

A Repair Kit for Grading

15 Fixes for Broken Grades

A STUDY GUIDE from
ETS Assessment Training Institute

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Preface

A *Repair Kit for Grading*, by Ken O'Connor describes 15 ways to make grades and marks more consistent, accurate, meaningful, and supportive of learning (page 4). These are called 15 fixes. This study guide is intended for use in conjunction with study of the book. It suggests discussions and activities for each fix that serve one or more of the following purposes:

- Clarifying ideas
- Providing extra information on a topic, or where to locate it
- Thinking through and planning changes to try; we call these *replacement strategies*
- Posing common grading/marking dilemmas to solve

Many of the discussions and activities proposed herein can be more meaningful and useful if done with others.

Ken's book represents one of several resources from ETS Assessment Training Institute (ATI) on the topic of grading to support learning. The accompanying DVD (*Grading and Reporting in Standards-Based Schools*) features Ken and Rick Stiggins of the ETS Assessment Training Institute giving an interactive half-day workshop experience in which they present segments of information about grading/marking interspersed with opportunities to discuss the information presented. The third source for information on grading is ATI's book *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning: Doing It Right—Using It Well (CASL)*. Chapter 10 of CASL specifically examines sound grading practices, although information in other chapters bear on the topics in Ken's book and accompanying DVD.

The table in Appendix A shows how these three resources interrelate. Ken's book and the discussion questions from this *Study Guide* can be used to supplement the presentation on the DVD or vice versa. The table also shows where to get additional information in *CASL* on each topic.

If we were to recommend a sequence of study on grading it would be:

1. DVD, *Grading and Reporting in Standards-Based Schools*
2. *CASL*, Chapter 10
3. Ken's book *A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades*

Discussion Questions and Activities

Kick-Off

■ *Activity 1.1 Self-Assess*

Purpose:

To think about and record one's current grading practices for later comparison purposes.

Activity:

Appendix B contains a rubric for evaluating grading practices. It is based on the sound grading practices in CASL, DVD (*Grading and Reporting in Standards-Based Schools*) and book *A Repair Kit for Grading*. Mark the words and phrases in the rubric that reflect your current practice.

Appendix C presents a survey about current grading practices and beliefs. Take the survey.

We'll recommend this process again at the end of study to promote reflection on changes in practices and beliefs.

■ *Activity 1.2 Questions about Grading*

Purposes:

To record your present questions about grading. We suggest you revisit these questions at the end of study to determine which you can answer.

Activity:

Jot down the questions you have about grading. If you are working in a team, how do your questions compare to those of others on your team?

Fixes for Practices That Distort Achievement

■ Activity 2.1 Factors to Include in Grades

FIX 1-6

Don't include any of the following in grades—student behaviors, reduced marks on work submitted late, points for extra credit, reduced marks for cheating, attendance, or group scores.

Adapted From: Report Card Grading: Strategies and Solutions, Trainer's Guide, pp. 11–12 and Resource Sheet #4 and Grading and Reporting in Standards-Based Schools (2007), pp. 10–11 and Resource Sheet #4.

Note: The version in this study guide is more complete than the version on the DVD; student behaviors—Fix 1—are dealt with on the DVD.

Purpose:

To clarify the reasons that student behaviors (Fix 1), reduced marks on work submitted late (Fix 2), points for extra credit (Fix 3), academic dishonesty (Fix 4), attendance (Fix 5), and/or group scores (Fix 6) should not be included in grades.

Discuss:

Choose one or more of the factors listed in Fixes 1–6 to discuss. (We've found that for many factors, once one has been discussed, it is obvious how the discussion extends to the others.)

Generate a list of reasons FOR including the chosen factor in grades, and arguments AGAINST doing so. (Arguments for and against each factor can be found under Fixes 1–6 in *A Repair Kit for Grading*; additional arguments for a couple of the factors follow.)

Once everyone has debated the issue, discuss the following position: *If there are compelling arguments against including the factor, the only way arguments in favor of including the factor in the grade can win out is if the grader can act in some concrete way*

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to eliminate ALL arguments against. It is unacceptable to know that there are compelling reasons not to include a factor and go ahead and include it anyway.

What do you conclude about including factors besides achievement into grades/marks?

Fix 1: Effort	
Arguments FOR including effort in grades	Arguments AGAINST including effort in grades
<p>Effort is a valued outcome for students and should be rewarded</p> <p>Including effort provides some reward to low achievers</p> <p>Awarding effort should motivate students to complete work</p> <p>Awarding effort can underpin risk taking (innovative effort that falls short), a valued outcome for students</p> <p>While aptitude is not under students' control, effort is</p> <p>Current research suggests that students learn better if success or failure is attributed to effort rather than ability</p>	<p>Including effort muddies the degree to which students have attained mastery of learning targets</p> <p>Effort is difficult to define and assess well</p> <p>Most effort is expended outside the classroom</p> <p>Students can manipulate the teacher's perception of effort</p> <p>Different teachers use different weights when including effort in grades</p> <p>In some cases, the teacher controls who participates</p> <p>Personality traits or cultural differences can affect the appearance of effort</p> <p>Life demands achievement—not just trying hard</p> <p>What do we value—achieving or achieving and making it look hard? What if it was easy?</p> <p>Praise for effort only works if a success at learning is attributed to effort; effort praised in and of itself can lead to less motivation if a student fails yet is praised for effort.</p>

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Fix 2: Reducing Marks for Work Submitted Late	
Arguments FOR reducing marks for work submitted late	Arguments AGAINST reducing marks for work submitted late
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewards students who turn their work in on time so that grading time is minimized and the pace of learning is maintained • Promptness is valued in real life • It's most fair to students to give everyone the same amount of time • Students who do work on time learn more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muddies the degree to which students have mastered the desired learning targets • Can mask the reasons for the late work, decreasing the chances that the school can help • Such penalties don't work for many chronically late students • If the goal is to change behavior rather than to punish non-compliance, there may be more effective procedures • In daily life many deadlines are regularly renegotiated

Fix 3: Points for Extra Credit	
Arguments FOR including points for extra credit in grades when they reflect something other than the expected learning	Arguments AGAINST including points for extra credit in grades when they reflect something other than the expected learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a means of giving students the grade one feels is appropriate • Is seen to be motivating and fun so that students want to do the work • Doing extra credit is an indicator of effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muddies the degree to which a student has attained mastery of content • Hard to determine how much extra credit is logical • Different teachers can have different amounts of extra credit • May send an unwanted message to students about what the learning targets are

■ **Activity 2.2** *What’s in a “B”?*

FIX 1-5, 8, 13, 14

Don’t include any of the following in grades—student behaviors, reduced marks on work submitted late, points for extra credit, attendance, ability, homework, and early work.

Adapted From: *Practice with Student-Involved Classroom Assessment*, Activity 13-2, pages 283–284.

Purpose:

To provide another way to think about the problems associated with including factors besides achievement in grades.

Scenario Discussion:

Read the following scenario and discuss the subsequent questions.

A group of teachers, other educators, and parents were attending a grading workshop at a regional conference. A parent asked if the educators in the room could tell her what’s in a B and how it’s different from an A or C. Participants were asked to record their answers to two questions:

1. What should a grade tell us about students?
2. What factors are actually used to determine student grades in your setting?

The answers were compiled into two charts:

What should grades tell us about students?	What factors are actually included in grades?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What things they know and can do • Whether they have improved during the marking period • What their strengths are and the things they need to work on • Whether they can solve real-world problems • What level their work is at • Whether they are ready to move on • How they help one another • Whether they've reached a standard • How well they can apply what they know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement • Attendance and tardiness • Behavior/attitude • End of marking period test scores • Homework • Family status • Ability • Promptness in getting work in • Extra credit bonus points

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Does the list on the left reflect what you think grades should tell us about students?

Now look at the list on the right. Would the factors actually included in grades result in providing the information we need for the decisions on the left? What would need to be done differently? What factors *must* be included?

What things on either list are troubling to you? Why?

■ Activity 2.3 Encouraging Promptness

FIX**2**

Don't reduce marks on work submitted late.

Purpose:

To consider replacement strategies for encouraging students to get work in on time.

Discuss:

For Fix 2, Ken suggests that marking/grading penalties for late work misrepresent student achievement, can harm student motivation, and are generally ineffective in changing behavior. Discuss the alternative strategies Ken suggests, brainstorm others, and think about, which of these you might try.

Ken's Suggestions:

- Direct communication with parents (p. 28).
- Require structured study hall before, during, or after school (p. 28)
- Identify at the beginning of the school year students who are organizationally challenged and provide them structure in assignments (p. 28)
- Involve students in deciding timelines and consequences for lateness (p. 29).
- Negotiate extension of time as needed based on reasonable need (p. 27).

■ Activity 2.4 *Credit for Doing Versus Learning*

FIX 3**Don't give points for extra credit.****Purpose:**

To consider ways to move from a “credit for doing” culture to a “learning” culture.

Discuss:

Over the years, students begin to see grades as payment one receives for “doing” something. Do homework, get credit. Contribute to the food drive, get credit. Behave appropriately, get credit. Do an extra piece of work, get credit. Yet, we know in standards-driven schools, it's not the “doing” that counts, it's the mastery of the standards, the learning that results from the doing.

What concrete strategies can you think of for helping students understand the difference between the “doing” and the “learning?”

■ Activity 2.5 *Academic Dishonesty*

FIX 4**Don't punish academic dishonesty with reduced grades.****Purpose:**

To consider replacement strategies for punishing academic dishonesty with reduced grades.

Discuss:

For Fix 4, Ken suggests that there are two main issues surrounding cheating: how to prevent it, and what to do about it when it happens. He proposes several answers to each question (pages 36–42; they are summarized below.) Discuss Ken's ideas and determine which might work for you.

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How to Prevent Cheating	What To Do When Cheating Occurs
<p>Articulate an academic honesty policy with clear behavioral consequences for breaches, such as providing evidence of level of achievement through redoing the current assignment or completing another exam or assignment; communicating the misconduct to all the student's teachers; complete the work on his/her own time; suspend extracurricular involvement; probation; suspension; expulsion.</p>	<p>Interview students privately to try and determine if the transgression was inadvertent or deliberate. If inadvertent, counsel the student and require the work to be redone. If deliberate, apply the sanctions in the district policy.</p>
<p>Make expectations clear to students and help them understand why academic integrity is so important.</p>	
<p>Make the meaning of plagiarism and cheating clear to students. For example, show an example of plagiarism.</p>	
<p>Use in-class assignments.</p>	
<p>Change exams each term.</p>	
<p>Proctor exams; spread students out during exams; use extended written response formats; check back packs, coats, and technology.</p>	
<p>Have students attach a signed statement to all summative assessments and assignments that they have not cheated or plagiarized.</p>	

■ Activity 2.6 Attendance Dilemma

FIX 5

Don't consider attendance in grade determination; report absences separately.

Adapted from: *Grading and Reporting in Standards-Based Schools* (2007), pp. 10–11 and Resource Sheet #2.

Note: This activity is exactly the same as on the DVD, segment 1.

Purposes:

To explore the potential tension between using grades to motivate student attendance and using grades to communicate about learning. To promote understanding of why it is important to use grades/marks only to communicate, not to motivate.

Scenario Discussion:

Read the following scenario and discuss the questions presented.

Report card grades have become a highly visible and very important part of our culture. The reason for their prominence is that, historically, we have used them both as our primary mode of communication about student learning and as our primary motivation system. Just hypothetically, if we were to tell you that you could no longer use grades for both communication and motivation—if we forced you to chose just one—how many would decide to use them for communication but not motivation? How many would opt for motivation and not communication? This activity is designed to test the depth of convictions on that choice. Please consider the following dilemma.

A REPORT CARD GRADING DILEMMA

In the following situation, you are a middle school principal. There is a meeting about to take place in your office that involves a serious grading problem. Participants include an 8th grade student, both parents, and one of your best teachers.

To describe the context, your school board has passed a grading policy designed to strongly encourage student attendance. It states, “If a student has more than 5 unexcused absences in a given grading period, the only grade that can be given is an “F.” The board’s message to students is that you learn more if you are present in school than if you are absent. So teachers can compel students to attend.

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The 8th grader sitting in your office had 7 unexcused absences during the past grading period. However, none of those absences interfered with an assessment of achievement. This student had completed all assignments, projects, quizzes and tests on time, with an academic average of 98%. Moreover, the teacher's pre-assessment provides compelling evidence that the student did not know the material at the start of the unit. Further, all district-required interim reporting procedures were carried out to inform both the student and family about the absences.

The topic of the meeting is: Should the student receive an "A" or "F" on the report card? The student is presenting clear evidence of having met the teacher's academic standards and feels that an "A" is the only just grade. The student's parents agree.

The teacher argues that although the achievement evidence says, "A," assigning an "A" would violate board policy. Charges of insubordination could be leveled, if the district policy was ignored. The only viable choice from the teacher's perspective is to assign an "F" on the student's report card.

You, the principal, must decide. You could decide to assign an "F" in accord with the policy that maintains the importance of attendance. But if you do, you will misrepresent this student's actual academic achievement on the permanent record.

On the other hand, you could opt to assign an "A." If you do this, you will violate board policy yourself and undercut the value of that policy in the eyes of students. But the result will be an accurate record of this student's attainment.

The question is, what should you do and why?

If one follows Ken and Rick's keys to effective grading from the first video segment, what is the proper resolution of this dilemma; that is, what grade should appear on the report card and why?

■ **Activity 2.7** *Borderline Grades*

End of Chapter 2

Purpose:

To consider replacement strategies for assigning borderline grades based on behavior, attendance, etc.

Discuss:

What do you do if you have a borderline grade? Ken suggests not to consider attendance, effort, participation, etc. Rather, he suggests the need to gather more evidence. He suggests several sources of additional information. Add ideas and discuss what might work for you.

1. “Extra credit” work can be used if it provides evidence of the amount learned (not merely used to add points to a total; page 32).
2. Have an additional assignment or test at hand to use for tie-breaking.
3. Homework or other practice work, used with care, might provide extra evidence (page 103).
4. Engage students as partners in identifying appropriate evidence of learning (p. 34).
5. Give more comprehensive assessments and assignments greater weight.

Fixes for Low-Quality or Poorly Organized Evidence

■ Activity 3.1 *Know What Each Item on a Test Measures*

FIX 7

Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods; do it by learning goal.

Purposes:

To clarify what needs to be done by way of designing assessments in order to be able to record information on student learning by goal; to reinforce the idea that standards-based reporting requires standards-based assessment and record-keeping.

Discuss:

In Fix 7 (p. 54) Ken states, "To be standards based in grading, teachers plan each assessment to provide direct evidence of student proficiency on specific learning outcomes/goals and then record this evidence by goal (p. 54)" This implies that to be standards-based, teachers need to know the goal measured by each item or task on every assessment to make sure (a) results can be recorded by goal, and (b) the set of assessments over time adequately provides enough evidence on each goal to enable a sound inference about level of student mastery.

This raises the question of whether the time required to design such assessments is worth it. To emphasize the importance, consider the following list of what CAN'T be done if you don't know what each item on an assessment measures. Do you agree? What might you add to the list?

- Know if the assessment covers what was taught
- Make a good inference about level of student achievement on individual learning goals
- Plan the next steps in instruction
- Keep track of student learning target-by-target or standard-by-standard

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- Give descriptive feedback to students on their strengths and areas requiring further work
- Have students self-assess and set goals for their own next steps in learning
- Complete a standards-based report card

Our position is that it is essential to know exactly what is covered on an assessment.

■ Activity 3.2 *Setting Up Record Books***FIX 7****Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods.****Purpose:**

To consider replacement strategies for setting up a record book by source of information rather than learning goal.

Discuss:

In Fix 7, Ken discusses various ways that record-books can be set up to reflect learning goals for students rather than sources of information (quizzes, tests, etc.) He talks about both the need to decide the level of detail about goals to be kept (by standard, benchmark/grade-level expectation/objective, or specific targets) and keeping a separate page of information for each student.

He says, “The level of specificity at which teachers collect evidence depends on the nature of the learning goals, the specificity of reporting required, and the teacher’s beliefs about what is both necessary and possible (p. 59).” We would elaborate that “the teacher’s beliefs about what is . . . necessary,” means the level of detail needed to (a) plan next steps in instruction, and (b) provide good descriptive feedback to students about their strengths and areas for further study.

Consider how you might set up a learning record book by learning goal. What level of detail would be necessary? Can you have all students on a single page, or would it work better to have a separate page for each student?

■ Activity 3.3 Converting Rubric Scores to Grades

FIX 7

Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods.

Purpose:

To provide information teachers might need to determine a final grade if summative information includes both percentage correct scores and rubric scores.

Additional Help:

In Fix 7 on pages 56–57, Ken briefly shows and discusses a record book that includes both proportion of items correct (e.g., 19/20) and rubric scores (e.g., 4 on a scale of 0–4). He briefly describes how this information might be combined to determine a final grade. For additional help on how to combine these different types of scores to determine a final grade see *CASL*, Chapter 10 or *Creating and Recognizing Quality Rubrics*, Chapter 5.

■ Activity 3.4 Grading on a Curve

FIX 7

Don't assign grades based on a student's achievement compared to other students.

Purposes:

To explore other reasons for and against grading based on comparisons between students.

Discuss:

Assigning grades based on comparisons with other students is sometimes called “grading on a curve.” On page 73 in Ken's book, he notes two reasons for not grading on a curve. First, such practice is non-motivational for all but the top students. Second, it is difficult to decide which group is the proper reference group—students in this class, all students who have taken the class, or all students in all classes.

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Another reason implied, but not addressed in the book, for not grading on a curve is that it's not fair for students in honors courses where students tend to be high achievers.

A consideration not addressed in the book in support of grading on a curve relates to test difficulty. What happens if a test really *is* too hard and all students do poorly, or really *is* too easy and all students do well? It's not fair to penalize students if the test developer inadvertently made the test too hard or reward students unduly if the test developer made a test too easy.

Discuss what should be done if you think a test really is too easy or too hard and therefore standard percent correct doesn't accurately represent student mastery of a topic.

■ Activity 3.5 Creating Accurate Assessments**FIX 7****Don't rely on evidence gathered using assessments that fail to meet standards of quality.****Purpose:**

To provide additional assistance on creating assessments that yield accurate results.

Additional Help:

The topic of creating assessments that yield accurate results is covered briefly in Ken's book on pages 75–78. A parallel overview of keys to quality classroom assessment is in Segment 1 of the DVD, *Grading & Reporting in Standards-Based Schools*. Considerable additional assistance, based on the same Five Keys to Quality Classroom Assessment is one of the main focuses of Chapters 2–8 in *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning: Doing It Right—Using It Well (CASL)*.

Fixes for Inappropriate Grade Calculation

■ Activity 4.1 *Teacher Judgment*

FIX 11

Don't rely only on the mean; consider other measures of central tendency.

Purpose:

To explore when teacher judgment might result in a summative grade that is different from that calculated by a measure of central tendency of scores.

Discussion:

On page 83 in Ken's book, he discussed *determining* grades rather than *calculating* grades. What happens when teachers use professional judgment to augment numerical calculations and a final judgment doesn't strictly match the numerical calculation? How might such a procedure be justified?

■ Activity 4.2 *Including Zeros*

FIX 12

Don't include zeros in grade determination when evidence is missing or as punishment.

Purpose:

To consider replacement strategies for using zero for missing work.

Discuss:

In Fix 12 (and also in Fix 13), Ken provides several suggestions for handling missing information when determining grades. Discuss which of these alternatives might work for you.

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Ken Suggests:

1. If the missing work is practice work, such as most homework, it shouldn't be included in a final grade anyway (Fix 13, p. 95).
2. If the missing work is necessary in order to determine level of proficiency, use *incomplete* instead of a grade (Fix 12, p. 87). Accompany this with specific requirements for completing the work, e.g., Saturday work sessions.
3. The use of zeros is problematic because they have such an impact on averages. A transition strategy might be to assign 50% for missing work, making the range for an F (50–60%) roughly the same for other grades (e.g., A is 90–100%; Fix 12, page 89).
4. For the same reason as in solution 3, you might make the scale “equal-interval” by calling A a 4, B a 3, C a 2, D a 1, and F a 0 (Fix 12, page 89).
5. Again, for the same reason as in solution 3, you might use the median score instead of the mean (Fix 12, page 89).
6. Build overlapping assessments so that if a student misses any one of them there will be enough evidence from the others (Fix 12, page 90).
7. Require that students supply extra evidence of learning so that proficiency level can be accurately determined. Have a store of assignments or tests on hand and require that students complete them on their own time (Fix 2, page 28.)

■ Activity 4.3 “Incompletes” for Missing Practice Work**FIX 12**

Don't include zeros in grade determination when evidence is missing or as punishment.

Purpose:

To clarify an important point about using “incomplete” when work is missing.

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Discuss:

In Fix 12, Ken suggests not including in final grades zero for missing assessment information. In Fix 13, Ken states that performance on work assigned for practice (formative work such as homework) not be included in a final grade at all, or under very restricted conditions. Combining the two positions together, the message would be that an *incomplete* would not be awarded merely if work was missing, but only if the missing performances interfere with the teacher's ability to make a reasonable judgment about level of student achievement. Thus, missing homework would not be sufficient grounds, in and of itself, for assigning an incomplete because homework is usually for practice. Only important missing summative assessment information would form a basis for an incomplete.

Discuss the questions you might have about these ideas.

■ Activity 4.4 *The Dilemma of the Zero***FIX 12**

Don't include zeros in grade determination when evidence is missing or as punishment.

Purpose:

To discuss a solution to a real situation involving including zeros in grades.

Adapted From: *Making Connections*, pp. 107–108.

Scenario Discussion:

Read the following scenario and discuss the questions that follow.

Your daughter is enrolled in a 10th grade biology course. The mid-term progress report sent home from school says she is getting a D+ in biology, yet the only tests and assignments you have seen have had A and B+ on the top. Your daughter reports having done all the required work and is at a loss to explain the grade. You request a meeting with the teacher.

The teacher explains that the grade is based on actual performance so your daughter must not be learning the material. The teacher uses a computer grade book software program. He enters your daughter's name and the

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screen shows a list of entries leading to an average of 69%. The teacher points out that the cutoff scores he has placed in the computer transforms this percentage into a D+. So the progress report is correct.

Here is the information on the screen:

First unit test: 95%

Unit lab report 85%

Second test: 85%

Unit lab report 0%

You inquire about the 0%. If the report is missing, the computer is instructed to enter a zero into the record and average it into the computation of the grade. But, you point out, your child seems to be grasping the material fairly well and performing well on the required assessments. The teacher seems genuinely surprised at the reason for the low grade, agreeing that the rest of the record is very good. How is it, you ask, that the teacher concluded earlier that your child is not learning the material?

Upon further discussion, you find that she had specifically asked for permission to turn in the report late because she wanted to work further on the data analysis, and she was granted permission to do so. The teacher has no recollection of that conversation.

Discuss:

1. Are the teacher's practices in this case sound from a grading point of view. Why or why not?
2. If you were this teacher what might you have done to avoid this problem?

Fixes to Support Learning

■ Activity 5.1 *Using Formative Information Summatively*

FIX 13

Don't use information from formative assessments and practice to determine grades; use only summative assessment.

Purpose:

To think more deeply about when using formative data to inform a summative decision might be legitimate.

Discuss:

On page 95, Ken says “Include, in all but specific, limited cases, only evidence from summative assessments...” What might be some of the limited, specific cases in which evidence from formative work can be considered when determining a final grade?

Following are two of our ideas. What else?

1. A borderline grade might be resolved by considering the entire body of evidence for a student including formative work such as homework. In order for this to work, a teacher needs to have in mind what A, B, C, etc. understanding looks like, not just consider the total number of points earned.
2. Student learning targets that require complex and lengthy performances or creation of products can be tricky for strictly separating formative and summative assessments. Consider lab reports. Say a teacher assigns ten labs over the course of a semester so that students can practice and get better over time. To strictly separate formative and summative assessments, after the 10th report, the students would be assigned some number of reports to create, the marks to count toward the final grade. But, this is unwieldy and time-consuming. Why not just use performance on the final two or three lab reports as summative assessment?

■ Activity 5.2 Standards-Based Record Keeping

FIX 13

Don't use information from formative assessments and practice to determine grades; use only summative assessment.

Purpose:

To consider a replacement strategy for keeping all formative and summative assessment information together.

Discuss:

Under Fix 7 Ken discusses recording information about student learning by standard or goal rather than by source of information. Under a previous discussion question, we suggested that you consider how this might look for your record keeping.

Fix 13 adds an additional wrinkle. Perhaps formative information should be kept separately from summative information (page 99). This would solve at least two problems. First, it would be easier at the end to locate and summarize the summative assessment information. Secondly, it easily allows for tracking student learning so that appropriate instruction can be planned.

So, now there are two considerations for record book design: keeping information by goal not by source, and keeping formative information separate from summative information. If you were to use these two design ideas, how might your record book look?

Our Response:

Should we include some examples?

■ Activity 5.3 *Effective Formative Feedback to Students*

FIX 13

Don't use information from formative assessments and practice to determine grades; use only summative assessment.

Purpose:

To provide additional help on descriptive feedback.

Additional Help:

In Fix 13, Ken talks about providing descriptive feedback to students when assessment is formative. The point is that the goal of formative assessment is to modify learning. Descriptive feedback is a more powerful way than evaluative feedback to modify learning. A more comprehensive discussion of descriptive feedback is in CASL on pages 40, 154, 157–164, 236–239, 241, 283–284,

■ Activity 5.4 *Student Involvement in Grading*

FIX 15

Don't leave students out of the grading process.

Purpose:

To think through student-involvement as it pertains to grading.

Discuss:

What are the ways Ken suggests to involve students in grading and marking? What other ideas do you have? Which might work for you?

End of Book Discussion Questions

■ Activity 6.1 Grading Policy

Purpose:

To consider what features would be useful to include in a policy statement on grading.

Discuss:

Throughout the *15 Fixes* book, Ken refers to ideas that could be incorporated into a district policy statement that would support the 15 fixes. Some of them are listed below. With your group discuss what you would like to see or not see in *your* local grading policy statement.

- Grades and marks should reflect only achievement not effort, participation, attendance, lateness of work, extra credit not related to our learning goals, nor academic dishonesty (Fixes 1–5).
- Behavior is important and will be reported and acted upon, but using a more effective procedure than reducing grades (Fixes 1–5).
- If there is not enough evidence of a student’s level of proficiency because of missing summative information, the student will receive an *incomplete* (Fixes 2, 4, and 12). Zeros for missing work will not be averaged into grades. Students will have _____ amount of time to convert this incomplete to a grade by submitting additional evidence of proficiency. The student is responsible for discussing with the teacher the evidence that would be acceptable. And/or students are required to join a Saturday work session.
- Scores for group work will not be included in marks/grades (Fix 6).
- All summative grades will be based on clearly defined standards for performance, not performance compared to other students (Fixes 8 and 9).
- All grades will be based on accurate assessment information (Fix 10).

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- Grades will be based on the most consistent pattern of performance not just on the average score or rating. This means that sometimes the median or the mode provides the most accurate measure of performance (Fix 11). This also means that for proficiencies that develop over time, performance at the end is more important than performance at the beginning (Fix 14). Additionally, this means that grades may not be based on strictly numerical computations. There is a role for teacher judgment of proficiency (Fix 11).
- Performance on work intended for practice will only be considered in the final grade if it provides extra evidence of proficiency (Fix 13).
- Feedback to students on practice work will be descriptive rather than evaluative (Fix 13).
- Students and parents will know from the beginning of instruction which assessments are for practice and which will count toward the final grade (Fix 13).
- Other ideas can be found in various policy statements on page 113.

Look for other information in the book that might have implications for grading policies. Discuss which would be desirable in *your* local policy. Be sure to have a rationale for each element of the policy.

■ Activity 6.2 What Does “Fairness” in Grading/Marking Mean?

Purpose:

To anticipate and plan for questions about fairness in grading.

Discuss:

On page 9, Ken says, “In education we have tended to think of *fairness* as uniformity.” When it comes to grading and marking does *fair* mean the *same*? For example, Ken recommends accepting late work because we want to send a message to students that we will acknowledge their learning whenever it occurs (page 107). We would rather err on the side of providing lots of opportunities to learn than not providing enough. (However late work is not without consequences. Students might be required to come in on their own time for extra assistance.)

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After reading this book, what would you say to a parent or community member who raises the question of fairness if students are treated differently when grading?

■ Activity 6.2 My Grades Don't Match State Assessment Results!**Purpose:**

To consider solutions to a potential communication problem.

Adapted From: *Practice with Student-Involved Classroom Assessment*, Activity 13-3, pages 285–286.

Scenario Discussion:

Read the following letter from a teacher and discuss the subsequent questions.

“It seems important to let you know of a phenomenon I’m experiencing in my school as we deal with the data about students who do and do not meet standards on the state assessment and the relationship of these standards to the grades they earn. While it remains true that most of the kids who are meeting standards are those who also get As, we are discovering a significant number of students who do get As who don’t meet the standards, and a similar number who get rather poor grades who do meet the standards. What should we do?”

Following are some suggestions we have when this occurs. What else might you check?

1. Why might the situation be occurring?
 - a. The state assessment only includes achievement, while grades might include factors other than achievement (Keys 1–6).
 - b. The state assessment measures achievement at a point in time while grades might include zeros for missing work (Fix 12), practice work (Fix 13), or work from early in the grading period that is no longer accurate (Fix 14).
 - c. The grade might be based on growth rather than performance at a point in time (Fix 8).

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- d. Class work might not be aligned with priorities in the state assessment, so classroom assessments might measure different things than the state assessment (Fix 10). This includes the fact that grades might reflect learning targets such as performance skills and products that are inadequately covered in the state assessment. So the problem might be with the state assessment no the classroom grade.
 - e. The classroom assessments underpinning the grades aren't accurate (Fix 10).
 - f. It is unclear how the state performance standard cutoffs relate to teachers' grading cutoffs (Fix 8).
 - g. Grades might be based on comparison to other students while the state results are criterion-referenced (Fix 9).
 - h. The grade might be based on a strict average, when the median or mode might represent a more accurate picture of learning (Fix 11).
2. What would you do to repair this situation?
- a. Clarify state assessment and classroom learning targets. Do they match? If not, should they and which needs to be adjusted?
 - b. If learning targets between the state assessment and classroom assessments are aligned, does instruction match?
 - c. Check the classroom assessments for accuracy (Fix 10).
 - d. Include only achievement in grades.
 - e. Grades should be criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced.
 - f. Recheck the method for combining results into a grade—eliminate irrelevant information, use the most recent information, and consider another measure of central tendency.
 - g. Recheck the content, clarity, and quality of the state assessment.
 - h. Try to calibrate classroom cutoff standards to those used by the state, unless classroom standards are more accurate.

■ Activity 6.4 Cross-Walk Between Fixes and Grading Rubric

Purpose:

To solidify the ideas in Ken’s book by relating them to the Rubric for Grading in Appendix B and/or the Survey in Appendix C.

Activity:

Appendix B is a rubric for evaluating grading practices. It is based on the sound grading practices in *CASL*, DVD (*Grading and Reporting in Standards-Based Schools*) and book *A Repair Kit for Grading*. Appendix B is a survey about current grading practices and beliefs.

Choose one or both and identify the “fix” associated with various descriptors on the rubric or questions on the survey. For example, on the rubric, the first criterion, “organizing the grade book” relates to Fix 7: Don’t organize information in grading records by assessment method On the survey, for example, question 10, “I keep separate track of information from formative and summative assessments,” relates to Fix 13: Don’t use information from formative assessment and practice to determine grades. . . .

■ Activity 6.5 Where Am I Now?

Purpose:

To think about how one’s grading practices and/or understanding and opinions about grading practices have evolved since the beginning of study.

Activity:

Appendix B is a rubric for evaluating grading practices. It is based on the sound grading practices in *CASL*, DVD (*Grading and Reporting in Standards-Based Schools*) and book *A Repair Kit for Grading*. Appendix B is a survey about current grading practices and beliefs.

Choose one or the other and: record current practices. Consider what opinions and practices have changes since the beginning of study. Why have they or have they not changed?

■ *Activity 6.6 Questions About Grading*

Purposes:

To revisit your initial questions and determine which you can now answer.

Activity:

Look at your initial questions. How might you answer these questions now? What new questions have arisen?

If you are working in a team, how do your new questions and responses to previous questions compare to others in your group?

Appendix A

Cross-Walk Among the DVD (*Grading and Reporting in Standards-Based Schools*), the Book (*A Repair Kit for Grading*), and the Book (*Classroom Assessment for Student Learning*)

DVD Segment	CASL Cross-References	A Repair Kit for Grading Cross-Reference
Segment 1: Discussion of assessment <i>of</i> and <i>for</i> learning, establishing grading as being assessment <i>of</i> learning.	A complete discussion is in Chapter 1, pages 41–46 ; specific examples occur throughout <i>CASL</i> .	Pages 6–7 have definitions. Fix 13: Don't include formative information in grades. Fix 15: Student involvement.
Keys to effective grading	Chapter 10	There is an overview of keys on pages 4–7 . Fixes 1–15 expand on these keys. The discussion on the DVD focuses on Fixes 1, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, and 15 .
Activity 1A: Discuss keys	Activity not in <i>CASL</i> .	Activity not repeated in book.
Activity 1B: Grading Dilemma	Activity not in <i>CASL</i> .	This activity is repeated under Fix 5 : Don't consider attendance in grade determination. Activity repeated herein.
Segment 2: Student motivation comes from assessment for learning.	Chapter 2, pages 38–39	Discussion is on pages 10–12 . Student motivation is mentioned throughout the fixes. The DVD segment especially mentions Fixes 1, 10, 13, and 15 .
Activity: How to help students focus on learning rather than the grade	Chapter 2: Seven Strategies, pages 41–46.	This topic relates to the student involvement ideas in several fixes, especially Fix 15 : student involvement. The specific activity on the DVD is not repeated in this study guide.

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DVD Segment	CASL Cross-References	A Repair Kit for Grading Cross-Reference
Segment 3: Features not to be factored into grades.	Chapter 10, pages 309–314.	The DVD focuses on Fixes 1, 2, 5, and 13.
Activity: Features not to be factored into grades	Chapter 10, pages 309–314	Fixes 1–6. Study Guide Activity 2.1 expands the activity on the DVD..
<p>Segment 4: Characteristics of sound content standards.</p> <p>Center on what's important</p> <p>Be thoroughly mastered by teachers</p> <p>Be consistent across teachers</p> <p>Be mapped</p> <p>Posted for all to see</p> <p>Be prioritized</p> <p>Reflect achievement progresses over time</p> <p>Be transformed into student-friendly versions</p> <p>In the grade book, evidence should be collected by target</p> <p>Report standards mastered and not mastered</p>	<p>Characteristics of sound learning targets, Chapter 3</p> <p>Chapter 3, pages 57–60</p> <p>Planning assessment of and for learning, Chapter 9</p> <p>Transforming assessments of learning into grades, Chapter 10</p>	<p>Fix 8: Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards.</p> <p>Fix 15: Student involvement</p> <p>Fix 7: Don't organize information in records by assessment method; organize by standard.</p> <p>Fixes 8 (Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards and 9 (Don't assign grades based on student's achievement compared to other students.)</p> <p>The DVD also mentions Fixes 13 and 14.</p>
Activity: Teacher planning	Activity not repeated in <i>CASL</i> .	Activity not repeated in book.
Segment 5: Keys to successful grading.	Chapter 10	There is an overview of keys on pages 4–7. Fixes 1–15 expand on these keys. The DVD focuses on Fixes 2, 8, 10, and 15.
Student involvement	Every chapter	Included in several fixes and expanded in Fix 15: student involvement.

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DVD Segment	CASL Cross-References	<i>A Repair Kit for Grading</i> Cross-Reference
Activity: Discuss student involvement ideas	Specific activity not repeated in <i>CASL</i> .	Specific activity not repeated in this study guide.
Segment 6: Stories Story 1: Ken Story 2: Rick Story 3: Laura Final advice:		Fixes 1, 3 Fix 15 Fix 2 Fixes 8 and 10

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Appendix B

Rubric for Evaluating Grading Practices

Criterion	Beginning	Developing	Fluent
1. Organizing the gradebook	The evidence of learning (e.g., a gradebook) is entirely organized by sources of information (e.g., tests, quizzes, homework, labs, etc.).	The evidence of learning (e.g., a gradebook) is organized by sources of information mixed with specific content standards.	The evidence of learning (e.g., a gradebook) is completely organized by student learning outcomes (e.g., content standards, benchmarks, grade level indicators, curriculum expectations, etc.).
2. Including factors in the grade	<p>Overall summary grades are based on a mix of achievement and nonachievement factors (e.g., timeliness of work, attitude, effort, cheating). Non-achievement factors have a major impact on grades.</p> <p>Extra credit points are given for extra work completed; without connection to extra learning.</p> <p>Cheating, late work, and missing work result in a zero (or a radically lower score) in the gradebook. There is no opportunity to make up such work, except in a few cases.</p> <p>Borderline grade cases are handled by considering nonachievement factors.</p>	<p>Overall summary grades are based on a mix of achievement and nonachievement factors, but achievement counts a lot more.</p> <p>Some extra credit points are given for extra work completed; some extra credit work is used to provide extra evidence of student learning.</p> <p>Cheating, late work, and missing work result in a zero (or lower score) in the gradebook. But, there is an opportunity to make up work and replace the zero or raise the lower score.</p> <p>Borderline cases are handled by considering a combination of nonachievement factors and collecting additional evidence of student learning.</p>	<p>Overall summary grades are based on achievement only.</p> <p>Extra credit work is evaluated for quality and is only used to provide extra evidence of learning. Credit is not awarded merely for completion of work.</p> <p>Cheating, late work, and missing work is recorded as “incomplete” or “not enough information” rather than as zero. There is an opportunity to replace an “incomplete” with a score without penalty.</p> <p>Borderline grade cases are handled by collecting additional evidence of student achievement, not by counting nonachievement factors.</p>

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<p>3. Considering assessment purpose</p>	<p>Everything each student does is given a score and every score goes into the final grade. There is no distinction between “scores” on practice work (formative assessment or many types of homework) and scores on work to demonstrate level of achievement (summative assessment).</p>	<p>Some distinctions are made between formative (practice such as homework) and summative assessment, but practice work still constitutes a significant part of the grade.</p>	<p>Student work is assessed frequently (formative assessment) and graded occasionally (summative assessment). “Scores” on formative assessments and other practice work (e.g., homework) are used descriptively to inform teachers and students of what has been learned and the next steps in learning. Grades are based only on summative assessments.</p>
<p>4. Considering most recent information</p>	<p>All assessment data is cumulative and used in calculating a final summative grade. No consideration is given to identifying or using the most current information.</p>	<p>More current evidence is given consideration at times, but does not entirely replace out-of-date evidence.</p>	<p>Most recent evidence completely replaces out-of-date evidence when it is reasonable to do so. For example, how well students write at the end of the grading period is more important than how well they write at the beginning, and later evidence of improved content understanding is more important than early evidence.</p>

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<p>5. Summarizing information and determining final grade</p>	<p>The gradebook has a mixture of ABC, percentages, + ✓ -, and/or rubric scores, etc., with no explanation of how they are to be combined into a final summary grade.</p> <p>Rubric scores are converted to percentages when averaged with other scores; or, there is no provision for combining rubric and percentage scores.</p> <p>Final summary grades are based on a curve—a student's place in the rank order of student achievement.</p> <p>Final grades for special needs students are not based on learning targets as specified in the IEP.</p> <p>Final summary grades are based on calculation of mean (average) only</p>	<p>The gradebook may or may not have a mixture of symbols, but there is some attempt, even if incomplete, to explain how to combine them.</p> <p>Rubric scores are not directly converted to percentages; some type of decision rule is used, the final grade many times does not best depict level of student achievement.</p> <p>Final grades are criterion referenced, not norm referenced. They are based on preset standards such as A = 90–100% and B = 80–89%. But, there is no indication of the necessity to ensure shared meaning of symbols—i.e., there is no definition of each standard.</p> <p>There is an attempt to base final grades for special needs students on learning targets in the IEP, but the attempt is not always successful; or, it is not clear to all parties that modified learning targets are used to assign a grade.</p> <p>The teacher understands various measures of central tendency, but may not always choose the best one to accurately describe student achievement.</p>	<p>The gradebook may or may not have a mix of symbol types, but there is a sound explanation of how to combine them.</p> <p>Rubric scores are converted to a final grade using a decision rule that results in an accurate depiction of the level of student attainment of the learning targets.</p> <p>Final grades are criterion referenced, not norm referenced. They are based on preset standards with clear descriptions of what each symbol means. These descriptions go beyond A = 90–100% and B = 80–89%; they describe what A, B, etc. performance looks like.</p> <p>Final grades for special needs students are criterion referenced, and indicate level of attainment of the learning goals as specified in the IEP. The targets on which grades are based are clear to all parties.</p> <p>The teacher understands various measures of central tendency (average, median, mode) and understands when each is the most appropriate one to use to accurately describe student achievement.</p>
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<p>6. Verifying Assessment Quality</p>	<p>There is little evidence of consideration of the accuracy/quality of the individual assessments on which grades are based.</p> <p>Quality standards for classroom assessment are not considered and the teacher has trouble articulating standards for quality.</p> <p>Assessments are rarely modified for special needs students when such modifications would provide much more accurate information about student learning.</p>	<p>The teacher tries to base grades on accurate assessment results only, but may not consciously understand all the features of a sound assessment.</p> <p>Some standards of quality are adhered to in judging the accuracy of the assessment results on which grades are based. The teacher can articulate some of these standards; or, uses standards for quality assessment intuitively, but has trouble articulating why an assessment is sound.</p> <p>Assessments are modified for special needs students, but the procedures used may not result in accurate information and/or match provisions in the IEP.</p>	<p>Grades are based only on accurate assessment results. Questionable results are not included.</p> <p>The teacher can articulate standards of quality, and can show evidence of consideration of these standards in classroom assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear and appropriate learning targets clear and appropriate users and uses choosing the best assessment method writing clear, unambiguous questions good sampling avoiding potential sources of bias and mismeasurement) <p>Assessments are modified for special needs students in ways that match instructional modifications described in IEPs. Such modifications result in generating accurate information on student achievement.</p>
<p>7. Involving Students</p>	<p>Grades are a surprise to students because (1) students don't understand the bases on which they are determined, (2) students have not been involved in their own assessment (learning targets are not clear to them, and/or they do not self-assess and track progress toward the targets); or (3) teacher feedback is only evaluative (a judgment of level of quality) and includes no descriptive component.</p>	<p>Grades are somewhat of a surprise to students because student-involvement practices and descriptive feedback are too limited to give them insights into the nature of the learning targets being pursued and their own performance.</p>	<p>Grades are not a surprise to students because (a) students understand the basis for the grades received, (2) students have been involved in their own assessment (they understand the learning targets they are to hit, self-assess in relation to the targets, track their own progress toward the targets, and/or talk about their progress), and/or (3) teacher communication to students is frequent, descriptive, and focuses on what they have learned as well as the next steps in learning. Descriptive feedback is related directly to specific and clear learning targets.</p>

Appendix C

Survey On Marking and Grading Practices

Instructions:

There are three parts to the survey. The first part asks about your current grading practices. The second part asks about your opinions about grading. The third part asks about your confidence in various areas.

Taking this survey at the beginning and the end of study on grading can be a useful way to track and digest changes in your thinking and practices.

Definitions:

Marking is the process of providing an evaluative judgment on a single piece of work. In the U.S. this is called grading individual pieces of work.

Grading is the process of summarizing marks over a period of time for external reporting.

	Almost Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
1. I include one or more of the following in grades: effort, participation, tardiness, attendance, and/or adherence to class rules.				
2. I reduce points/marks on work submitted late.				
3. I give bonus points for extra credit.				
4. I reduce marks/grades for cheating.				
5. I organize information in my record/marking/grading book by source: homework, quizzes, tests, labs, etc.				
6. I include in grades zeros for missing work.				

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	Almost Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
7. I communicate feedback on assessments by providing a single letter grade)				
8. I provide detailed comments to students about strengths and weaknesses in their work.				
9. I include performance on homework into final grades.				
10. I keep separate track of information from formative and summative assessments.				
11. I allow students to redo assessments without penalty if they have not done well. (NBPTS Study)				
12. I allow new evidence to replace, not simply be added to old evidence.				
13. My students understand how grades will be calculated and what evidence will count.				

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
14. The ONLY purpose for grades/marks should be to communicate student learning as of a point in time.				
15. One should NEVER include group scores in grades for individual students.				
16. There should be a limit to the number of students who receive marks/grades of A.				
17. Assessments and marks/grades should demonstrate how well students are doing relative to one another.				
18. It's most accurate to base grades on the mean (average) score rather than the median (middle) or mode (most frequent) score.				
19. Peer- and self-assessment should be limited to formative assessment because only teachers should assign grades/marks.				

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	Very Confident	Somewhat Confident	A Little Confident
20. I can design or find assessments that provide an accurate picture of student learning on particular learning targets/objectives.			
21. I can prepare assessment plans for units that show when formative and summative assessments will occur and how they interact.			
22. I can assign grades that support learning.			