

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <i>Preface</i> | <i>vi</i> |
| Chapter 1: Setting the Stage | 1 |
| Key Definitions | 5 |
| Purpose(s) for Grades | 6 |
| Underpinning Issues | 6 |
| <i>Fairness</i> | 6 |
| <i>Motivation</i> | 7 |
| <i>Objectivity and Professional Judgement</i> | 9 |
| Student Involvement | 10 |
| The 15 Fixes | 10 |
| Chapter 2: Fixes for Practices That Distort Achievement | 12 |
| FIX 1: Don't include student behaviours (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc.) in grades; include only achievement | 13 |
| Student Involvement | 15 |
| Summary | 17 |
| FIX 2: Don't reduce marks on "work" submit- ted late; provide support for the learner | 18 |
| Student Involvement | 21 |
| Summary | 21 |
| FIX 3: Don't give points for extra credit or use bonus points; seek only evidence that more work has resulted in a higher level of achievement | 22 |
| Student Involvement | 24 |
| Summary | 25 |

| | |
|--|----|
| FIX 4: Don't punish academic dishonesty with reduced grades; apply other consequences and reassess to determine actual level of achievement. | 26 |
| Student Involvement. | 30 |
| Summary | 31 |
| FIX 5: Don't consider attendance in grade determination; report absences separately. | 32 |
| Summary | 34 |
| FIX 6: Don't include group scores in grades; use only individual achievement evidence. | 35 |
| Summary | 37 |

Chapter 3: Fixes for Low-Quality or Poorly Organized Evidence. 38

| | |
|--|----|
| FIX 7: Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods or simply summarize into a single grade; organize and report evidence by standards/learning goals | 39 |
| Summary | 45 |
| FIX 8: Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations. | 46 |
| Student Involvement. | 53 |
| Summary | 54 |
| FIX 9: Don't assign grades based on student's achievement compared to other students; compare each student's performance to preset standards | 55 |
| Summary | 56 |
| FIX 10: Don't rely on evidence gathered using assessments that fail to meet standards of quality; rely only on quality assessments | 57 |
| Summary | 59 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Chapter 4: Fixes for Inappropriate Grade Calculation | 60 |
| FIX 11: Don't rely only on the mean; consider other measures of central tendency and use professional judgement | 61 |
| Summary | 63 |
| FIX 12: Don't include zeros in grade determination when evidence is missing or as punishment; use alternatives, such as reassessing to determine real achievement or use "I" for Incomplete or Insufficient Evidence. | 64 |
| Student Involvement. | 69 |
| Summary | 69 |
| | |
| Chapter 5: Fixes to Support Learning | 70 |
| FIX 13: Don't use information from formative assessments and practice to determine grades; use only summative evidence | 71 |
| Student Involvement. | 78 |
| Summary | 79 |
| FIX 14: Don't summarize evidence accumulated over time when learning is developmental and will grow with time and repeated opportunities; in those instances, emphasize more recent achievement | 80 |
| Summary | 82 |
| FIX 15: Don't leave students out of the grading process. Involve students; they can— and should—play key roles in assessment and grading that promote achievement. | 83 |
| Summary | 86 |
| | |
| Chapter 6: Summary and Reflection | 87 |
| | |
| References | 90 |

FIX 4**Don't punish academic dishonesty with reduced grades; apply other consequences and reassess to determine actual level of achievement.**

No studies support the use of low grades or marks as punishments. Instead of prompting greater effort, low grades more often cause students to withdraw from learning.

—Guskey and Bailey, 2001, pp. 34–35

You cheated, so you get a zero on this test (assignment, etc.)”. This has been the typical response to the discovery of academic dishonesty. It is another example of broken grades because it uses the assessment/grading policy as a tool to discipline students for inappropriate behaviour, thus distorting student achievement. The fixes for this are to articulate an academic honesty policy with clear behavioural consequences for breaches and to require students to redo the test or assignment without cheating or plagiarizing, to establish an accurate achievement record for grading.

Academic dishonesty is an ongoing problem in years 5 – 12 and in colleges. Dealing with it is often difficult; probably like many of you, I have been part of very emotional arguments about it. As with most behavioural concerns there are two main issues—how to prevent it, and what to do about it when it happens. Most schools try to deal with both of these issues together by having punitive policies that range from zeros on the assignment to loss of credit to expulsion. These policies arise from the belief that if the punishment is sufficiently severe then students will not risk being caught. Continuing academic dishonesty, however, points to the need for viable alternatives. It is perhaps best to begin with how to prevent it, then develop procedures to deal with it when it happens.

FIX 9**Don't assign grades based on a student's achievement compared to other students; compare each student's performance to preset standards.**

Grading on the curve makes learning a highly competitive activity in which students compete against one another for the few scarce rewards (high grades) distributed by the teacher. Under these conditions, students readily see that helping others become successful threatens their own chances for success. As a result, learning becomes a game of winners and losers; and because the number of rewards is kept arbitrarily small, most students are forced to be losers.

—Guskey, 1996a, pp. 18–19

Grades are broken when they compare students to each other. The fix is to base grades on preset achievement standards—to be criterion referenced, not norm referenced in assigning grades. In doing so, we acknowledge that it is possible for all students to get an A or for all students to get an F. There would be no plan to intentionally distribute grades on a construct such as the bell curve, ensuring a few A's, more B's, even more C's, some D's and a few F's.

You can test the thinking in your school or region by answering this question: “What do you think would happen if you did an outstanding job, all the students in your class did an outstanding job, and all the students received an A?” If the response is that the grades would be questioned with comments such as, “easy teacher”, “no or low standards”, or “grade inflation”, then you are in a norm-referenced setting. If on the other hand the grades were questioned but the comments were “great”, “that’s what we want”, or “let’s celebrate lots of winners”, you are in a criterion-referenced setting.