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Pathways to Proficiency: Implementing Evidence-Based Grading

By Troy Gobble, Mark Onuscheck, Anthony R. Reibel, and Eric Twadell

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Pathways to Proficiency: Implementing Evidence-Based Grading* by Troy Gobble, Mark Onuscheck, Anthony R. Reibel, and Eric Twadell.

Pathways to Proficiency details a practical creative model for adopting more effective, evidence-based grading practices in K–12 education.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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Chapter 1

Preparation

1. List the three key points that should be remembered during the preparation phase of implementing evidence-based grading.
2. In what ways did the authors' team prepare to and decide to change to an evidence-based grading model?
3. Before teacher team members can prepare for evidence-based grading, on what four commitments must they reach a consensus?
4. What is a *stop doing* list, and what can this tool help determine? What grading practices, or traps, have you fallen into that you've had to stop doing immediately, or that you believe you should stop doing presently?
5. Why is the percentage system a flawed grading model, and why has it persisted in spite of its known flaws? Why should teachers base grades on proficiency levels instead?

6. How are the act of reporting and the act of grading different? Why do many schools use evidence in reporting practices but not in grading practices? In what ways should evidence be properly integrated into grading and reporting practices?

Chapter 2

Incubation

1. Why is the incubation phase valuable to teacher team members in a shift to evidence-based grading? Also, why does pushback often accompany the incubation phase?
2. In reading about the authors' team's experience in the incubation phase, what do you notice about how the team members related to the reason behind the shift and the ideas that came up about grading practices?
3. What does *clarity* mean in evidence-based grading? Why should clarity not necessarily be synonymous with *specificity* in regard to evidence-based grading?
4. Why is feedback considered the grade in an effective evidence-based grading model? Provide an example each of what reactive feedback, prescriptive feedback, and inclusive feedback might sound like in your classroom.
5. List the questions teachers can ask to check if their assessments maintain a healthy balance between *right thinking* and *right answers*. Why is evidence-based grading more concerned with verifying right thinking than with verifying right answers?

6. Describe the past qualities and original purpose of the gradebook and how the gradebook's function and visibility have changed over time. What should an evidence-based gradebook accomplish?

Chapter 3

Insight

1. Why is the insight phase of implementing evidence-based grading exciting? What three key points should teachers keep in mind during this phase?
2. How does an evidence-based plan help students avoid shallow learning? What learning opportunities does evidence-based lesson structuring afford students?
3. In your own words, define *no-outcome assessments*, what teachers and students must do in regard to these assessments, and what these assessments allow teachers to examine. In contrast, what do *almost-there assessments* allow teachers to examine?
4. How is mimicry different from cognitive engagement, and why is cognitive engagement the preferred result of student learning? Come up with a few of your own examples of questions that invite mimicry and questions that invite cognitive engagement.
5. In designing a rubric, why is it crucial to maintain a delicate balance between classification and communication? How might you bring greater balance to one of your assessments based on this guidance?

6. Why is scoring evidence-based assessments much different from scoring points-based assessments? What is the goal of scoring evidence-based assessments, and what two objectives should teachers focus on to achieve this goal?

Chapter 4

Evaluation

1. What three questions can teachers ask themselves to check whether their assessments are evidence based? What three questions should teachers consider to ensure they effectively communicate learning targets?
2. Consider the sample letter in figure 4.3 (pages 109–110) that explains to students’ parents the purpose and criteria of evidence-based grading. Why is it important to provide parents with this clarifying information before a course or semester starts? Record how you might prepare a similar letter for your students’ parents.
3. According to Peter Brown, Henry Roediger, and Mark McDaniel, what three types of practices are essential to make student learning stick?
4. How do teachers tend to apply retakes improperly, and how does this differ from the conditions in which retakes are actually useful? What misconceptions surround retakes? Which, if any, of these misconceptions persist in your school?
5. Why do Thomas Guskey and Lee Ann Jung believe students should receive multiple grades, separately reporting their behavior and their academic achievement? Describe a

case in which a student's behavior inadvertently became part of his or her academic grade and how an evidence-based gradebook could have helped avoid this.

6. Through what three avenues does evidence-based grading produce responsibility and self-reliance in students?

Chapter 5

Elaboration

1. List the six core beliefs in evidence-based grading. What are the biggest lessons you learn from considering the components of these six core beliefs?
2. In your own words, describe the subtle yet undeniable elements of student performance that aid teachers in transitioning to evidence-based grading.
3. For what reasons and myths do teachers often ignore the *central tendency*, and why do the authors disagree with avoiding the central tendency? What three possibilities does Thomas Guskey suggest for determining central tendency?
4. Why is it important to account for blips in student performance in a proficiency-based system, and why are they easier to spot in this system rather than a system of averaging grades? Describe a case in which a proficiency-based system could have spotted a blip in one of your students' performance.
5. Why are final exams a tricky topic in evidence-based grading? What do teachers outside of evidence-based grading often look to final exams to tell them, and how does this differ from a final exam's role in evidence-based grading?

6. In what forms can teams and teachers collaborate to implement evidence-based grading?

Which of these forms best suits your school and your teachers, and why is this the case?