

Guidelines for Grading in a Standards-Based System ***Ken O'Connor (2002). How to Grade for Learning***

1. *Relate grading procedures to learning goals.*

- a. Marzano and Kendall (1996): "First and foremost, the teacher must stop thinking in terms of assignments, tests and activities to which points are assigned, and start thinking in terms of level of performance in the declarative and procedural knowledge specific to her subject area."
- b. O'Connor (2002): Teachers should link grades to learning goals not assessment methods. Reporting should allow for detailed information on learning goals.

2. *Use criterion-referenced performance standards as reference points to determine grades.*

- a. Glasser (1990): "No student grade should ever depend on what other students do."
- b. Spady (1991): "Criteria need to be focused on the true culminating outcomes of significance for our students—not on all the daily details and work tasks."
- c. Stiggins (2001b): "How are teachers to provide dependable information about student achievement if the targets are not defined?"

3. *Limit the valued attributes included in grades to individual achievement. (Effort, participation, getting work in on time.)*

- a. Stiggins and Knight (1997) "When the object is effective communication of achievement ... schools should adopt grading policies that permit teachers to indicate each student's current level of achievement with nothing else factored in to interfere with that message."
- b. Gronlund and Linn (1990): "Letter grades are likely to be most meaningful and useful when they represent achievement only. If they are contaminated by such extraneous factors as effort, the amount of work completed (rather than quality of the work), personal conduct and so on, their interpretation will be hopelessly confused. When letter grades combine various aspects of pupil development, not only do they lose their meaning as a measure of achievement, but they also suppress information concerning other aspects of development."

4. *Sample student performance — do not include all scores in grades.*

- a. Black and Wiliam (1998): "Culture of success — advice on what each student can do to improve and self assessment by pupils involving thoughtful reflection in which all pupils can be encouraged to take part."
- b. Chapman (1993): "Daily quizzes, interim tasks, single journal entries, and other contributing pieces and checks for understanding may merit a + or – mark, but don't merit intense bean counting."
- c. Spady (1987): Mistakes are inherent elements in the journey toward learning competence. Grades that label those mistakes and make their consequences irreversible which is counter to the notion of human growth and our inherent potential for change and improvement."

5. *Grade in pencil — keep records so they can be updated easily.*

- a. Guskey (1996): "What information provides the most accurate description 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 student learning."
- b. Ken O'Connor (2002): "Improvement is best considered as a reporting variable and not primarily as a grading variable. Grades then are based on students' most consistent level of achievement with special consideration for more recent achievement."
- c. Ebert (1992): "Second chances do not just appear, nor do they naturally work out without some evidence (of students) using past mistakes to enhance future success. Therefore, reassessment is the opportunity and students learn the responsibility."

6. *Crunch numbers carefully, if at all.*

- a. Reeves (2000): "The consequence for a student who fails to meet a standard is not a low grade but rather the opportunity — indeed the requirement — to resubmit his or her work."
- b. Guskey (1996): "If the purpose of grading and reporting is to provide an accurate description of what the students have learned, then averaging must be considered inadequate and inappropriate."
- c. O'Connor (2002): "Teachers should consider the effects of various ways of calculating central tendency; the effect of extreme marks, especially zeros; how scores and/or learning goals should be weighted; how to include nontraditional scores (e.g., rubrics) in grades; and the possible use of I grades (Incomplete)."

7. *Use quality assessment(s) and properly record evidence of achievement.*

- a. O'Connor (2002): "Marks and grades are meaningful when, and only when, they are based on quality assessment. 1) Setting clear and appropriate targets {knowledge, applications, dispositions}, 2) Stating clear purpose, 3) Matching target to method, 4) Selecting appropriate samples for learning domain, and 5) Controlling interference or distortion."

8. *Discuss and involve students in assessment, including grading, throughout the teaching and learning process.*

- a. Gregory, Cameron, and Davies (1997): "When students take part in developing criteria, they are much more likely to understand what is expected of them, 'buy in,' and then accomplish the task successfully."
- b. Sperling (1993): "The results far outweigh the effort. Because criteria are clearly spelled out, students can take responsibility to evaluate their own work. They compare their self-assessment with the teacher's assessment, set goals for future work, and initiate corrective action to improve their own work."
- c. Schaefer (1997): "Tests and other assessments should not surprise students. They should be aware of the learning goals and understand what they will be asked to do to provide evidence of their learning. This does not mean that teachers should 'teach to the test'; it means that teachers must 'test the teaching' in a way which is fair and reasonable for their students."