

## Chapter 10 More Grading Issues

(Grading systems, Grading exceptional students, Computer grading programs, Calculating GPA's, Other legal issues, Grading policy)

One of the greatest challenges of using report cards is that they have traditionally been used to report out on how a student has succeeded based on achievement linked to a common task. This creates natural problems for students who have difficulty with written output and has often benefitted students who could create nice looking products. There are also great inconsistencies with terms of usage around weighting, averaging, missing work and whether or not students should be able to redo work and how that should be factored in (which is why you are reading this book). The use of report cards has been debated since they were first implemented, which also is when the focus of learning has been about what grade the student was going to see on the report.

Shifting to an eportfolio with a focus on descriptive feedback allows the focus of learning to change. The focus is no longer about the mark that was received, but on the feedback as to how the learning could be further improved. Consciously or unconsciously those who are determining the curriculum delivery must ask themselves not what the learner should be graded on but on what the student (not the class) needs to learn. We need learners to seek the right answers to their questions, not worry about cramming for a memorization focused test and focusing about the almighty grade, and ensuring that they learned. This leads to a focus on learning standards being achieved rather than a set of tasks being completed.

Collating this information into a grade book can be complex. It can help to have a running record of learning outcomes along the top with student names in rows (example from BC's curriculum):

English Language Arts 7	BIG IDEA	Curricular Competency	Content
	Exploring and sharing multiple perspectives extends our thinking	Synthesize ideas from a variety of sources to build understanding	metacognitive strategies
student 1			
student 2			

Where it becomes personalized is when we do not simply place a number or letter in the record (unless it connects to a rubric/learning standard where the definition of the number or letter is made explicit) but providing an exemplar, possibly including individual descriptive feedback, that can be referred back to. This is much easier when using an ongoing portfolio system so that examples of work linked to the standard can be improved upon throughout the learning term.

English Language Arts 7	BIG IDEA	Curricular Competency	Content
	Exploring and sharing multiple perspectives extends our thinking	Synthesize ideas from a variety of sources to build understanding	metacognitive strategies
<b>student 1</b>	reading and watching a short story & video interpretation and imagining they were a minor character	eportfolio example: speech to class comparing two versions	student was working on seeing story from another characters perspective
<b>student 2</b>	reading two poem about the same topic	exploring a video review of the poetry to get another point of view	eportfolio share: student views compare/contrast to other reviewer

This then leads to having a variety of learning artifacts that can be reviewed in order to see accomplishments and learnings that the student has made over time. Within the portfolio there should be specific descriptive feedback that can be reviewed to see if the learner made progress based on the areas for growth identified by the teacher. The standards and learning outcomes do not have to change, but the way the student shows their ability to accomplish this can be very personalized.

The personalized feedback then becomes part of an ongoing feedback-loop where new information and learnings can be applied (or re-applied) to an artifact of learning. The focus then needs to turn towards how to provide the feedback in a meaningful manor. When starting out, it can be advantageous for both the teacher and the student to start simple; such as using “two stars and a wish” where you focus on two positives and one area to focus on improving. This can expand as both participants int he feedback loop become more comfortable with the process and establish what communication strategies work best for them.

A summation of learning can also be provided to indicate if the level of work is within anticipated age/grade expectations; as an example a project linked to a literature study could indicate what reading level the text is based on and what grade learning outcomes the strategies come from. When necessary, a grade can then be assigned based on a portfolio review of the learning represented based on specific subjects (Belanoff, P., & Dickson, M. 1991 Portfolios : process and product. Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton/Cook Publishers) . It does not need to factor in distractions such as the amount of time it took, attendance, the amount of practice needed, or comparisons to how other students did on the same task. It allows differentiation to be shown authentically; whether the student is gifted or has challenges, they are still being given descriptive feedback to improve their work based on what they have done and what they can do next.