

A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades

By Ken O'Connor

Fixes for Grading Practices that Distort Achievement

- Fix 1: Don't include **student behaviors** (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc.) in grades; include **only achievement**.
- Fix 2: Don't reduce marks on "work" submitted **late**; provide support for the learner.
- Fix 3: Don't give points for **extra credit** or use bonus points; seek only evidence that more work has resulted in a higher level of achievement.
- Fix 4: Don't punish **academic dishonesty** with reduced grades; apply other consequences and reassess to determine actual level of achievement.
- Fix 5: Don't consider **attendance** in grade determination; report absences separately.
- Fix 6: Don't include **group scores** in grades; use only individual achievement evidence.

Fixes for Low Quality or Poorly Organized Evidence

- Fix 7: Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods or simply summarize into a single grade: organize and report evidence by **standards/learning goals**.
- Fix 8: Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide **clear descriptions of achievement expectations**.
- Fix 9: Don't assign grades based on a student's achievement **compared to other students**; compare each student's performance to preset standards.
- Fix 10: Don't rely on evidence gathered using assessments that fail to meet standards of quality; rely only on **quality assessments**.

Fixes for Inappropriate Grade Calculation

Fix 11: Don't rely on the mean; consider other measures of central tendency and use professional judgment.

Fix 12: Don't include **zeros** in grade determination when evidence is missing or as a punishment; use alternatives, such as reassessing to determine real achievement, or use "I" for Incomplete or Insufficient Evidence.

Fixes to Support Learning

Fix 13: Don't use information from **formative assessments** and **practice** to determine grades; use only summative evidence.

Fix 14: Don't summarize evidence accumulated over time when learning is developmental and will grow with time and repeated opportunities; in those instances, emphasize more **recent achievement**.

Fix 15: Don't leave students out of the grading process. **Involve students**; they can - and should - play key roles in assessment and grading that promote achievement.