



## HOW TO GRADE FOR LEARNING

### Grading Practices That Inhibit Learning

1. **Inconsistent grading scales**      The same performance results in different grades, in different schools or classes.
2. **Worshipping averages**      All of the math to calculate an average is used, even when "the average" is not consistent with what the teacher knows about the student's learning.
3. **Using zeros indiscriminately**      Giving zeros for incomplete work has a devastating effect on averages and often zeros are not even related to learning or achievement but to nonacademic factors like behavior, respect, punctuality, etc.
4. **Following the pattern of assign, test, grade, and teach**      Students are often told to read material and prepare for a test. The real discussion and teaching then takes place—after the test. It is far more logical to teach before testing, but we continue to an alarming extent to follow the pattern of assign, test, grade, and teach.
5. **Failing to match testing to teaching**      Too many teachers rely on trick questions, new formats, and unfamiliar material. If students are expected to perform skills and produce information for a grade, these should be part of the instruction.
6. **Ambushing students**      Pop quizzes are more likely to teach students how to cheat on a test than to result in learning. Such tests are often control vehicles designed to get even, not to aid understanding.
7. **Suggesting that success is unlikely**      Students are not likely to strive for targets that they already know are unattainable to them.
8. **Practicing "gotcha" teaching**      A nearly foolproof way to inhibit student learning is to keep the outcomes and expectations of their classes secret. Tests become ways of finding out how well students have read their teacher's mind.
9. **Grading first efforts**      Learning is not a "one-shot" deal. When the products of learning are complex and sophisticated, students need a lot of teaching, practice, and feedback before the product is evaluated.
10. **Penalizing students for taking risks**      Taking risks is not often rewarded in school. Students need encouragement and support, not low marks, while they try new or more demanding work.
11. **Failing to recognize measurement error**      Very often grades are reported as objective statistics without attention to weighting factors or the reliability of the scores. In most cases, a composite score may be only a rough estimate of student learning, and sometimes it can be very inaccurate.
12. **Establishing inconsistent grading criteria**      Criteria for grading in schools and classes often change from day to day, grading period to grading period, and class to class. This lack of consensus makes it difficult for students to understand the rules.

#### Figure Intro.14

← Robert Lynn Canady and Phyllis R. Hotchkiss, "It's a Good Score: Just a Bad Grade," September, 1989, pg. 68-71. *Phi Delta Kappan*. Reproduced with permission.