

Preventing Failure Through Grading Reform

Session 1

6/16/2021

1:00-3:00

A Little About Me

- Highland English teacher (13 yrs) & department chair (4 yrs)
- Classroom grading reformer (about 8 yrs)
- Grading reform leader (about 3 yrs)
- Researcher
- Writer
- Editor
- Consultant
- Twitter @JoshKunnath

Preventing Failure Through Grading Reform: Overview of Our Work

- *Day 1 (6/15): “the why”*
- *Day 2 (6/22): “the what”*
- *Day 3 (6/29): “the how”*
- *1st Q & beyond: implementation & support*



Why Grading Reform?

Are Grades Really that Important?

Consider their impact students' lives:

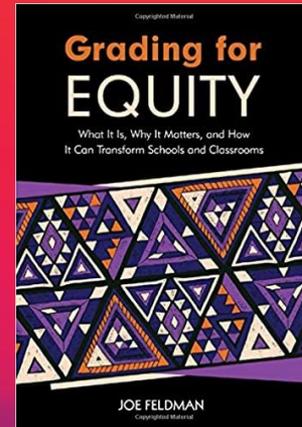
- Special academic programs
- Sports
- Remediation (including summer school)
- Scholarships
- College
- Jobs



Defining *Accurate Grading*

What is Accurate Grading?

Driving Principal: *Our grading must use calculations that are mathematically sound, easy to understand, and correctly describe a student's level of academic performance. (Feldman, 2019)*



What is Accurate Grading?

Grading practices that align to your established grading purpose.

What isn't Accurate Grading?

- Practices that are mathematically unsound
- Practices that are unclear or difficult to understand
- Practices that incorrectly communicate students' academic performance
- Practices that communicate information *other than* students' academic performance
- Practices that don't align to your established grading purpose



Creating a Grading Purpose Statement

Why Establish a Grading Purpose Statement?

- The meaning of grades isn't inherent
- Grade meaning is often misunderstood because of assumptions
- To help you focus your subsequent grading reform
- To clarify your “why,” “what,” and “how” about grades to students & parents

Create a Personal Grading Purpose Statement

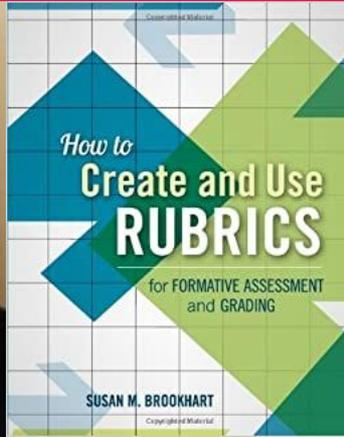
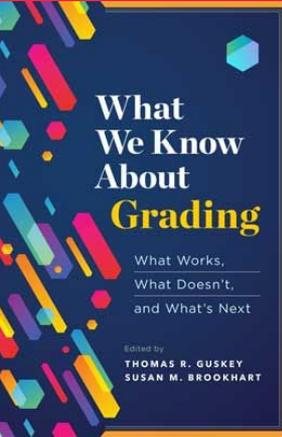
- What is the purpose of your grades?
- Write a short statement to communicate this.

[\(Use this purpose statement Google doc\)](#)

3. Looking to the Literature: **“Starting the Conversation About Grading,” by Susan Brookhart**

“Starting the Conversation About Grading” by Susan Brookhart

- Close read
- Team share w/ the QCC Protocol



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Starting the Conversation About Grading

Susan M. Brookhart

The first task in successful grading reform is to reach consensus on the purpose of grades.

When I talk with teachers about grading, feelings often run high. Teachers tend to assume that others agree with their positions, but in fact I hear a range of opinions. Some talk about the academic meaning of grades:

Our state test scores were rising, but our grades weren't. Aren't we supposed to be measuring the same standards?

Our kids used to complain that with some teachers they'd get an A, and with others they'd get a B. We're trying to be more consistent.

Some address the importance of effort:

They can't get an A if they don't do the homework. If you only do half the work on your job, you get fired.

Everything students do counts in my classroom.

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4. Team Time: Creating a Grading Purpose Statement

Example: Des Moines Public Schools

"Des Moines Public Schools commits to all stakeholders to provide fair, accurate, specific, and timely information regarding student progress towards agreed-upon common standards as well as feedback for next steps and growth areas."

Example: Bexley City Schools (Ohio)

Grading and reporting belief system

WE BELIEVE...

The intended audiences for grade cards are students and their parents.

The most accurate reporting systems are those that separate academic achievement from behavior reporting.

Students deserve multiple opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do after learning.

Learning is a process and where you finish is more important than where you start or how long it took you to get there.

Example: Fremont School District 79 (Illinois)

Principle 1 - Grades and Reports Should Be Based on Clearly Specified Learning Goals and Performance Standards.

All students in the same grade in the same course, no matter their instructor, will be graded using the same standards.

Principle 2 - Evidence Used for Grading Should Be Valid.

Students are assessed on what they are taught. There are no trick questions and no surprises.

Principle 3 - Grading Should Be Based on Established Criteria, Not on Arbitrary Norms.

Students are graded on the standards assessed, not on arbitrary norms such as poor handwriting or no name on their paper.

Principle 4 - Not Everything Should be Included in Grades.

Students should not be penalized for early attempts in learning. Students are not graded as they are learning the information, but after the learning has occurred. Students need to have enough "practice" in order to be successful.

Principle 5 - Avoid Grading Based on (Mean) Averages.

When reporting student progress on a standard, teachers can use any and all evidence to gauge a student's progress. Averaging and algorithms are unnecessary in reporting whether or not a student has mastered a standard.

Principle 6 - Focus on Achievement, and Report Other Factors Separately.

Students' achievement should be the only aspect included in their grade. Students' math grades will reflect their math achievement. However, their habits and responsibilities during math will be reported separately.

Example: KHSD Grading Reform Cohorts'

Key Grading Tenets

- 1) The primary purpose of grades is to communicate student academic achievement of established learning expectations
- 2) The primary audience of grades is students and parents
- 3) Teachers, administrators, and schools have a responsibility to ensure equitable grading practices

Example: My Grading Purpose Statement

- 1) The purpose of my grades is to **communicate** student **academic achievement** of the priority **standards**.
- 2) The best tool I have to measure that achievement is **summative assessment**, so my grades are made from evidence from those assessments.
- 3) Students have **multiple opportunities** to show their evidence of achievement.
- 4) The primary **audience** of my grades is **students** and **parents**

Creating a Team Grading Purpose Statement

- Consider the following:
 - What is the intended meaning of your grades?
 - Who is the primary audience?
 - Reach an “I can live with that” status
(Brookhart, 2011)
- (Use the same purpose statement Google doc)

Exit Ticket:

- 1) How is your grading purpose statement going so far?
- 2) What questions and/or concerns do you have in this first session?
- 3) Feedback

<https://forms.gle/AFrfd4Q9efWERjq79>