

Youth Advisory Council - Paradigms & Possibilities Series

AUTHOR INFO

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(she/her)

Age: 15 years old

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5 emojis that describe me:

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"My best learning experience was a field trip in middle school. We stayed at a ranch that recreated the living conditions of different countries, spending a night in their conditions and making or trading for our own food. It was not a conventional learning experience, but it was enjoyable, community-building, and left long-lasting impacts."

"I'm curious about learning about culture around the world, especially food and fashion."



GRADING SYSTEMS: I want to look at the differences between letter grading, standards-based grading, and number grading. I also want to look at different types of assessments (major and minor), and their weights, along with redo and late policies.

100%

I've experienced standards-based grading, number grading, and a combination of the two, and will also go through letter grading during the summer when taking a community college class. I think the way that an assignment or test is graded, and the weight it has, changes the effort the student puts into actually understanding the topic and how they approach it. However, in my experience, the standards-based grading that I had was basically just number grades with a rubric. Though students could redo some assignments until we reached mastery, it still translated to number grades and didn't feel much different than if we had just been graded normally.



In terms of major, minor, and daily grades, I think that daily or formative grades don't get enough weight as they should. At my old school, some grades had 0% weight, and at my current school, daily grades usually have 10% weight despite having around ten assignments in that category. This means that students have less motivation to put full effort into these assignments, which ruins the point of daily practice and check-ins after each lesson. The daily grades should have more weight to encourage students to ensure they understood the lesson each day, instead of trying to figure it all out right before a test.

CONSIDERING DIFFERENT APPROACHES

[Trying standards-based grading in Palo Alto, CA:](#)

- Still using letter grades, which is confusing for students and teachers
- Mixed reactions from students, parents, and teachers -
- Goal is to give students the chance to revise and improve, have optional homework for practice, and have multiple opportunities to show reach the standards
- Asks them to apply knowledge instead of memorize everything
- Scores students on a range of 1-4 depending on how much mastery they show, but it is translated into letter grades
- Takes more of teachers' time
- A lot of effort to remake how they enter information into the gradebook and how they function, but they are working for equity

[Changing grading practices with an eye on equity:](#)

- A teacher started reflecting on how equitable his grading policies were
- His system was originally categories of types of assignments, each given a percent weight; realized that evaluating the mastery of content was very subjective and could be biased
- Stopped grading homework, as he thought it may be unfair to students who had responsibilities outside of school that didn't allow them time to do homework
- The amount of homework [done] dropped at first, but students started doing it once they saw their quiz and test grades drop
- More of his students realized the way to improve their grades was to improve their understanding through their own motivation

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GATHERING IDEAS FROM OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE...

If you have experienced standards-based grading, did you think it was better, the same, or worse than normal letter or number grading?

- It was about the same or maybe even a little less helpful than regular based grading.
- The feedback I got wasn't specific about what I did well or needed help with, and they were more of general statements like circling "somewhat understood the material" on a rubric, which wasn't specific enough to be helpful.

Do you think extra credit assignments are helpful? Do you do them? Do you think they are equitable?

- I like ones better that actually help with content and show understanding about it rather than random assignments like going to a museum.
- I don't get a lot of chances for extra credit, so I haven't done a lot of them.
- They can and can't be equitable, so it depends on the teacher to figure out the types of assignments that everyone can do, but still relate to the material.



Do you think that the benefits of redos outweigh the chance that students will put in less effort... because they know that they have something to fall back on?

I think that the number of students who actually use redos outnumbers the amount of students who abuse the policies. Punishing those that actually need redos isn't worth it just because some students take advantage of the policy.

What is your opinion on behavioral grades like participation grades?

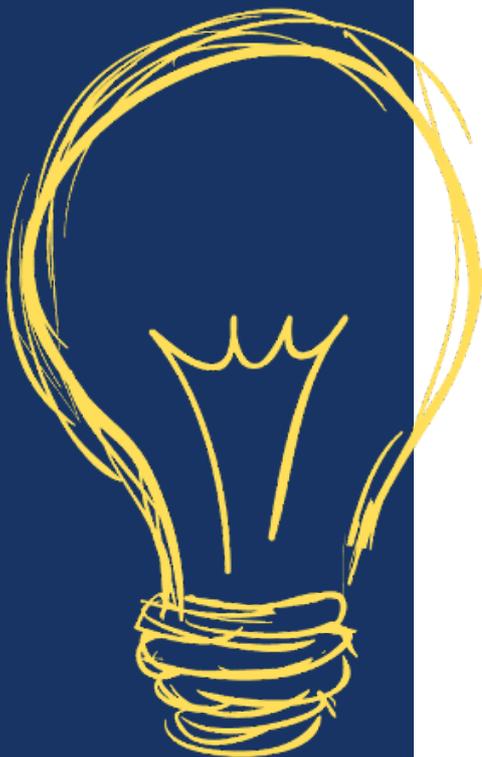
- Though it makes sense for foreign language classes and speech classes, it can be unfair for people with anxiety.
- Forced participations can make raising hands and speaking scary, and make students uncomfortable to participate.
- There are better ways to document participation in ways that don't stress people out unnecessarily, like written work.
- Personally, verbal participation grades stress me out, and I would much rather respond on paper for the grade instead of have to speak in front of the class.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS...

After reading about the advantages and disadvantages of standards-based grading, I understand now that number and letter grades will almost always end up being the final scores in the gradebook, unless schools completely change their gradebook system and colleges change how they review high school transcripts. Since standards-based grading currently almost always turns into letter or number grades and takes a lot of time for teachers, I think the best approach is to apply the principles of standards-based grading to current grade systems. For example, teachers could allow assignment redos to full credit, give specific feedback, encourage students to reflect and see what certain areas they are struggling in, offer rubrics with the standards for each number or letter grade, and finding ways to support each individual's learning and studying style.

My perspective about daily grades changed a lot after reading the article about equitable grading. I realized that I was biased to my personal experience, as I personally need a teacher to give me assignments that reinforce what I learned and allow me to check what I don't understand, especially because I respond better to external pressure than internal pressure. After reading the article, I saw how students who have their own methods of studying may see the daily assignments as a waste of time, especially those who need to have jobs to support their family, and they shouldn't be punished for using their own studying methods.

However, I don't agree that homework shouldn't be graded and extra credit shouldn't be allowed. Grades put a lot of stress on students, so having something to fall back on makes heavier weighted assignments or tests less intimidating. If all the weight is on tests and quizzes, students will get extremely stressed, especially those who know the material but aren't good test-takers. However, it was interesting to see that students started doing homework of their own accord to understand the material, as that is a very beneficial impact for both studying and life skills. I agree that retakes and corrections should be encouraged and allowed.



Feldman (2019) suggests:

- To take away extra credit since it is for people who have extra time and money and the assignments usually don't connect towards the material
- Require retakes for scores under a certain number
- Encouraging retakes, but putting parameters on them to retake after showing growth or reflecting on what they missed the first time
- Not including behavioral standards in grades like on-time work, organization, participation, etc. Teachers can have discussions about them, especially if it heavily impacts a student's grade, but if the student is showing mastery, it shouldn't be accounted in grades