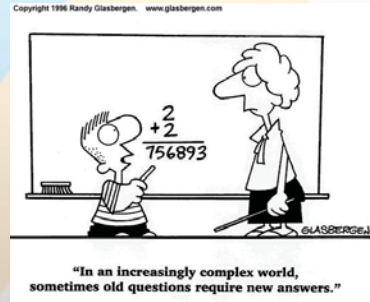




RIVERSIDE COUNTY  
OFFICE OF EDUCATION  
JUDY D. WHITE, Ed.D.  
County Superintendent of Schools

## Why should I shift from traditional grading practices to a standards based system?



Brian Wold  
Bwold@valverde.edu  
Social Science  
Rancho Verde High School  
Val Verde Unified



**"Increasingly, [educational] reformers saw grades as tools for system-building rather than as pedagogical devices -- a common language for communication about learning outcomes." (Schneider and Hutt 2013)**

***Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets.***

***--Paul Batalden***

**What do all of these have in common?**

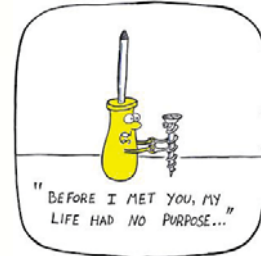


wiseGEEK



## What is the purpose of grades?

- Communicate information to parents about student achievement and performance in school
- Document student performance to evaluate the effectiveness of school programs
- Provide evidence of student lack of effort or inappropriate responsibility
- Provide evidence of teacher effectiveness in communicating curriculum
- Provide incentives for students to learn
- Provide information to students for self-evaluation
- Rank students
- Select, identify or group students for certain educational programs such as honor classes



## Philosophy versus Practice

- We all bring a personal philosophy to education which encompasses some of the following:
  - What students should know
  - How students should behave
  - How teachers should transmit information to their students
  - What the scope of the teachers' role
  - *How the student should be evaluated on their performance within the classroom*
- Our differences in philosophy allows for meaningful discussion and evaluation of what we are doing as educators but can also lead to division and accusation.



## Philosophy versus Practice

### Which of these four words does not belong?

Horse      Anvil  
Nose      Clock

- If grading policy is developed simply by the personal philosophies of teachers this can lead to systems where grades are created by diametrically opposed beliefs creating confusion and calls into question the validity of outcomes.



## Philosophy versus Practice

Points of debate regarding grading:

- Use of zeros
- Weight of homework(or any category) in grade
- Nature of reassessment
- Late policies



## Philosophy versus Practice

Grades should not be dependent on teacher selection (“Teacher Lottery”)

Teacher A -- Believes that tests are the best measurement of student subject mastery and sets up their gradebook as follows:

Exams -- 70%

Classwork -- 30%

Teacher B -- Believes that lower stakes evaluations are a more appropriate measure of student mastery and sets up their gradebook as follows:

Exams -- 30%

Classwork -- 70%

Both teachers share exams and in-class assignments.

Sally is in teacher A's class and earns 70% of the total possible points on her exams and 90% of the points in her classwork giving her a final grade of 76%

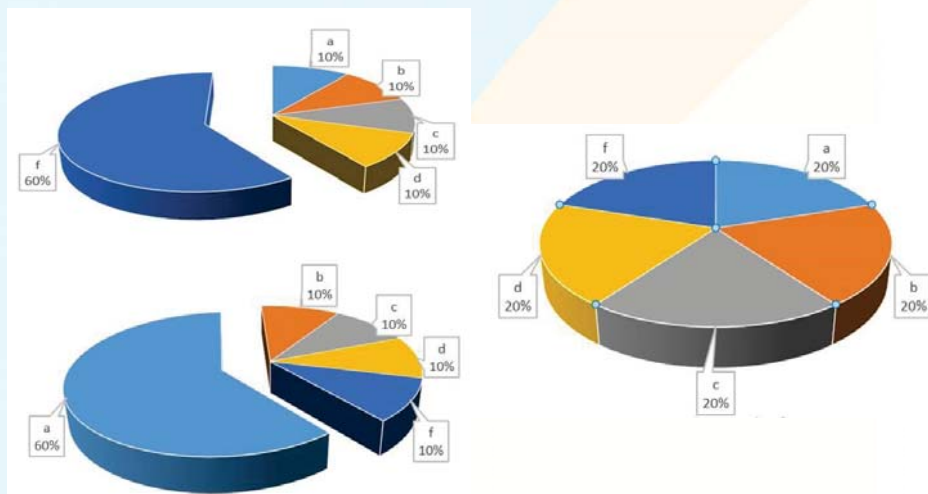
Billy is in teacher B's class and earns the same 70% of the total possible points on his exams and 90% of the points on his classwork giving him a final grade of 82%

**Which grade is right?**



## Philosophy versus Practice

Grading Scale Equity





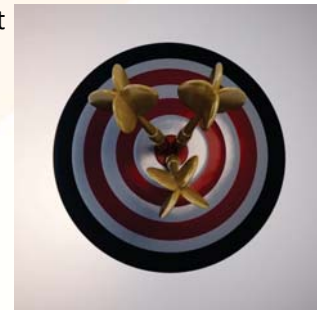
Assessments in Order	Karen	Alex	Jennifer	Stephen
#1	0	63	0	0
#2	0	63	10	0
#3	0	63	10	62
#4	90	63	10	62
#5	90	63	100	63
#6	90	63	100	63
#7	90	63	100	90
#8	90	63	100	90
#9	90	63	100	100
#10	90	63	100	100
Mean	63%	63%	63%	63%
Median	90%	63%	100%	63%
Mode	90%	63%	100%	0,62,63,90,100



## Philosophy versus Practice

### Accuracy

- Determined by two primary variables
  - Quality of assessment
  - Teacher's ability to accurately interpret results
- Studies have shown mixed outcomes in teachers' ability to consistently interpret results to avoid inaccurate reporting
  - 101 point scale versus a 5(6) point scale
  - Rubric scoring
- Grades based solely on achievement
  - Focus on learning rather than the behavior



## Philosophy versus Practice

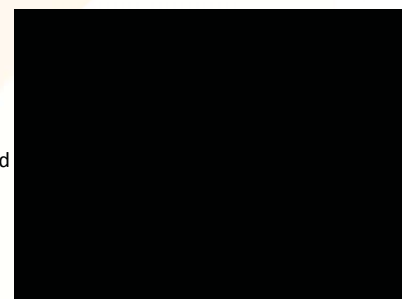
### Confidence

- *A sense that success is possible even if not immediate*
- Fixed versus Growth Mindsets
  - How do our current grading policies reinforce a Fixed Mindset?
  - How can the grading system be modified to develop a Growth Mindset?

### Winning and Losing Streaks

- Events do not exist in a vacuum
- How does the traditional grading system reinforce the idea that performance is independent?
- High stakes assessment leads to stress, risk-avoidance, and grade-focused behavior rather than learning focused
- How often do adults have the ability to retake "assessments" – SAT, Driving Tests, CSET
  - How would our behavior change if we couldn't have redos?

Success is a journey,  
not a destination.  
The doing is often  
more important than  
the outcome.  
-- Arthur Ashe





## How to Bring Parents on Board

- The key here is Communication
- Grades are a prevalent element within our society from school, to rating businesses, to evaluating the quality of movies and as a result everyone is an “expert”
- Explain the changes but more importantly why the changes will benefit both the student and the parent.



## Final Thoughts

The implementation of standards based grading requires a complete re-envisioning of what structures are being put into place to support teachers and students. As a group educators must be prepared to ask if the practices they are putting into place represent the best possible outcomes for students or are simply a replication of “the way it’s always been done.”

The goal is to move our grading policies to a more sound practice in order to improve validity and to maintain the confidence of our students.



