

## Twitter Thread on Assessment and Grading

### in Sudden, Extended, On-line Teaching and Learning

[Composed and Posted by Rick Wormeli on March 20, 2020, with elements added in the days that followed. 'Want further conversation? Rick is available at [rick@rickwormeli.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:rick@rickwormeli.onmicrosoft.com)]

Given diverse family life situations, resources, levels of support, mental health, and tech access issues, grading things students have done at home via sudden online lessons is more than likely in inequitable. This means grades are likely to be inaccurate reports of learning, and some or many students do not get a fair shake at learning or at demonstrating what they've learned, which reflects serious grading bias; grade reports are distorted and perhaps inaccurate.

Having said that, however, teachers have been teaching online for years, so there are ways to mitigate some of these challenging and biased elements. Plus, some teachers may be required by administrators to grade student work that comes back to them during this time period. So, what principles and practices of assessment and grading still apply, whether we are grading in a F2F classroom, or via exclusively online interactions? Yeah, we might need to get creative on how to apply them, but they are still worth every effort. Let's take a look:

- We can still separate formative (coming to know) learning and assessment experiences from summative ones, facilitating helpful feedback and revising learning with formatives, but not making the formatives high stakes in nature (i.e. grades, %'s, rubric scores).
- We can still brainstorm (and let kids suggest) alternative ways to demonstrate evidence of learning and not get hung up on whether or not they did something so much as that they demonstrated learning. Unless we're teaching the test format itself, it's irrelevant, if we're after evidence of a standard.
- This means conferring with our subject-like colleagues and brainstorming multiple ways to elicit the same evidence of proficiency, and gosh, it turns out that there are usually dozens of ways to assess the same evidence.
- We're still going to be aware that students learn at different rates and not let an arbitrary timeline keep a student from learning.
- We're still channeling @tguskey and will focus on cultivating students and their talents instead of merely using grades to sort children.
- We can still disaggregate our reports, reporting less curriculum per symbol, & reporting by standards instead of a massive aggregate.
- We can be mindful not to conflate the report of one thing with the report of another (We still separate work habits from reports of academic proficiency).
- We can still focus on what students can carry forward and do independently of all assistance as the most accurate report of final proficiency.
- If we're worried about whether or not students are doing the work at home themselves, we can collaborate on ways to help students maintain that integrity and assure honor. Some starting ideas in how to minimize cheating and plagiarism are included in Rick's article on the topic at [rickwormeli.com/articles](http://rickwormeli.com/articles).

- We will still need to identify evidence for performance of different levels of proficiency regarding our standards, and to calibrate all of that with our subject like colleagues. And, we can still provide examples to students of different levels of proficiency that students can analyze in light of criteria for success for their own work on the same content. Analyzing others' efforts really catalyzes our own thinking about our own understandings.
- We can still use multiple descriptive feedback techniques, teach them to our students and their parents, and help them self-monitor how they're doing in relation to learning goals. This will also help build and monitor academic goals, which is often motivating.
- We can still do re-learning/re-assessing/re-do's if students have not learned to a solid level of proficiency, at least for the most leveraging of standards, and yes, we can still remove extra credit activities that do not actually elicit evidence of the same proficiencies.
- We can still study interval science and grading accuracy and get rid of zeroes on the 100 point scale.
- We can still separate reports of lateness from the reports of academic proficiency.
- And yes, we can still study research on how to build self-efficacy, executive function, self-discipline, and tenacity in students and see that none of it says to use grades, or to falsely report student proficiency based on elements that are not evidence of the standard itself.
- We can still see grades are accurate, ethical, helpful communication, not compensation, reward, affirmation, or validation.
- We can also choose to be fair (developmentally appropriate for what students need, equitable, even when it is different from what others might need to achieve the same level of learning or higher), instead of hiding behind claims we have to be equal.
- We can still begin with the end in mind (Covey) and hold to Rick Stiggins' reminder that students can hit targets they can see and that stand still for them. We can be overtly transparent with assessments at every turn so nobody wonders at the criteria for any level of proficiency.
- We can get up to speed on varied assessment prompts and test designs and use them, and we can ask students to perform more traditional assessment responses on paper, if they prefer, and send in a picture of it. If they want to include an audiofile of some sort to explain it, that's great!
- We can still do portfolios, though this time, e-portfolios, of their work over time, and ask students to reflect on their growth, and how each piece represents their learning regarding specific standards.
- We can definitely build our repertoire of activities to engage in content that also assess students formatively. A great place to start is Summarization in any Subject 2nd Ed by @dedrasedu and myself published by ASCD.
- Pass/Fail may be as far we go at first. As teachers get more comfortable with online teaching, learning, and assessing, however, they will grow more comfortable with distinctions among levels of proficiency, so we may need to allow at least three levels of reporting:

Proficient

Developing

No Evidence Presented

Of course, each of these needs to be clearly defined. If students go above and beyond, and the teacher feels it's truly the student's work, there can be a separate addendum indicting such.

**Caution when developing assessments and lessons online:** “But how will I grade it?” as our first thought before assigning something online should ring warning bells in our educator’s mind. The primary indicator as to whether or not something is worth pursuing in a lesson shouldn't be its ultimate grade-ability. Much of the important stuff we teach and that students learn defies easy quantifying and grading. We can't forego that key content and learning experience because we don't see a quick grading solution.

**Definitely Challenging:**

- Finding time to get enough evidence to constitute proficiency or a pattern thereof
- Equitable access to online content in students’ homes
- Equitable home support, resources, and sleep
- Raised anxiety, panic, and depression levels
- Limited teacher training in assessment design
- Administrators requiring grades on non-evidence tasks
- Required state/provincial testing
- Requiring students to demonstrate proficiency with anything that requires them to be together. ‘Important point, though: Creative responses to this issue have been blossoming all over the internet and it relatively solvable. So, yeah, do debates, book discussions, mock trials, performances, and the like.

**Final Note:**

Grading can be very inequitable and thereby, unethical, during this ramp up time for extended online learning, so we're well advised to limit it to only the very necessary, and even then, always keep it open to changing grades at any time. If we have to do it, though, don't lose sight of the principles of accurate, ethical grading. They still apply.

**Assistance as We Navigate New Grading Waters:**

On Twitter: @tguskey @TomSchimmer @mctownsley @garnet\_hillman @RoweRikW @MandyStalets @kenoc7 @leeannjung @CVULearns, @rickwormeli2, @myrondueck, among others.

Websites: [mctownsley.net/standards-based-grading/](http://mctownsley.net/standards-based-grading/), [tguskey.com](http://tguskey.com), [tomschimmer.com/about/](http://tomschimmer.com/about/), [www.rickwormeli.com](http://www.rickwormeli.com)

**Technology/Websites that really help with assessment, teaching, and grading:**

#SBLchat	Zoom
Flipgrid	Edmodo
Schoology	Seesaw
Quizziz	Padlet
Quizlet	Screencastify
Mentimeter	Skype
Kaizena	Voxer

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