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Grading and Learning: Practices That Support Student Achievement

By Susan M. Brookhart

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to *Grading and Learning: Practices That Support Student Achievement* by Susan M. Brookhart. The strategies in this book are designed for teachers to use to assign grades in a way that supports self-assessment and goal setting for students and indicates to teachers the level of success of their instruction.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way sequentially through the book or to focus on topics addressed in a particular chapter.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to make grading a constructive process that promotes learning.

Chapter 1

All Students Can Learn

1. What are the principles that should influence your grading decisions?
2. The author provides an example scenario in which these principles are not followed. What are the potential negative outcomes when grading is about discipline and control rather than learning?
3. Why is it important that the concept of achievement be included in the definition of *grade*?
4. What are some of the external pressures that influence grading policies? What challenges do they pose for achievement-based grading?

Chapter 2

Grading on Standards for Achievement

1. In the scenario described in this chapter, how did Ms. Davis do a disservice to her students by not grading on standards for achievement? What could she have done that would have been more helpful for Courtney and Aaliyah?
2. How can teachers use achievement-based grades to plan future instruction? How can students use achievement-based grades to move forward?
3. What is the difference between state and/or Common Core standards, curriculum goals, and intended learning goals?
4. Why is it important that each assessment have definitions for each performance level that are communicated to students?
5. How can you still use grading principles based on standards even if your school does not use standards-based report cards?

Chapter 3

Grading Strategies That Support and Motivate Student Effort and Learning

1. What three basic elements contribute to self-determination?
2. Why is it important to use grading policies and instruction that allows students self-determination and self-regulation?
3. In the example scenario in this chapter, how did Mr. Miller use grading policies and practices to help support Jayden’s self-regulation?
4. Describe a tool or strategy you can use in the classroom to help students control their own learning.

Chapter 4

Designing and Grading Assessments to Reflect Student Achievement

1. How are students affected when they are unaware of learning goals or do not understand how their work is evaluated?
2. Describe what distinguishes high-quality assessment “ingredients” from poor test items and performance assessment tasks.
3. Why is it important to report grades on assignments in the same manner that they are reported on report cards?
4. What benefits result from using formative assessment and providing students with a variety of examples of high-quality work?
5. Why are pop quizzes an ineffective and inaccurate way of assessing student learning? What is a better alternative?
6. How can you address behavior and other non-achievement issues separately from grades?

Chapter 5

Designing Report Card Grading Policies to Reflect Student Achievement

1. What is the benefit of including a progress measure in addition to reporting achievement on standards-based report cards?
2. How can “blueprint thinking” help create a reporting system that accurately reflects a student’s achievement?
3. What are the benefits of reporting nonachievement factors? Why should they be reported separately from standards-based achievement grades?
4. Why is it important to have a clearly stated, documented grading policy at the classroom and district level? What are the benefits of involving students in the creation of grading policies?
5. In the example scenario for Strategy 9, the concept of a standards-based report card seems lost. What could Ms. Fisher have done differently to improve her grading and reporting system? How would the results have been different?
6. Why is it important to use multiple measures in grading?

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7. What factors should you use to decide how individual assessment grades should be weighted?

8. What process should be used to make a determination on a borderline grade? What factors should be considered? What factors should not be considered?

Chapter 6

Beginning and Implementing Learning-Focused Report Card Grading

Policies

1. What is the danger of approaching grading reform with discussions that focus on teaching, policy, and the operational details of grading rather than the purpose of grading (learning)?
2. What is an effective way to get educators to focus their grading-reform discussions on student learning (rather than focusing on specific aspects of policy)?
3. As you move toward standards-based grading in your school or district, what measures can you use to help guide teachers who are not used to using learning-focused assessments and grading?
4. Why is it important for districts to provide teachers with grading guidelines that include examples and nonexamples?

Chapter 7

Communicating With Students and Parents

1. Describe the three additional methods of communication (aside from report cards). How can you invite responses to each of these in a way that creates a dialogue?
2. What kinds of information are best reported through a narrative? What possible forms can a narrative take?
3. What preparation is necessary prior to a conference to ensure its success?
4. What are the possible settings in which portfolios can be used to communicate student achievement?