

# Essential Learning, Effective Grading

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# Issues that Started the Journey

- Student grades didn't match abilities (kids who can't speak Spanish getting As, some talented kids getting bad grades).
- I had no idea what I was doing with my gradebook!!
- Some categories and weights were arbitrary, as were some assignment and project values. WHY was the clothing project 40 points? It fit the rubric I'd made.

(Y'know how we should use backward design for teaching? It had never occurred to me to use it for my overall grading!)

# Resources I used to start my journey and am using now!!

- Books by Ken O'Connor (How to Grade for Learning, A Repair Kit for Grading)
- Books by Robert Marzano (Formative Assessment & Standards Based Grading, Assessment and Grading that Works)
- Books by Guskey (Practical Solutions for Serious Problems in Standards-Based Grading)
- Workshops and webinars by Scott Benedict ([www.teachforjune.com](http://www.teachforjune.com))
- There are TONS of good resources out there!

# 3 Big Issues with Grades

- Homework—can artificially inflate grades for kids who know how to play the game, copy work from others, and not actually learn anything!
- Extra Credit—makes a lot of extra work for me, and allows kids to make up for not learning all term, while not providing any actual growth in proficiency.
- Zero Grades—It can take SEVEN perfect papers to make up for one zero, maybe more depending on the weight of the assignments.

# Thinking about Grades: What do they mean? *What should they reflect?*

- Grades should measure achievement
- Grades should serve as proof of knowledge and skill
- Grades should communicate areas of strength and weakness
- Grades should help let students (and teachers!) know what to do next.
- Grades should reflect progress toward meeting selected standards (whether your own, ACTFL, CCSS, State, District)

# Toxic Grading Practices & Antidotes

- Using zero for missing work: Use “incomplete” instead, or give a “high F”. One missing thing doesn’t destroy student grades. Consider using a contract to get student back on track (If you work hard & pass second quarter, I’ll change your first quarter grade to passing.) Then the consequence for a bad performance becomes “do it right”, not “bad grade, nothing you can do”.
- Using the mean score: Many students don’t “get it” right away. Their end of term grades might be high, and are more accurate reflections of their achievement. Should their first assessments be equal to their most recent ones?

# Toxic Grading Practices & Antidotes

- One super big project or test: if a kid has a bad day or doesn't understand the instructions, this can destroy their whole term grade!
- Grading effort, participation, behavior: Should a student who doesn't raise his/her hand in class be penalized if he/she can do the work? Bad behavior should have consequences...elsewhere.

# Grading

- Grades should be meaningful, accurate, consistent, and SUPPORTIVE OF LEARNING.

Standards-Based Grading and  
Skill-Based Assessment are one way  
to achieve this!



# Standards Based Grades:

- Are based on standards (whatever standards you choose/are required to use!
- Use formative assessment to guide instruction, and summative assessment to determine final levels of mastery.
- Give clear picture of student knowledge and skills.
- Show areas of strength and weakness.

# Assessments

## FORMATIVE

- homework
- quizzes
- informal questions and answers
- observation
- class discussions

## SUMMATIVE

- tests
- projects
- final exams
- performance assessments
- formal questions and answers

# How to get going:

- Set up learning targets/standards
- Put into groups (these are gradebook categories...things like “speaking” or “presentational communication”). Try for about 5-6, although some teachers have 7-8. For me, more categories = more complicated. I use 6 (listening, speaking, reading, writing, culture, other)
- Develop rubrics. If you are crafty, you can get away with one rubric for each category...helps kids know exactly how you’ll assess them. Rubric qualifiers can be as simple as “exceptional, at standard, approaching standard, basic”
- In the rubric, identify specific things to be assessed in ALL assessments of that group: ie, vocabulary use, specific tense, adjective agreement, etc.)

# How to get going:

- Design assessments (summative first, then formative. Scaffold them to each other). Be sure to plan assessments for all categories!
- Sample rubrics and rubric-writing resources available from [www.teachforjune.com](http://www.teachforjune.com). Select the “Resources” tab and scroll down to find “Rubrics”.

## LISTENING

- listen and draw
- listen and choose
- story and questions
- list what doesn't make sense or is
- out of place
- summaries
- listen and write/reflect

## READING

- read and draw
- read and choose
- story and questions
- list what doesn't make sense or is
- out of place
- summaries
- read and write/reflect

## SPEAKING

- draw and talk
- tell the missing part of the story
- tell a new beginning/ending
- picture sequences
- A & B activities
- paired dialogues
- question and answer

## WRITING

- draw and write
- write the missing part of the story
- write a new ending/beginning
- picture sequences
- topic writes
- timed writing
- question and answer

## CULTURE

- reports
- web quests
- presentations
- bulletin boards
- maps

## LANGUAGE MECHANICS

- draw & label
- posters
- Models
- translation
- can you find all the (grammar item)?
- point-of-view changes
- tense changes

Rubrics & rubric-writing resources available at  
[www.teachforjune.com](http://www.teachforjune.com)

# Set up your gradebook

- Whatever you emphasize most in class should be weighted more heavily. If you do very few speaking activities, it should not be a large percent of the grade.
- Assess what you value and value what you assess.
- Sometimes you have to “trick” a traditional gradebook into working with standards. (I made my standards 100-pt. assignments and then sequenced all the assignments/assessments that relate so that they follow the standard. At the end of the term, I can assign a standard grade based on overall performance, especially recent work.



# This Year's Standards

- Listening: 18%
  - Understand isolated words/logical vocabulary use
  - Understand longer passages
  - Understand tense, subject, function of words
- Speaking: 18%
  - Conversation about class topic.
  - Retell story or present information from class
- Reading: 18%
  - Understand isolated words/logical vocabulary use
  - Understand longer passages
  - Understand tense, subject, function of words
- Writing: 18%
  - Compose answer to questions (in Spanish)
  - Write about class topic, rewrite story
  - Use grammar forms (tense, subject)
- Culture: 18%
  - Knowledge of geography and history
  - Knowledge of social differences, customs, behavior
  - Culture of language (formal/informal, etc.)
- Class Engagement: 10%
  - (Miscellaneous stuff, warm ups, getting syllabus signed, etc.)