

101: Traditional Grading Practices Are Objective and Other Myths

Empower!

SAI Annual Conference
Des Moines, IA
August 6, 2014

Tim Westerberg, Activator

GRADING PERIOD	1	2	3	4
Overall Average	A			
SCIENCE	A			
LANGUAGE ARTS	C			
MATH	B			
SOCIAL STUDIES	A			
ART	A			
PE	A			
MUSIC	A			
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	C			
Overall Average	B			

“A grade can be regarded only as an inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has attained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite amount of material.”

“...neither the weight of scholarship nor common sense seems to have influenced grading policies in many schools. Practices vary greatly among teachers in the same school—and even worse, the practices best supported by research are rarely in evidence.”

Doug Reeves. “Effective Grading Practices.”

Educational Leadership, 65 (5): February 2008, p. 85.

We can increase the **accuracy** and **fairness** of classroom assessment and grading *dramatically* by moving toward SBG



Accuracy

Students who receive As and Bs are prepared to be successful at the next level, without remediation



“Nearly 40 percent of Colorado’s high school class of 2011 needed remedial coursework in at least one subject before beginning college-level work...according to a report released...by the Colorado Department of Higher Education....”

Anthony Cotton. “40% of high school grads need remediation.” *The Denver Post*, 5/17/13, p. 5A.

Remedial Coursework

“A 2012 study by Complete College America found that a record 51.7 percent of students enrolled in community colleges and 19.9 percent of students enrolled in four year institutions place into remedial coursework.”

Competency Education Series: Policy Brief One.
KnowledgeWorks, 4/25/13, p. 4.

College Preparedness

The governing board for “the nation’s report card” (2013 results) concludes in a new analysis that only 39 percent of 12th graders are prepared for entry-level college courses in math and 38 percent are ready in reading.

Liana Heitin . “**Most Seniors Unprepared for College, NAEP Analysis Finds.**” *Education Week* Vol. 33, Issue 32, Page 4 May 21, 2014.

Iowa

31 percent of 2011 ACT-tested Iowa high school graduates met all four of ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks.

The Reality of College Readiness
2013—Iowa ACT

College Readiness, African-Americans

Only 10 percent of African-Americans who graduated high school in 2013 met at least three of the ACT's four College-Readiness Benchmarks...

"The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2013: African American Students." *Education Week* 33, NO 27 (April 2, 2014): p. 5.

"Too often, students who haven't been prepared in earlier grades flounder in AP classes, or are awarded A's and B's in the courses and then fail the AP exams.

The high grades for course work can lull students into a false sense of security, said Steve Syverson, a board member of the National Association of College Admission Counseling and a former dean of admissions at Lawrence University in Wisconsin. Many students arrive at college with AP courses on their transcripts, but with skills so low they must take remedial classes.

"The kids are ... doing what society is telling them to do," he said. "We just set those kids up for complete failure because they just get hammered when they get to college."

A Baltimore Sun analysis of test scores showed a troubling discrepancy between grades for AP course work and scores on the exams. In at least 19 high schools throughout the Baltimore region, more than half of the students who earned an A or B in an AP class failed the exam."

Liz Bowie. "Maryland schools have been leader in Advanced Placement, but results are mixed." *The Baltimore Sun* 8/17/13.
<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/bs-md-advanced-placement-classes-20130817.0.6301932.story>

"New survey results from the ACT assessment organization, made public Wednesday, show a disconnect on the crucial question of college readiness. Eighty-nine percent of high school teachers surveyed said students who finished their classes were well or very well prepared for college work in those subjects. But 26 percent of college instructors say incoming students are well or very well prepared for first-year courses, the survey found."

Nick Anderson. "ACT survey finds gap on college readiness." *The Washington Post.* 4/17/13.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/act-survey-finds-gap-on-college-readiness/2013/04/17/bdc8dd7c-a770-11e2-a8e2-5b98cb59187f_story.html



Accuracy
&
Fairness



**Doug Reeves. Principals' Partnership. San Antonio, 7/17/07
An Experiment in Grading Policy**

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| ■ C | Group 1 |
| ■ C | ■ A = 100 |
| ■ MA = Missing Assignment | ■ B = 90 |
| ■ D | ■ C = 80 |
| ■ C | ■ D = 70 |
| ■ B | Group 2 |
| ■ MA = Missing Assignment | ■ A = 4 |
| ■ MA = Missing Assignment | ■ B = 3 |
| ■ B | ■ C = 2 |
| ■ A | ■ D = 1 |

Figure 6.8 Alternatives to Zeros

Student Scores	Equal Difference Scales		
	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)

SOURCE: O'Connor, K. (2007). *A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades*. Portland, OR: Educational Testing Service, p. 88. Reprinted with permission.

A highly discussed policy that eliminated "zeroes" on in-class assignments arrived in Metro Nashville Public Schools this year in a move that made 50 percent the new low. Now, that grade scale will extend to the application of scores received on end-of-course state-administered exams by Nashville high school students.

Joey Garrison. *The Tennessean*. May 30, 2014.
<http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/education/2014/05/30/nashville-schools-eliminate-zeroes-final-exams-match-new-grade-scale/9781223/>

Grading Scales Comparisons

1. A+, A+, A+, 0
2. C, 0, C, C
3. C, A-, 0, B, B, C
4. D, D, D, D, 0, D, D

100-98	A+	12
97-95	A	11
94-93	A-	10
92-90	B+	9
89-86	B	8
85-84	B-	7
83-81	C+	6
80-77	C	5
76-75	C-	4
74-73	D+	3
72-71	D	2
70	D-	1
≤ 69	F	0

Research About and Alternatives to the Zero

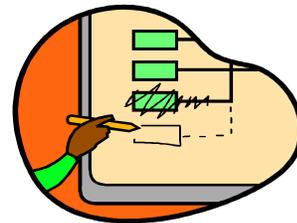
[www.cna.org/centers/education/rel/
tech-assistance/reference-
desk/2011-03-15a](http://www.cna.org/centers/education/rel/tech-assistance/reference-desk/2011-03-15a)

Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia

HQPs

2. The practice of **giving** extra credit.

“Do-Overs”



HQPs

3. The practice combining academic performance with citizenship and work habits.

Evaluating Assessments for Validity and Reliability

Validity

- Does my assessment measure what it was supposed to measure?

ex: If one of my students were able to show that they knew what an adjective was in one assessment, they would be able to get it correct on similar assessments?

Reliability

- Will my assessment always get the same results?

ex: If one of my students were able to show that they knew what an adjective was in one assessment, they would be able to get it correct on similar assessments—a couple of days later, weeks, months?

Measure What You Mean to Measure

- If you want to determine a student's ability to demonstrate the relationship between the theme and a character's actions, results shouldn't be clouded by:

- Lack of proficiency in writing in English
- A missing name on a paper
- Difficulty following directions
- Rewards for unused bathroom passes



Tomlinson, 2008

“U.S. teachers lead the charge in making homework a high-stakes event, with nearly 70% selecting to grade homework, compared with 6% in Germany, 14% in Japan, and 28% in Canada, despite research suggesting that grading students on outside work encourages them to limit their focus, cheat, strive for the minimally set standards for success, and produces undue stress on family dynamics.” (p. 53)

Dorothy Suskind. “What students would do if they did not do their homework.” *Phi Delta Kappan* 94, N 1 (September 2012): pp. 52-55.

HQPs

4. The practice of averaging.

Reflecting On . . . Problems With the Mean

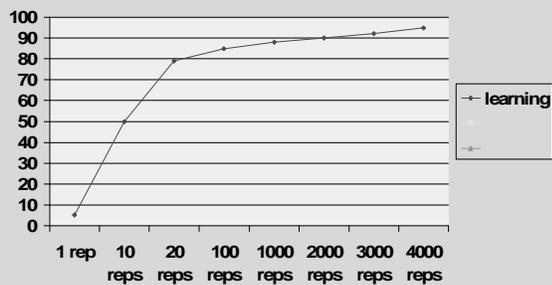
Study the information in Figure 6.1. Assume that these are the marks four students have received for 10 summative assessments in a school subject—elementary, secondary, or college—on a similar set of learning goals.

Figure 6.1 Issues With the Mean

Assessments in Order	Karen	Alex	Jennifer	Stephen
Assessment #1	0	63	0	0
Assessment #2	0	63	10	0
Assessment #3	0	63	10	62
Assessment #4	90	63	10	62
Assessment #5	90	63	100	63
Assessment #6	90	63	100	63
Assessment #7	90	63	100	90
Assessment #8	90	63	100	90
Assessment #9	90	63	100	100
Assessment #10	90	63	100	100
Total	630	630	630	630
Mean	63%	63%	63%	63%
Median	90%	63%	100%	63%
Mode	90%	63%	100%	?

From O'Connor (2009), p. 155

Power Law (Trend Scores)



Topic Scores for 3 Students

2.0	3.0	2.0
1.5	2.0	1.0
2.0	2.0	1.5
3.0	2.5	2.0
2.5	3.0	2.0
3.0	2.0	2.5
3.0	3.0	3.0
2.5	2.5	3.0
3.0	3.0	3.5
3.0	3.0	3.0

Topic Scores for 3 Students

2.0	3.0	2.0
1.5	2.0	1.0
2.0	2.0	1.5
3.0	2.5	M
2.5	3.0	2.0
M	2.0	2.5
3.0	3.0	3.0
2.5	2.5	3.0
3.0	M	3.5
3.0	3.0	3.0

HQP

5. The “semester Killer”



HQP

6. Homework policies that discourage the completion of late/missing work.

HQPs

7. Promoting the notion of the “objectivity” of traditional grading practices.

Guskey, T. (2009). *Practical solutions for serious problems in standards-based grading. P. 17.*

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ■ Major exams or compositions | ■ Homework completion |
| ■ Class quizzes | ■ Homework quality |
| ■ Reports or projects | ■ Class participation |
| ■ Student portfolios | ■ Work habits & neatness |
| ■ Exhibits of students' work | ■ Effort |
| ■ Laboratory projects | ■ Attendance |
| ■ Students' notebooks or journals | ■ Punctuality of Assignments |
| ■ Classroom observations | ■ Class behavior or attitude |
| ■ Oral presentations | ■ Progress made |

A. Items 1-10

Ten items that require recall of important but simpler content that was explicitly taught

Total for section=

B. Items 11-14

Four items that ask for application of complex content that was explicitly taught AND in situations similar to what was taught.

Total for section=

C. Item 15-16

Two items that asks for application in novel situations that go beyond what was explicitly taught

Total for section=

Total /100

“Overall, the large number of grade categories in the percentage grading scale and the fine discrimination required in determining the differences among categories allow for the greater influence of subjectivity, more error, and diminished reliability. The increased precision of percentage grades is truly far more imaginary than real....Percentage grading systems that attempt to identify 100 distinct levels of performance distort the precision, objectivity, and reliability of grades.” (pp. 70 & 72)

Thomas Guskey. “The Case Against Percentage Grades.” *Educational Leadership* 71, NO 1 (September 2013): pp. 68-72.

HQP

1. The practice of giving zeros for work not turned in.
2. The practice of giving extra credit.
3. The practice of combining academic performance with citizenship and work habits.
4. The practice of averaging.
5. The “semester killer”
6. Homework policies that discourage the completion of late/missing work.
7. Promoting the notion of the “objectivity” of traditional grading practices.

GAPS?



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