td>Initially tailor your implementation efforts toward the low effort/high yield practices OR where there is minimal resistance.</td>
<td>Build a modified plan that focuses on exploration of new assessment &amp; grading practices; Year 0. Better to get it right, than first.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


