



Educational Testing Service

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

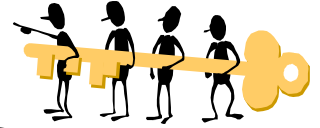
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KEYS TO QUALITY CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT



Accurate Assessment

Key 1: Clear Purpose

What's the purpose?
Who will use the results?
What will they use the results to do?

Key 2: Clear Targets

What are the learning targets?
Are they clear?
Are they appropriate?

Key 3: Sound Design

What method?
Quality questions?
Sampled how?
Avoid bias how?

Effectively Used

Key 4: Effective Communication

How manage information?
How report? To whom?

Key 5: Student Involvement

Students are users, too

Students can track progress and communicate, too

Students need to understand targets, too

Students can assess, too

PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH DESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK

My definition of feedback:

Forms of feedback I am familiar with:

Characteristics of effective feedback:

RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF FEEDBACK ON STUDENT LEARNING

The QUALITY of the feedback rather than its existence or absence is what determines its power. (Bangert-Downs, Kulik, Kulik, & Morgan, 1991; Sadler, 1989)

Effective learners operate best when they have insight into their own strengths and weaknesses and access to their own repertoires of strategies for learning. (Brown, 1994)

Feedback is most effective when it points out success and is designed to stimulate correction of errors relevant to the task. (Bloom)

Effective feedback points out successes and gives specific information about how to improve the performance or product. (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Black, et al, 2002; bloom, 1989; Brown, 1994)

Feedback is effective when it offers information about progress relative to the intended learning goal and about what action to take to reach the intended learning goal. (Hattie & Timperley, 2005)

Comments directed to the quality of the work--what was done well and what needs improving--increase student interest in the task and level of achievement. (Butler, 1988)

Teachers' feedback to pupils seems to serve social and managerial functions, often at the expense of the learning function. (Black & Wiliam, 1998)

Frequently feedback is used to push students to "do more" or to "do better," without being specific enough to help students know what to do. This type of feedback is generally ineffective. (Hattie & Timperley, 2005)

Research shows that feedback that emphasizes learning goals leads to greater learning gains than feedback that emphasizes self-esteem. (Ames, 1992; Butler, 1998; Dweck, 1986)

When receiving feedback emphasizing self-esteem, high-performing students often attribute their performance to effort and low-performing students attribute their performance to lack of ability. (Butler & Newman, 1995; Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Kluger & deNisi, 1996)

Feedback that cues the individual to direct attention to *self* (praise, effort, etc.) rather than to the *quality of the task* appears to have a negative effect on learning. Many studies speak to effective teachers praising less than average. (Cameron/Pierce, 1994; Kluger & DiNisi, 1996)

With regard to feedback, research makes the case for the use of descriptive, criterion-based feedback as opposed to numerical scoring or letter grades without clear criteria. (Butler & Neuman, 1995; Cameron & Pierce, 1994; Kluger & deNisi, 1996)

Feedback is effective when it addresses partial understanding. When student work demonstrates lack of understanding, feedback will not help. (Hattie & Timperley, 2005)

When providing feedback about what to do differently, focus on three key questions (Elawar and Corno, 1985):

- What is the key error?
- What is the probable reason why the student made the error?
- How can I guide the student to avoid the error in the future?

The giving of marks and the grading function are overemphasized, while the giving of useful advice and the learning function are underemphasized. (Black & Wiliam, 1998)

Intensive correction, where the teacher marks every error in every paper a student writes, is completely useless. Marking all errors is no more advantageous in terms of student growth than marking none of them. (Hillocks, 1986)

Grading every piece of homework is misdirected. A numerical grade does not show students how to improve their work. Further, students ignore comments when grades are given. (Butler, 1998)

When teachers substituted comments for grades, students engaged more productively in improving their work. (Black, et al, 2002)

CONCLUSION

Effective feedback

- Describes features of work or performance
- Relates directly to the learning targets and/or standards of quality
- Points out strengths and gives specific information about how to improve

Evaluative Feedback

Evaluative feedback sums up achievement and assigns a label. It expresses a judgment.

- Grades—A, B, C, D, F
- Letters—P for *proficient*, D for *developing*, B for *beginning*
- Numbers—4 for *exceeds standard*, 3 for *meets standard*, 2 for *approaching standard*, 1 for *does not meet standard*
- Words—Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor
- Other symbols—smiley faces, stars, pluses, checks, minuses, etc.
- Written comments—good work, needs work
- Stickers—Great Job! Awesome! Super!

Feedback that expresses approval or disapproval about the achievement or the student also falls into the category of evaluative feedback.

We often assign evaluative feedback to all work, even that which is for practice. Not only is this not necessary, it is in many instances counterproductive.

Descriptive Feedback

Descriptive feedback offers information about the work, product, or performance relative to the intended learning. *Effective* descriptive feedback has the following characteristics:

- Is value neutral—avoids praise or blame
- Focuses on the intended learning
- Shows where the work is right or wrong and why
- Pinpoints strengths and identifies areas for improvement in terms of the intended learning
- Takes into account the amount of corrective information the learner can act on at one time
- Models the kind of thinking students will engage in when they self-assess
- Can be used by students to take action to improve
- Does not cause the learner to shut down

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.

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?

Source: *Report Card Grading: Strategies and Solutions*. © 2004 ETS ATI

Outline of *Report Card Grading: Strategies and Solutions*

Use this outline of issues to track your progress through the workshop:

1. What should be the purpose for grades?
 - a. Use them to communicate about achievement?
 - b. Use them to motivate students?
 - c. If the two come into conflict, which should win?
 - d. "Report card grades should be used as a ."

2. What student characteristics should be assessed and factored into the computation of grades?
 - a. Student achievement?
 - b. Student's intelligence/aptitude/ability?
 - c. Student's level of effort or motivation?
 - d. Student's attitude?
 - e. Compliance with school or classroom rules?

3. What evidence of school achievement should be used?
 - a. Performance on daily assignments?
 - b. Results of classroom interaction during instruction?
 - c. Results of paper and pencil tests and quizzes?
 - d. Performance assessment observations and judgments?
 - e. Teacher's intuitions about student achievement?

4. What are the steps in sound grading practices?
 - a. What should students know?
 - b. What is the most important function of report card grading?
 - c. "In a standards-driven system, are responsible for maximizing. . ."

5. Other key grading issues.
 - a. Should we grade on achievement status or growth over time?
 - b. How should we transform performance assessment ratings into grades?
 - c. Should we grade on a curve or on pre-set standards?
 - d. Should we average performance over time for grading? When is it counterproductive?
 - e. How should we grade team performance in cooperative learning activities?
 - f. What about extra credit? Is it a hindrance or a help to the grading process?
 - g. How do we use common achievement goals when students start at different levels of abilities (i.e. mainstreamed students, advanced student, etc.)?
 - h. How do we address evaluation anxiety when grading students?

Source: *Report Card Grading: Strategies and Solutions*. © 2004 ETS ATI

Three Grading Principles

1. The purpose of grades is to communicate.
2. Grades communicate about achievement.
3. Grades communicate about achievement at a point in time.

ATI Grading Guidelines

1. *Organizing the gradebook*
 - **Arrange gradebook entries according to achievement target.**
2. *Including factors in the final grade*
 - Report and summarize achievement evidence separately from other student characteristics.
 - Use extra credit work only if it supplies additional evidence of achievement.
 - Record a score of zero only if that is the score on the work.
 - Handle borderline cases by collecting additional evidence of student learning.
3. *Considering assessment purpose*
 - Use assessments *for* learning as the basis for providing students with descriptive feedback they can use to see how to improve; do not factor them into report card grades without a compelling rationale.
4. *Considering most recent information*
 - Base grades on the most current evidence of the student's level of achievement.
5. *Summarizing information and determining the final grade*
 - Make final grades criterion referenced.
 - Convert, weight, and combine information with care.
 - Convert rubric scores to grades using a decision rule.
 - Select the best measure of central tendency to use in combining assessment information into a final grade.
6. *Verifying assessment quality*
 - Base all grades on verifiably accurate assessments of student achievement.
7. *Involving students*
 - Keep students apprised of their current level of achievement.

Source: *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning: Doing It Right—Using It Well*, Chapter 10