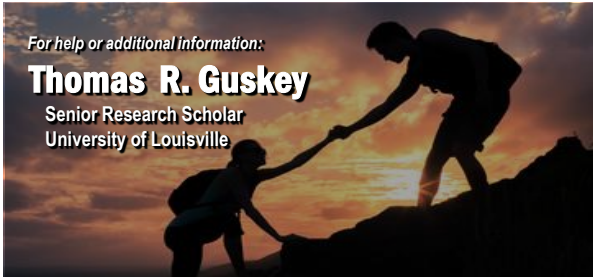Grading Practices Project Forum

"Reviewing the Why?"

Thomas R. Guskey
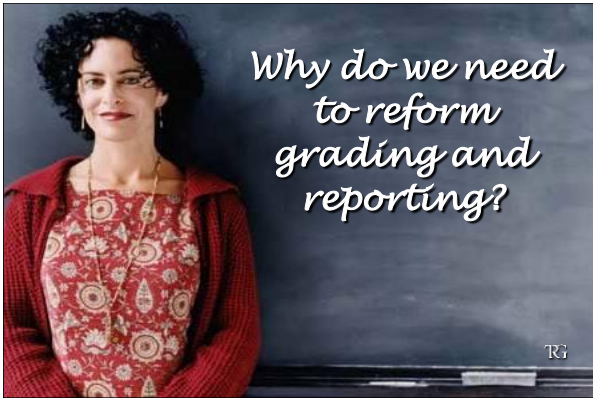
For help or additional information:

Thomas R. Guskey

Senior Research Scholar
University of Louisville

tguskey.com   @tguskey

guskey@uky.edu   859-221-0077

Why do we need to reform grading and reporting?
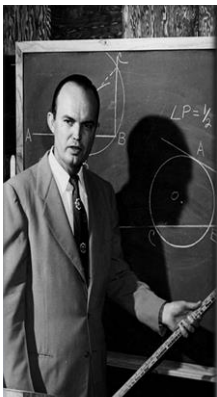
1. We have a long *history of research* on grading!

Study 1

Authors: **Daniel Starch & Edward Elliott**

Title: **"Reliability of the Grading of High School Work in English"**

Results: **Paper #1: 64-98%**
Paper #2: 50-97%

Published: **1912!**

Study 2

Author: **Hunter Brimi**

Title: **"Reliability of Grading High School Work in English"**

Teachers trained 18+ hours in "Traits of Writing"

Results: **Paper #1: 50-96%**

Published: **2011!**

2. Research has had *little impact* on practice!
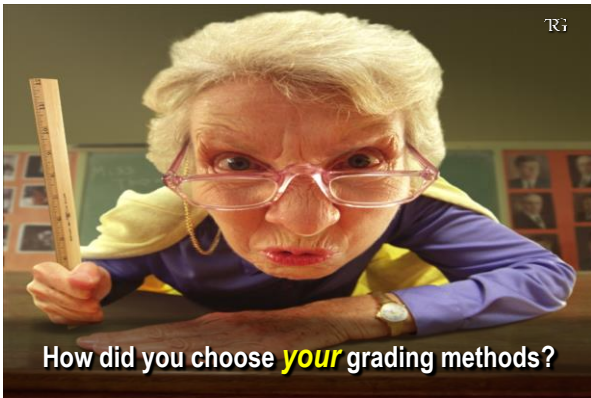
How did you choose *your* grading methods?
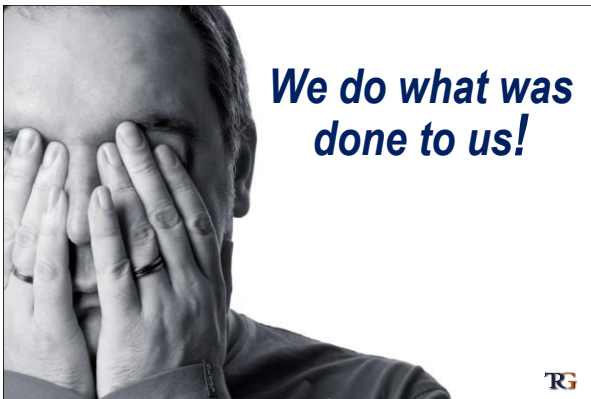
We do what was done to us!

Grading systems consist of three elements.
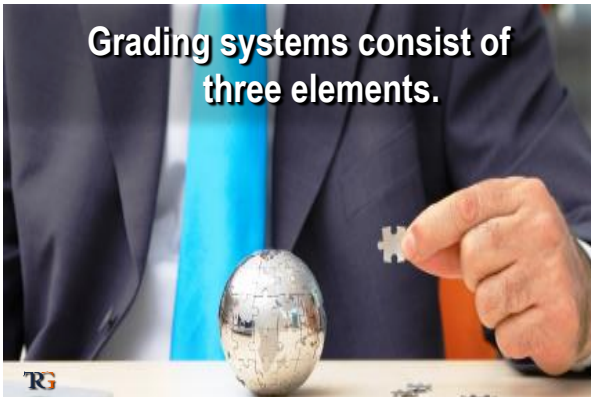
Elements of a *Grading System*

Element	Gradebook	Report Card	Permanent Record / Transcript
What does it include?	Scores	Grades	Summary Grades
Purpose?	*Ongoing record of performance*	*Interim summary of performance*	*Summary judgments of performance*
Who has access?	Families & Students	Families & Students	Families, Students, & 3rd Parties

---

Elements of a *Grading System*

Element	Gradebook	Report Card	Permanent Record / Transcript
What does it include?	Score	Grades	Summary Grades
Purpose?			*judgments* performance
Who has access?	Families & Students	Students	Families, Students, & 3rd Parties

We must make changes in All Three

3. We don't agree on
why or *how* we grade.

Important Questions

1. Why do we assign grades to students' work and use report cards?

2. What evidence should be used in determining students' grades?

   (For example, major exams, compositions, formative assessments, homework, class participation, etc.)
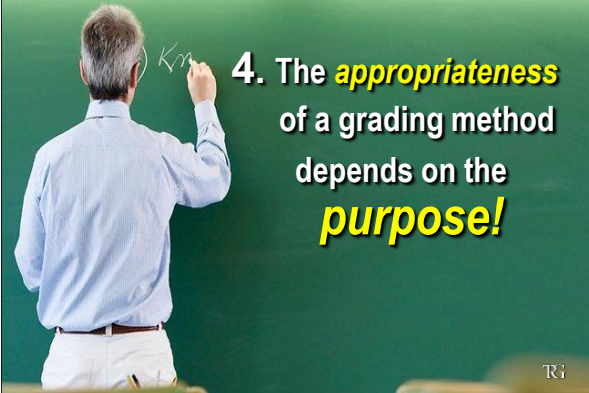
Surveys of educators identify
six **purposes of grading**

1. Communicate achievement status to *parents*

2. Provide information to *students* for self-evaluation

3. *Select, identify,* or *group* students for instruction

4. Provide *incentives* for students

5. *Evaluate* the effectiveness of instructional programs

6. Document students' *effort* or *responsibility*

Grading Elements
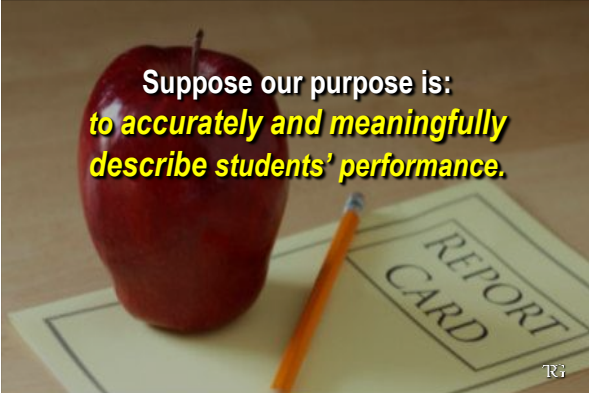
- Major exams or compositions
- Formative assessments
- Reports or projects
- Student portfolios
- Exhibits of students' work
- Laboratory projects
- Students' notebooks or journals
- Classroom observations
- Oral presentations
- Homework completion
- Homework quality
- Class participation
- Work habits and neatness
- Effort
- Class attendance
- Punctuality of assignments
- Class behavior or attitude
- Progress made

---

4. The *appropriateness* of a grading method depends on the *purpose!*

Suppose our purpose is: *to accurately and meaningfully describe students' performance.*

Letter Grades
(*Labels* attached to *categories* of performance)

➔ *Positives:*
    1. Describe the adequacy of performance
    2. Generally understood

➔ *Shortcomings:*
    1. Require integration of diverse information
    2. Arbitrary cut-offs
    3. Easily misinterpreted

TG

Percentage Grades
(*Numbers* attached to calculations)

➔ *Questionable Positives (???):*
    1. Provide finer discrimination
    2. Increase variation in grades

➔ *Shortcomings:*
    1. Require integration of diverse information
    2. Increase the number of arbitrary cut-offs
    3. Accentuate the influence of subjectivity

TG

Typical Letter Grading Scale:

Passing   *Failure*

A   B   C   D   F
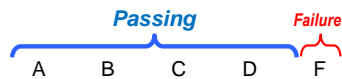
Percentage Grading Scale:

Passing   *Failure*

100   90   80   70   60   50   40   30   20   10   0

TG

Percentages applied to performance are often *inaccurate!*

Does 80% mean *mastery?*

It depends on the *standard!*

Is 80% sufficient for:

- ✓ Crossing the street safely?
- ✓ Being honest?
- ✓ Landing a plane safely?
- ✓ Using machinery in shop?
- ✓ Football pass completions
- ✓ Scoring in basketball?
- ✓ Getting a hit in baseball?

It depends on the *assessment!*
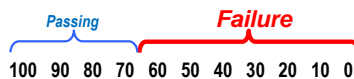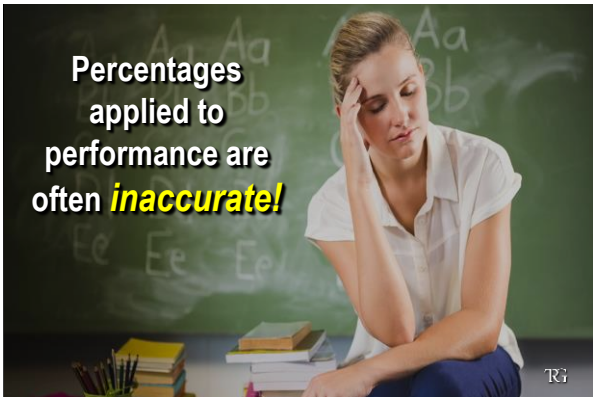
This Works!
From: Jung (2015)

Grade	Descriptor
4	Exemplary
3	Proficient
2	Developing
1	Struggling

This Works!
From: Jung (2015)

Grade	Descriptor
A	Exemplary
B	Proficient
C	Developing
F	Struggling

Even *this* Works!

Grade	Descriptor
😎	Exemplary
😉	Proficient
🤔	Developing
😬	Struggling

This *Doesn't* Work!

Grade	Descriptor
90-100%	Exemplary
80-89%	Proficient
70-79%	Developing
0-69%	Struggling

Record grades in **rubrics,** NOT *percentages!*

Standards-Based
(*Labels* attached to *categories* of performance)

➔ *Positives:*
    1. Offers a clear description of achievement
    2. Useful for diagnosis and prescription

➔ *Shortcomings:*
    1. Involves extra work for teachers
    2. May not be supported by gradebooks

TG

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1. To succeed with Standards-Based Grading, we must *change* the way we develop *rubrics!*

TG

Begin with a *"Model of Excellence"*

TG

2. To succeed with Standards-Based Grading, we must consider how parents/families *interpret labels!*

Levels of Student Performance Labels

1. Levels of Understanding / Quality

Modest	Beginning	Novice	Unsatisfactory
Intermediate	Progressing	Apprentice	Needs Improvement
Proficient	Adequate	Proficient	Satisfactory
Superior	Exemplary	Distinguished	Outstanding

2. Levels of Mastery / Proficiency

Below Basic	Below Standard	Pre-Emergent	Incomplete
Basic	Approaching Standard	Emerging	Limited
Proficient	Meets Standard	Acquiring	Partial
Advanced	Exceeds Standard	Extending	Thorough

3. Frequency of Display

Rarely	Never
Occasionally	Seldom
Frequently	Usually
Consistently	Always

4. Degree of Effectiveness

Ineffective	Poor
Moderately Effective	Acceptable
Highly Effective	Excellent

5. Evidence of Accomplishment

Little or No Evidence
Partial Evidence
Sufficient Evidence
Extensive Evidence

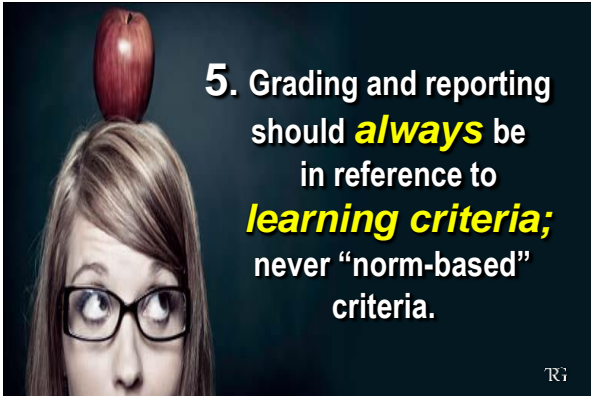# Narratives

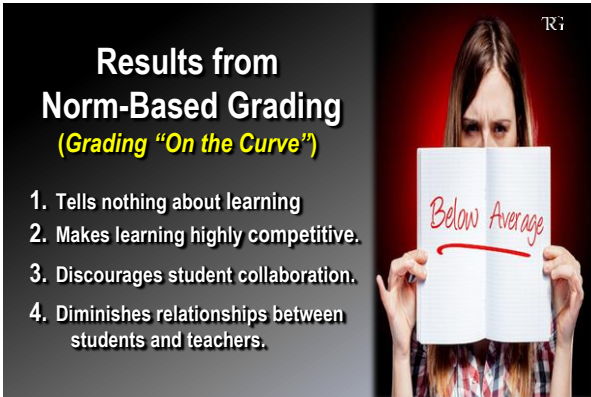**(Written *descriptions* of performance)**

➔ *Positives:*
  1. Offer a clear description of achievement
  2. Useful for diagnosis and prescription

➔ *Shortcomings:*
  1. Time-consuming for teachers to develop
  2. May not communicate the adequacy of progress
  3. Comments often become standardized

Combine methods to enhance *communicative value!*

5. Grading and reporting should *always* be in reference to *learning criteria;* never "norm-based" criteria.

Results from Norm-Based Grading
(*Grading "On the Curve"*)

1. Tells nothing about learning
2. Makes learning highly competitive.
3. Discourages student collaboration.
4. Diminishes relationships between students and teachers.

Below Average

Slide 1

Results from Criterion-Based Grading

1. Accurately describes student learning.
2. Students compete against the curriculum; *not* each other.
3. Encourages student collaboration.
4. Puts teachers & students on the same side to master learning goals.

RG

Slide 2

State of College Admission Survey (2018)

National Association for College Admission Counseling

RG

TABLE 7: PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGES ATTRIBUTING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACTORS IN ADMISSION DECISIONS: FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN

Factor	N	Considerable Importance	Moderate Importance	Limited Importance	No Importance
Grades in College Prep Courses	231	79.2%	13.0%	6.9%	0.9%
Grades in All Courses	229	60.3	31.0	8.7	—
Strength of Curriculum	231	60.2	26.8	10.0	3.0
Admission Test Scores (SAT, ACT)	228	55.7	32.5	7.9	3.9
Essay or Writing Sample	231	22.1	39.0	21.6	17.3
Counselor Recommendation	231	17.3	42.4	27.3	13.0
Student's Demonstrated Interest	231	16.9	33.3	26.8	22.9
Teacher Recommendation	230	15.2	43.5	27.8	13.5
Class Rank	228	14.0	37.7	32.0	16.2
Subject Test Scores (AP, IB)	227	7.0	35.2	32.6	25.1
Portfolio	229	6.6	10.0	30.6	52.8
Extracurricular Activities	231	5.6	43.3	34.6	16.5
SAT II Scores	226	5.3	8.4	23.0	63.3
Interview	229	3.5	23.1	28.4	45.0
State Graduation Exam Scores	228	3.5	11.0	25.4	60.1
Work	230	0.9	21.3	44.8	33.0

Slide 3

Grading Criteria

1. *Product*
2. *Process*
3. *Progress*

RG

Three Types of Grading Criteria

1. *Product* (*Achievement* of learning goals)

2. *Process* (*Behaviors* that enable learning)

3. *Progress* (*Improvement* or learning gain)

TG

Academic
Communication
Creativity / Innovation
Critical Thinking / Problem solving
Application / Transference

Compliance
Behavior in class
Class attendance
Conduct
Neatness of work
Punctuality in assignments
Punctuality to class

TG

Learning Enablers
Attitude in class
Class attendance/participation
Class quizzes or "Spot-Checks"
Daily class work
Effort
Engagement
Formative assessments
Goal setting
Homework (Completion & Quality)
Notebook/journal completion
Planning & organization
Study skills
Time Management
Work habits

Social and Emotional Learning
Citizenship
Collaboration/Teamwork
Compassion
Cooperation with classmates
Empathy/Perspective taking
Ethics
Flexibility/Adaptability
Grit
Growth mindset
Habits of mind
Help seeking & providing
Initiative/Self direction
Integrity
Leadership

Motivation
Persistence/Perseverance
Reflection
Resilience
Respect
Responsibility/Accountability
Self-advocacy
Self-awareness
Self-efficacy
Self-discipline/motivation
Social skills
Tenacity
Tolerance

To Succeed in Reporting on Non-Cognitive Competencies

1. Limit the number to 4-5 competencies

2. Develop clear and concise rubrics

3. Ensure developmental consistency

TG

**Grades cannot be enhanced or reduced based on "actions unrelated to student *academic* performance."**

Knight v. Board of Education, **1976**
Katzman v. Cumberland Valley Sch. Dist., **1984**
Keen v. Penson, **1992**
Smith v. Sch. City of Hobart, **1993**
Dardeau v. West Orange Grove Consol.
 Indep. Sch. Dist., **1999**
Horstine v. Twp. of Morristown, **2003**
Augustine v. Auoyelles Parish Sch. Bd., **2008**
Edinburg Consol. Indep. Sch. Dist. V. Smith, **2016**

(From: Link, 2019)

Things to do
TOMORROW
to Improve
Grading & Reporting
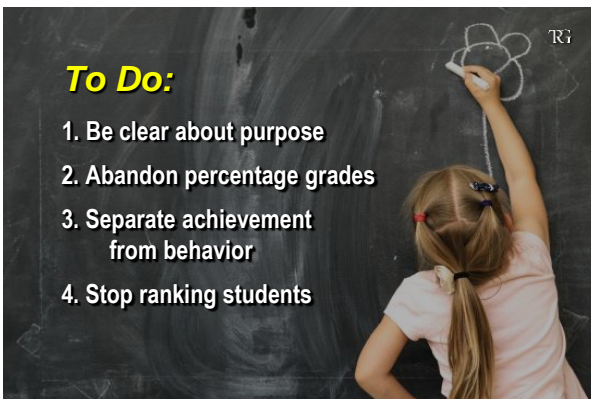
To Do:

1. Be clear about purpose

2. Abandon percentage grades

3. Separate achievement from behavior

4. Stop ranking students

Important Distinction:
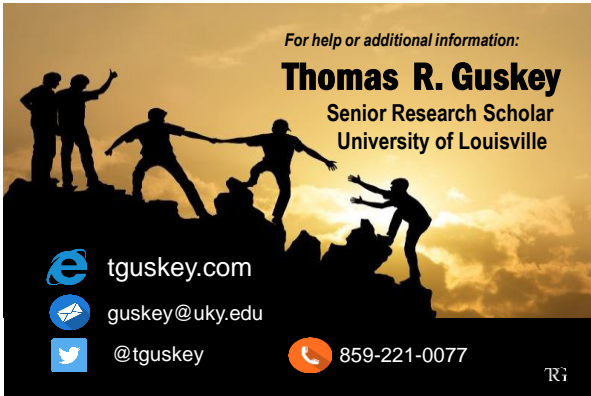
Managers know how to do things right.

Leaders know the right things to do!

For help or additional information:

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