

Effective Grading Practices: Creating a Compelling Case for Improvement

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Antecedents

Examples of Instructional Strategies

- Identifying similarities and differences
- Self-assessment
- Pervasive use of scoring guides
- Use of graphic organizers
- Engaging scenarios
- Homework for thinking with practice
- Flexible grouping

Common Examples of Cause Data

- Transitions between activities
 - Closing activities
- Routines for asking questions
 - Collecting assignments
- Routine for opening every class
- Teaching classroom procedures
- How teams and groups are formed

Causes

Teacher behaviors and routines that effect student achievement and lend themselves to replication

Instructional Strategies

Teacher-student practices that engage students in thinking; require training, practice, and ongoing professional development; and lend themselves to replication

Antecedents

Administrative structures and learning conditions that precede, anticipate, or predict excellence in performance, and lend themselves to replication

Ten Actions of Accountability

Modify Time

Analyze diverse types of data

Modify Opportunities

Create, implement, and evaluate common formative assessments

Provide corrective feedback

Authority-Permission to Add

Tailor training to needs

Replicate successful practices

Develop and test hypotheses

Make midcourse corrections

Commit resources

Subtracting Obsolete or Ineffective Practices

1. Does the practice/resource yield data about teaching or learning?	Yes	No
2. Does the practice/resource address specific content standards?	Yes	No
3. Does the practice/resource provide diagnostic data about student achievement?	Yes	No
4. Does the practice/resource invite collaboration with colleagues?	Yes	No
5. Is there data supporting the need for or value of the practice/resource to improve student achievement in	Yes	No
6. Is there a corresponding or competing practice/resource that accomplishes the same result?	Yes	No

Yes to three or fewer questions:The practice or resource should be subtracted in some measure.

Yes to four or more questions:The practice or resource should be retained or possibly replicated.

The Big Picture !

How Do All The Powerful Practices
Connect?

Context of National Research

- Effective monitoring of adult actions – teaching and leadership – strongly linked to gains in student achievement
- “Implementation gap” between intention and reality
- Fragmentation, particularly at secondary level, inhibits focus

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Purpose

- Importance of implementation
- Relating instructional and leadership initiatives to student results
- Focusing leadership attention and educational resources
- Identifying and documenting exemplary schools

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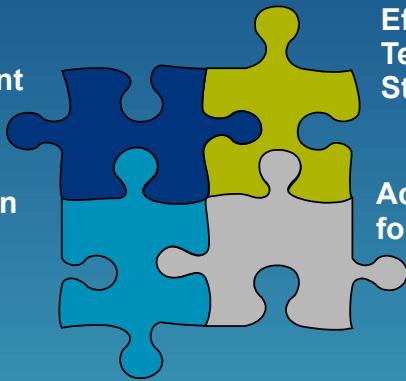
Putting the Pieces Of the Puzzle Together

Standards
and
Assessment

Effective
Teaching
Strategies

Data-Driven
Decision
Making

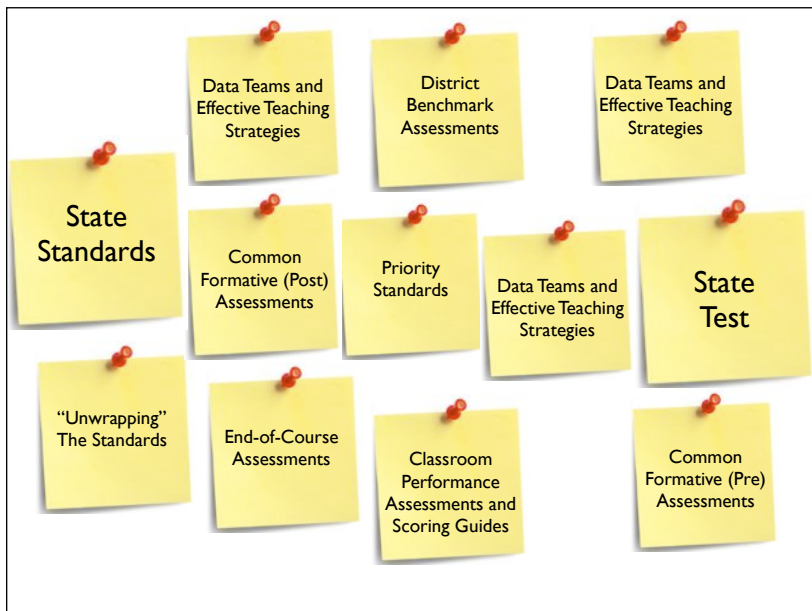
Accountability
for Learning

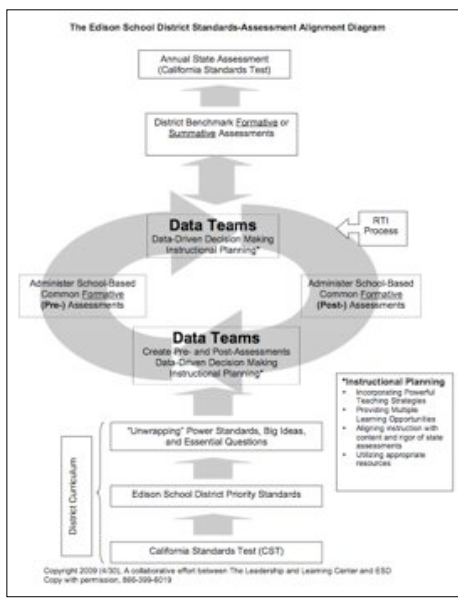


If the state standards
and the state tests
were **"bookends"** and these
powerful practices were the
"books" in between...



How Would You Arrange The **"Books"**
To Show the Connections?





Session Objectives

- Create a compelling case for improvement
- Learn the elements of effective grading
- Analyze current grading systems
- Experiment with alternative systems
- Create improved feedback strategies
- Develop an implementation plan

Session Objectives

If we can improve our grading practices, we can:

1. reduce the failure rate
2. improve discipline
3. improve faculty morale
4. host of other advantages

Grading Practices

- The Zero
- The Average
- The “Semester Killer”

The tradition of common practices is deep, and therefore many common practices are continued, even when we know that they are not effective.

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Activity

- What is the difference between “A” and “B” students and “D” and “F” students?

Let’s start with your own expertise and experience. Working alone or with colleagues, discuss your observations between A and B students, and D and F students. Describe those observations in rich detail.

Complete the following sentence: *The differences between a student who earns A’s and B’s and the student who earns D’s and F’s are...*

An Experiment in Grading Policy

- C
- C
- MA = Missing Assignment
- D
- C
- B
- MA = Missing Assignment
- MA = Missing Assignment
- B
- A

Group 1

- A = 100
- B = 90
- C = 80
- D = 70

Group 2

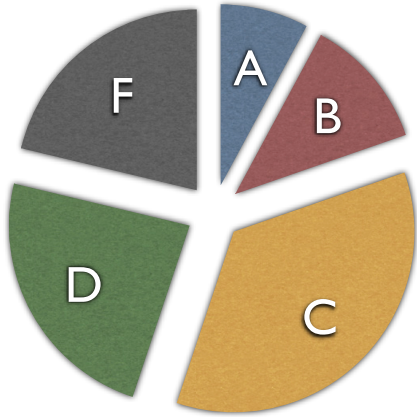
- A = 4
- B = 3
- C = 2
- D = 1

Group 3

- Choose your own system

Austin

10,000 Teachers Can't be Wrong, Right?



Grades for the **SAME** Student and
SAME Performance

How Did Each Group Differ in Grading?

- When we merely announce a “policy” on grading...that doesn’t help very much
- We have to think about how we *implement* that policy if we are going to meet our standards of accuracy, fairness and effectiveness
- Think about how the same student can receive wildly different grades and how you might react if you were the student or the parent

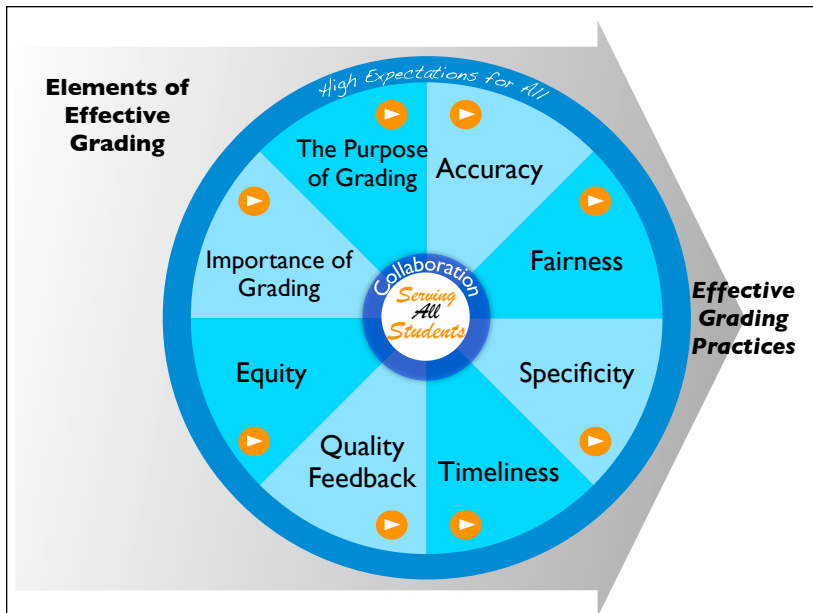
The system may be deeply flawed

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Why Grading Initiatives Fail

- Lack of respect for teacher background
- Changing individual systems of judgement requires a considerable degree of justification - *not mandates*

“Why” precedes “How”



Elements of Effective Grading

The following criteria will be used throughout the remainder of the seminar in order to establish consistent guidelines as we evaluate several different grading practices.

These definitions will provide a foundational structure, so we can ensure uniformity and clarity when providing feedback to students.

Elements of Effective Grading

- **Accurate**—The same piece of student work receives the same grade regardless of who the teacher is.
- **Fair**—Differences in grades should reflect variations in the quality of work, not differences in gender, ethnicity, or social class.

Elements of Effective Grading

- **Timely**—Students and parents should be told about grades early enough to correct problems.
- **Understandable**—Students should get detailed information about how to improve, not just a summative grade or comment.

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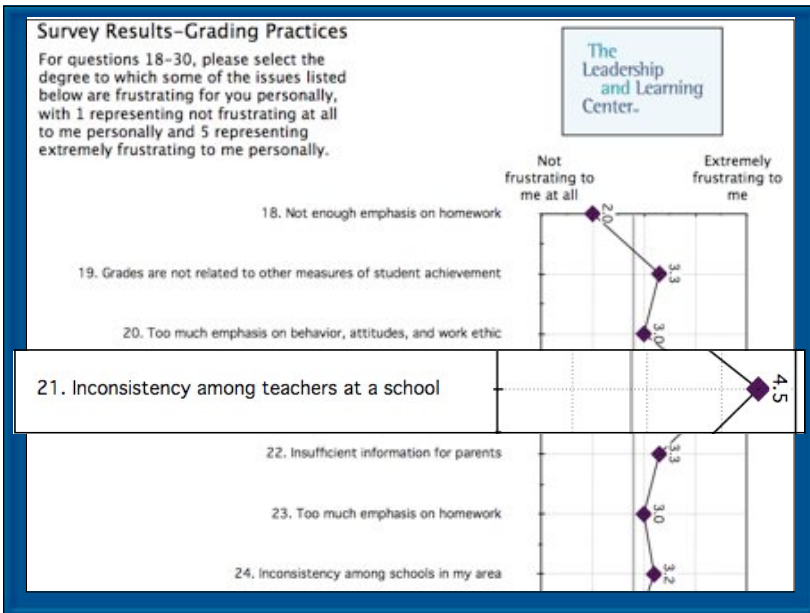
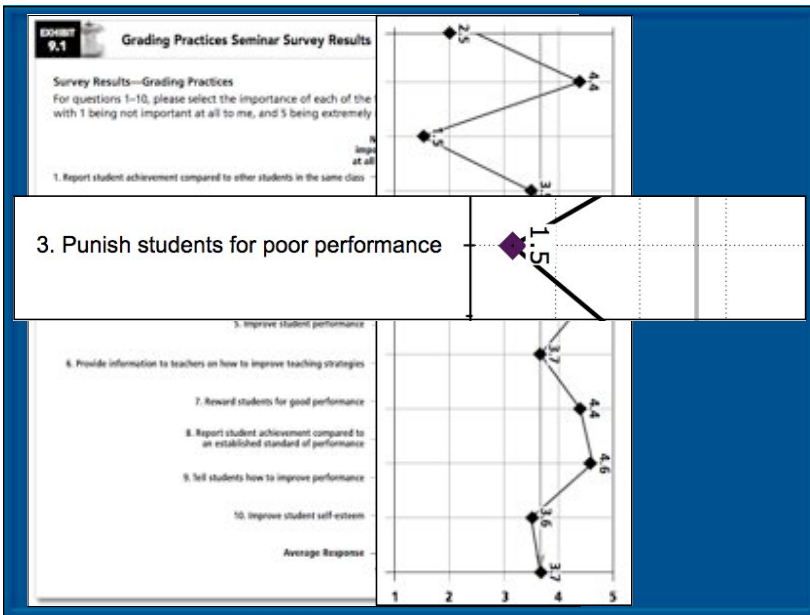
Activity: What Grading Policies and Practices Would You Like to Evaluate?

- Choose **ONE** or two criteria (accuracy, timely, fair, understandable, effective)
- Describe (in rich detail) a grading practice that meets this criterion
- Describe (in rich detail) a grading practice that violates this criterion (present practice)
- Group reports in 20 minutes

EXHIBIT 9.2 Effective-Grading Worksheet

Criterion for Effective Grading*	Description of Grading Practice that Meets this Criterion	Description of Grading Practice that Violates this Criterion
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accurate• Fair• Timely• Understandable		

*Choose ONE of the following criteria: accurate, fair, timely, or understandable.



If these beliefs are indeed true, then why do so many educators believe that awarding a grade of zero will motivate students?

I hope to sensitively challenge participants that grades are largely due to personal judgment and that the same student with the same work can receive wildly different feedback based on the grading policies of the teacher.

Definitions and Examples



Effect data:
Outcomes or results

Cause data:
Professional practices that create specific effects or results



Cause Influences Performance

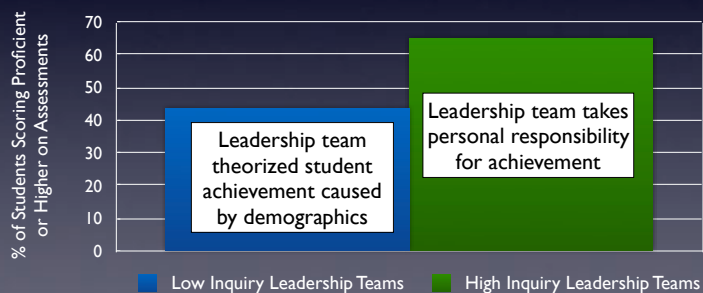
What **causes** student achievement?

Adults	Students
Curriculum	Poverty Level
Feedback	Ethnicity
Assessment	Home Language
Expectations	Parent Involvement
Multidisciplinary Lessons	
Engaging Lessons	
Multiple Opportunities for Success	
Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum	

Cause Influences Performance

If you believe that adults make a difference in student achievement, you are right.

If you believe that adults are hopeless bystanders because of demographic characteristics, you are right.



The Leadership/Learning Matrix (L2 Matrix)

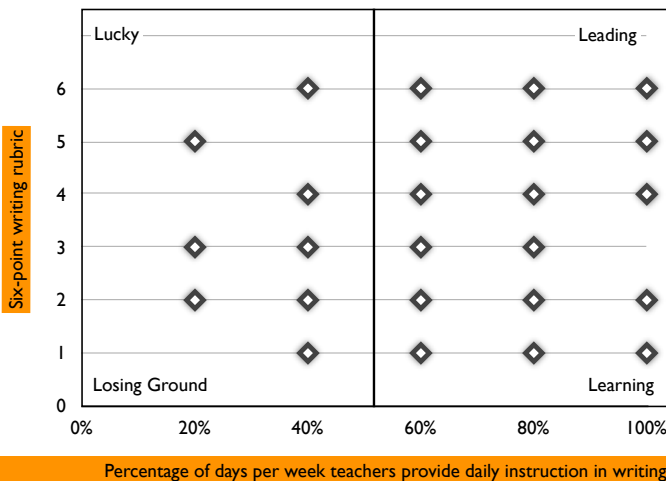
Effects/Results Data	<p>Lucky</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >High results, low understanding of antecedents >Replication of success unlikely 	<p>Leading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >High results, high understanding of antecedents >Replication of success likely
	<p>Losing Ground</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Low results, low understanding of antecedents >Replication of failure likely 	<p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Low results, high understanding of antecedents >Replication of mistakes unlikely

Leadership/Teaching Practices

Effect Data Examples	Cause Data Examples
State Test Data	Teacher-provided feedback for students
District Benchmarks	Collaborative Scoring Opportunities
School Attendance	Alignment of Standards
Formative Assessment	Implementation of PD
Data Team Assessment	Research-based Classroom Instructional Strategies
Common Formative Assessments	Effective Grading Practices

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Writing Rubric as Achievement and Percentage of Teacher Implementation as Antecedent



Factors That Influence Achievement

- Monitoring-students and adults (cause and effect)
- Evaluation-Is it working? For EVERYTHING we do
- Inquiry-your belief in the efficacy of your practice (your professional practice influences student achievement)
- Instructional practice-with emphasis on feedback (accurate, timely and specific)

Did you know?

- What are the two common causes of course failure?
 - 1) missing homework;
 - 2) poor performance on a single major assignment.

Adjusting your policy would have a huge impact on student failures. (Reeves)

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Benefits of Homework

- Homework teaches students about time management
- Homework helps teachers determine how well the lessons are being understood by their students.
- Homework teaches students how to problem solve.
- Homework gives students another opportunity to review the class material.

Benefits of Homework

- Homework teaches students that they may have to do things - even when they don't want to.
- Homework teaches students how to take responsibility for their part in the educational process.
- Homework teaches students how to work independently.
- Homework teaches students the importance of planning, staying organized and taking action.

10 Benefits of Homework - By - John Bishop

Consequences for late work

- Detention for chronic late work
- Report this behavior in expanded format report cards
- Come in before school, at lunch, after school
- Direct parent contact

Perception Issues and Grading Practices



What others say about feedback...

- “Feedback is a consequence of performance.” John Hattie, 2007
- “The primary purpose for grading should be to communicate with students and parents about their achievement and learning goals.” Susan Brookhart, 2004
- “Achievement was higher for students receiving pre-specified comments than just letter grades... and was better STILL for students receiving free comments written by teachers.” E. B. Page, 1958.

Feedback

- One of the most important purposes of grading is to provide feedback for improved performance



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Activity: What Do You Already Know About Feedback?

- My most effective feedback as a student and as a professional:
- My least effective feedback as a student and as a professional:



Grading Policies and Experience

- Spend time thinking about, both as a student and professional, when you received effective feedback
- Spend time thinking about, both as a student and professional, when you received ineffective feedback
- Describe both instances in rich detail and be ready to share
- Consider common characteristics of both types of feedback

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Real Time Feedback

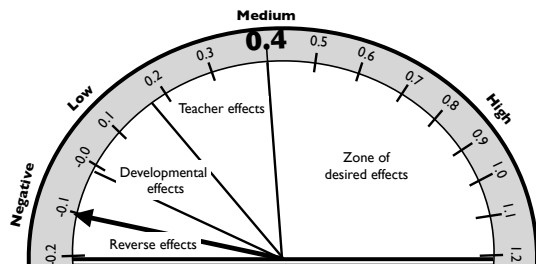
- Students get feedback, use it right away and learn from it to improve their performance (music, art, drama)



The result of 15 years research and synthesis over 800 meta-analyses on the influences on achievement in school-aged students.

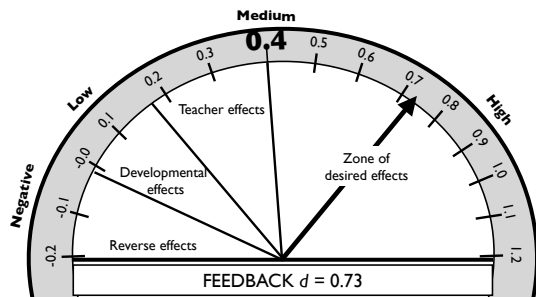


Hattie, John PH.d (2006). Visible Learning. New York: Routledge



Key

- Any effect below $d = 0$ (reverse effects) decrease achievement and are not wanted (retention)
- Any effect below $d = 0.15$ can be considered potentially harmful and should not be implemented
- The typical effect from teachers are between $d = 0.15$ and $d = 0.40$ and are similar to what teachers can accomplish in a typical year of schooling (teaching test taking)
- All influences above $d = 0.40$ are labeled in the "Zone of desired effects" as these are the influences that have the greatest impact on student achievement outcomes



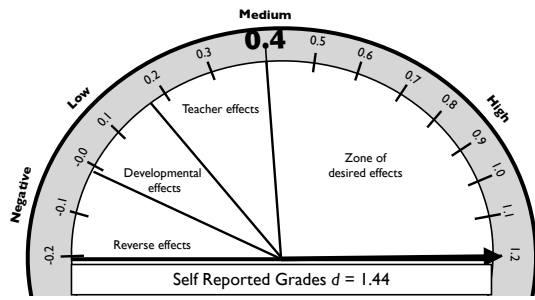
Rank	10 (138)
Number of meta-analysis	23
Number of studies	1,287
Number of people	67,931

Students are made aware
of their learning
and achievement

CAT
CHAT

- Fantastic
- Borderline
- Needs Work

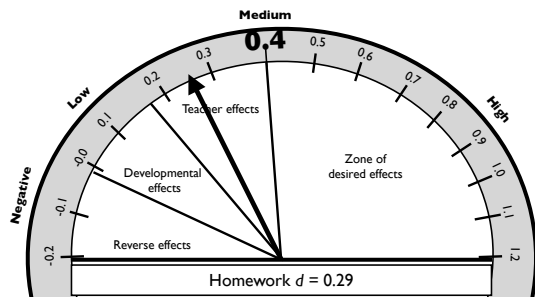




Rank	1 (138)
Number of meta-analysis	6
Number of studies	209
Number of people	79,433

Students are very adept at rating their own performance

If these ratings are too low, then expectations of performance can set limits of what students see as attainable



Rank	88 (138)
Number of meta-analysis	5
Number of studies	161
Number of people	105,282

Why Grading Practices Are So Important

- Grading practices are part of *feedback*, one of the single greatest influences on student achievement.
- Feedback is *only effective* if it meets these criteria:
 - Accurate
 - Fair
 - Timely
 - Understandable

The Case Against The Zero

Here's the typical 100 point grading scale:

A = 90

B = 80

C = 70

D = 60

F = 0?

The increments
are even between
each grade...



SC Uniform Grading Policy

Policies, Procedures & Protocol

Faculty and Staff Training
Beaufort County School District

Retaking A Course

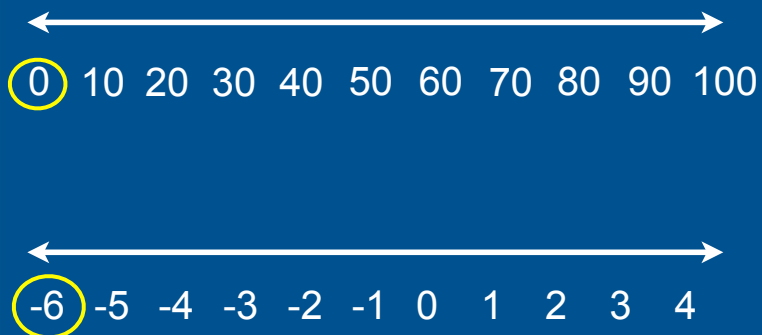
Students may retake courses to improve their grades:

- Only courses in which a grade of a **D** or **F** was earned may be retaken.
- The course in which a **D** or **F** was earned may only be retaken *during the current academic year or no later than the next academic school year*. Both the **D** or **F** earned and the grade earned in the retake will be figured into the overall grade point ratio.

Standards of Evidence



Standards of Evidence



Toxic Grading Practices and Alternatives

Does awarding zeros lead to more student responsibility? Is it an effective practice?

•Zeros for missing work (MA's when averaged resulted in a failing grade)

We award zero's because we want to teach personal responsibility. We want to improve student performance. The question is: **Is it working?**

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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The Zero Dialogue

- “If there is no zero, what strategies do I have as a teacher to motivate students to do the work I assign?”

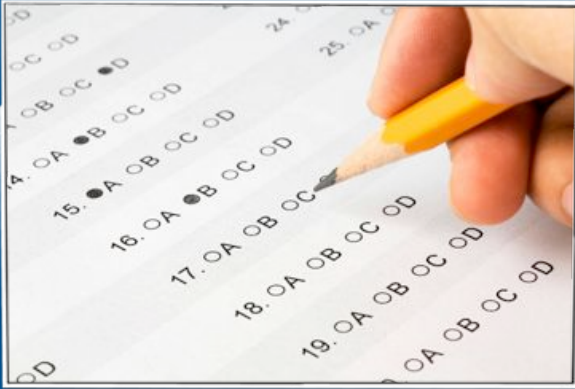
6 + 1

Questions

- Which teachers in the system already have a high level of compliance with assigned work, and what are they doing that could be useful to others?
- If the use of the zero is not effective in motivating students to do assigned work, then doesn't it make sense to at least attempt some alternative strategies?

#1

- Is your school using the early final option



Early Final

- Administer “Form B” of the final exam two weeks earlier than the regularly scheduled final
- If students have all work complete and earn an “A” or “B” on the early final, then their semester is over.

Early Final

Advantages	Disadvantages
The advantages of students earning an A or B before the end of the semester is far less damaging than the more likely scenario of <i>students who never engage deeply in learning the material at all.</i>	

#2

- Can students make up the work before, during, or after school?

Prevent or Endure?



Students don't fear zeros.

What thy fear is doing the work!

Completing the Work

Advantages	Disadvantages

- Strong evidence suggests that when the consequence for student missing work is changed from a zero to being required to complete the work:



#3

- Are assignments overly weighted, therefore contributing to higher levels of failure?

The “Big” Project (semester killer)

4 weeks-200 points

Incorporate Incremental Feedback

Week 1 50 points	Week 2 50 points	Week 3 50 points	Week 4 50 points
---------------------	---------------------	---------------------	---------------------

Very Fast Incremental Feedback

20 points	20 points	20 points	20 points	20 points	20 points	20 points	20 points	20 points	20 points
--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	--------------



- Responsibility
- Replicating expectations for college preparation or entry into the workforce

Real-World Professions



Offered multiple opportunities to obtain mastery/certification

Eliminate “Semester Killer”

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>It is far better to employ more assignments that require less time rather than fewer assignments requiring more time. The rationale is simple:</p> <p>Frequent, incremental assignments provide a source of feedback that is applicable and timely.</p>	

#4

- Have you considered using a menu system?
- Permits students to choose another assignment from a predetermined list that is of equal value to the missed assignment.
- Quantity and quality of the work remains the same.
- Alternative to one-size fits all assignments

Assignment Menu

- If you blow a 100-point test, you can either choose another 100-point item from the menu, or do four 25-point items

Warm-up!

Math _____

Math Worksheets
Addition Worksheet

Add the numbers together in each group and write the answer below the line.

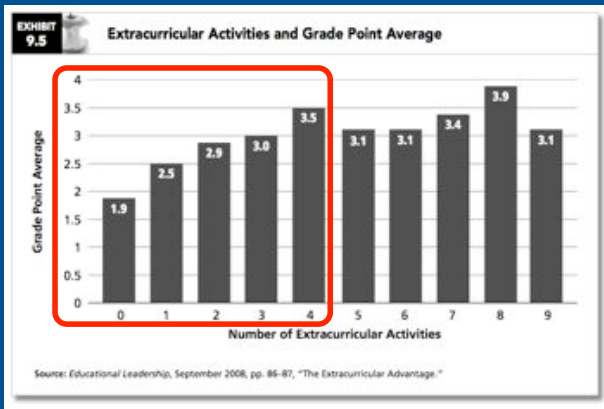
$\begin{array}{r} 1871 \\ + 6341 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 5643 \\ + 1973 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 5311 \\ + 3585 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 1373 \\ + 4128 \\ \hline \end{array}$
$\begin{array}{r} 2596 \\ + 7030 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 4170 \\ + 5458 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 3500 \\ + 4779 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 4634 \\ + 5020 \\ \hline \end{array}$
$\begin{array}{r} 1648 \\ + 2715 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 5281 \\ + 3999 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 7785 \\ + 1092 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 4712 \\ + 1234 \\ \hline \end{array}$
$\begin{array}{r} 3946 \\ + 2188 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 1523 \\ + 5017 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 2597 \\ + 2610 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 4693 \\ + 3301 \\ \hline \end{array}$
$\begin{array}{r} 1165 \\ + 7331 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 2314 \\ + 7380 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 6729 \\ + 2417 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 1092 \\ + 6595 \\ \hline \end{array}$

Menu System

Advantages	Disadvantages

#5

- Are students who fail enrolled in extracurricular activities?



Access to Activities

Advantages	Disadvantages

#6

- Have you considered assigning a score of "50" rather than a zero?

EXHIBIT 9.6 Demonstration of the Effect of a Zero Grade

Assignments	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total Percent	Final Grade
Scores	100	100	0	100	100	100	83%	B
Scores	100	100	100	50	100	100	92%	A

To be clear, the “50” should be assigned to types of student work that is completed, but not of passing quality, and also for work that is not completed.

Many educators have come to the conclusion that assigning zeroes for grades is no longer an acceptable practice because of mathematical errors.

Application of Minimum Grading System

When students receive zeros based on a 100-point grading scale, recovery is difficult because the zero carries inappropriate weighting and distorts the calculated grade.



Application of Minimum Grading System

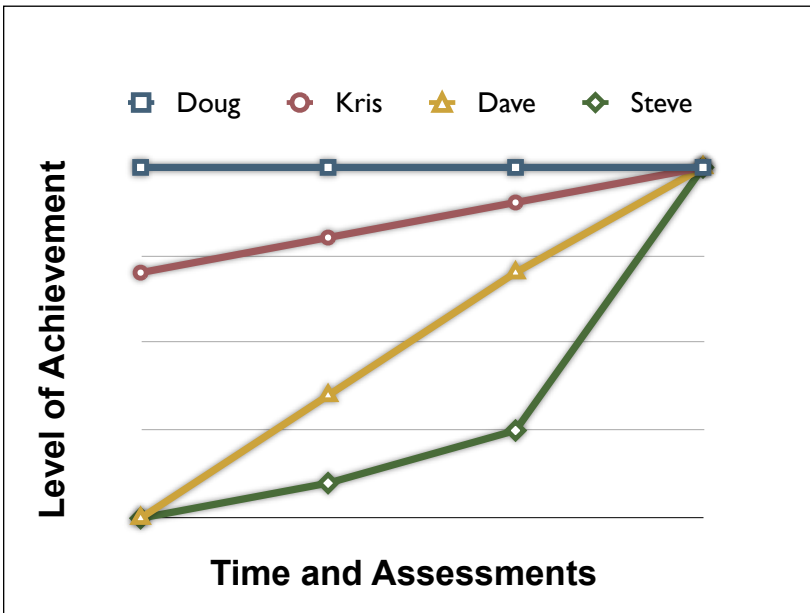
- Criticized because of the obvious reward a student receives when no reward has been earned
- If this is true, then we must also evaluate grading policies *that over-punish students--a result that they have equally not earned.*








That is why in scoring such Olympic events as gymnastics or diving, the highest and lowest scores from judges are always eliminated.

If they were not, one judge could control the entire competition simply by giving extreme scores.

A single zero has more influence on an average than any other score in the group.



Average

				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
82	84	86	83	0?

The average temperature is going to be 67 degrees!

#7

- If you must assign a zero, use a four-point grading scale.

EXHIBIT 9.8 100-Point Grading Scale Versus Four-Point Grading Scale

100-Point Scale	4-Point Scale
A = 100	A = 4
B = 89	B = 3
C = 79	C = 2
D = 69	D = 1

100 Point Scale	4 - Point Scale
A = 100	A = 4
B = 89	B = 3
C = 79	C = 2
D = 69	D = 1

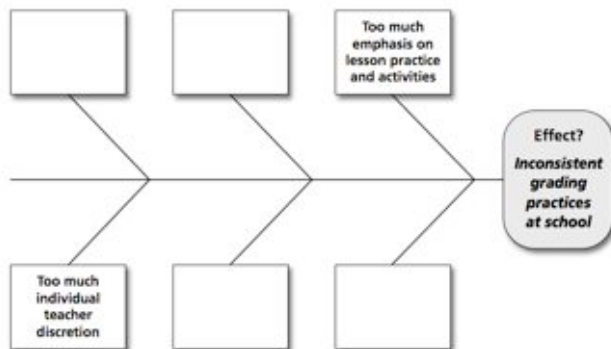
D **C**

Assignment #	Grade
1	B
2	D
3	C
4	Missing assignment
5	A

Equal Difference Scales

Scores	101 Point Scale	5-Point Scale	50-Point Scale
95	90-100(A)	4	95
85	80-89(B)	3	85
75	70-79(C)	2	75
65	60-69(D)	1	65
0	<60(F)	0	50
Mean	64 (D)	2(C)	74(C)
Median	75 (C)	2(C)	75(C)

Grading Practices	Advantages	Disadvantages
Average to compute final grade		
Final exam that is 20% of the final grade		
Refusal to accept late work		
Reduction in grade for late work		
Use of zero for missing work		
Reduction in grades for poor attitude		
Reduction in grades for poor behavior		
Reduction in grades for unexcused absences		



1. Record your biggest obstacle with respect to effective grading practices and implementation. What "sacred cow" or toxic grading practices should be eliminated? Place your obstacle in the "Effect" box.
2. Take time to reflect on the root causes and place them in the "cause" boxes around the diagram.
3. Use responses to "why" questions as branches to causes.
4. Develop a 100-day action plan to address the cause at its root.

Guiding Principles for an Effective District Grading Policy

1. Grades should only represent individual student achievement
2. Appropriate implementation of (common) formative assessment
3. Appropriate implementation of summative assessment
4. Use grading policies to *prepare* students for the real world, not "replicate"

What Does “Fair” Grading Mean?

- Genuinely a blind approach to student work
- Grades are associated with student academic performance
- Other factors that might influence teachers judgement, like behavior, participation, attendance, accent, or gender are not part of the grading process

ProgressBook
by Curriculum Associates, Inc.

Grade Book | Special Services | Help | Logout

Student Profile

Dashboard | 6 Day | Grid

Student: [Redacted] Class: [Redacted]
[Eng 201] Period: [QT 1]

Personal | Contacts | Progress | Assessments | Comments | Attendance | Schedule

68.00 D+

Average: 60.00 F

Homework

Date	Assignment	Weight	Mark	Miss?	Exc?	Comments
8/22/2009	Student Survey	1	20/20			
8/24/2009	English Desct. Guidelines	1	Missing/0	X		
8/27/2009	City Tr. p. 259 #6,7,9&10	1	Missing/0	X		
9/4/2009	7th Trm. An. Cause & Effect	1	26/24			
9/10/2009	Heroic Feats of Arthur	1	6/10			
9/10/2009	7th Trm. Q. Questions 1-6	1	Missing/0	X		
9/11/2009	Lectionist Summary	1	9/15			
9/15/2009	7th Lectionist Tr. 1,3,3,5 & 6	1	Missing/0	X		
9/16/2009	Theravik p. 673 #1	1	Missing/0	X		
9/17/2009	News Chart	1	20/20			

Participation

Average: 73.00 C

Date	Assignment	Weight	Mark	Miss?	Exc?	Comments
8/24/2009	Textbook Scavenger Hunt	1	40/40			
8/25/2009	Book Covers	1	8/15			
9/11/2009	Notebook Check 1	1	23/50			
9/15/2009	Misplaced Modifiers, p650	1	10/10			
9/16/2009	OGT p. 33-38 #11-14	1	10/10			
9/16/2009	Challenge Word Practice 3	1	5/5			
9/16/2009	Vocabulary List #3 Crossword	1	5/5			
9/18/2009	Participation Week Ending 9/18/09	1	13/25			
9/24/2009	Finalized Topic	1	10/10			

EDWIN
9.11

Example of Electronic Grade Book Entries

Participation

Date	Assignment	Weight	Mark
8/24/2009	Textbook Scavenger Hunt	1	40/40
8/25/2009	Book Covers	1	8/15
9/11/2009	Notebook Check 1	1	23/50
9/15/2009	Misplaced Modifiers, p650	1	10/10
9/16/2009	OGT p. 33-38 #11-14	1	10/10
9/16/2009	Challenge Word Practice 3	1	5/5
9/16/2009	Vocabulary List #3 Crossword	1	5/5
9/18/2009	Participation Week Ending 9/18/09	1	13/25
9/24/2009	Finalized Topic	1	10/10

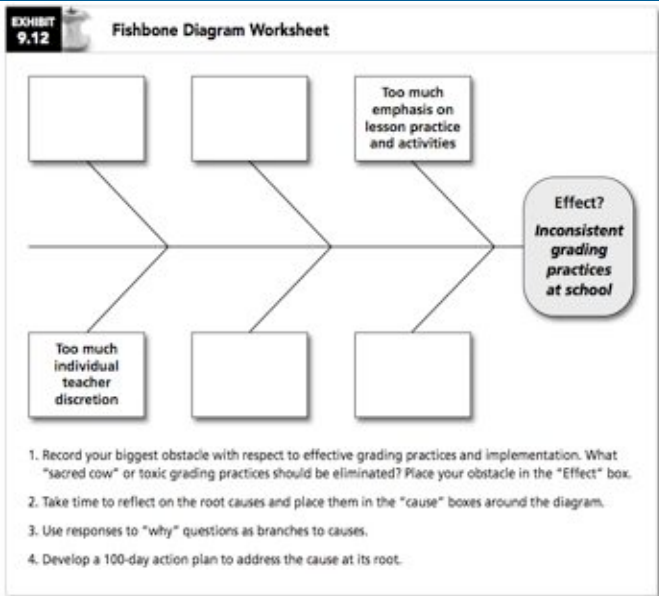
Synthesis

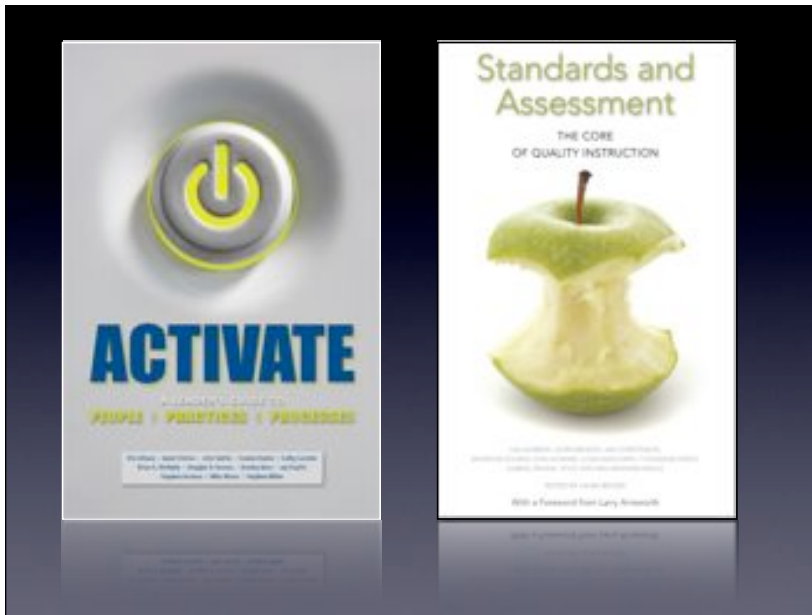
Think about the following questions and how you might answer them to shape your grading practices and policies:

1. What are new ideas, research, and insights that you have gained?
2. What will be your greatest challenges in implementing improved grading practices?
3. What will be your greatest rewards in implementing improved grading practices?

EXHIBIT 9.10 Advantages and Disadvantages of Common Grading Practices

Grading Practices	Advantages	Disadvantages
Average to compute final grade		
Final exam that is 20% of the final grade		
Refusal to accept late work		
Reduction in grade for late work		
Use of zero for missing work		
Reduction in grades for poor attitude		
Reduction in grades for poor behavior		
Reduction in grades for unexcused absences		





Rewards

1. More student success
2. Better grading practices
3. Fewer student discipline problems
4. Greater professional enjoyment

It's not easy, but the rewards of improved grading practices greatly outweigh the risks. The rewards personally justify the effort, and the rewards professionally will make every difficult conversation worth it!

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Thank You

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