Equitable Grading During Remote Learning

New Visions for Public Schools

What are equitable grading and feedback practices during this period of remote learning? Joe Feldman, author of Grading for Equity, provided key understandings of equitable grading during COVID-19 along with practices schools should consider regarding grades in a recent webinar. This document provides considerations for equitable grading during school closure that aligns to his webinar and to his book, *Grading for Equity*.

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Key Understandings
about equitable grading during school closure

Grades should reflect what students know and students may not be able to demonstrate this during COVID-19 because

- Cognitive capacity is impaired when stressed
- Abrupt transition to a new learning platform
- SEL resources and wrap around services are not reliable or available
- Impact of home life on academic success is hard to understand
- Parents may not be able to support students with learning
- Experiences of grief, trauma, economic hardships, or housing insecurity
- Teachers are not set up to do their best work during these strained times

Due to all of these reasons, grades are unlikely to be accurate reflections of what students know.

Equitable Grading Considerations
during Remote Learning

Do No Harm

During school closure, grades are unlikely to be an accurate reflection of what students know. Therefore, grading policies and practices should not increase stress or anxiety for a student during this time, especially due to factors that are outside of their control.

Assessing Maintenance Skills

Prioritizing a *do no harm* grading mentality and focusing the bulk of instruction on **maintaining skills** already taught will support students in building a strong foundation.

Assessing New Skills

Teaching and assessing a few key **new skills** in tandem with maintenance skills will support students in accessing content they will be learning next year.

Consideration 1 - Do No Harm

Review individual student gradebooks and make adjustments

- ❏ **Do** a thorough review of the student's technology access and the school outreach conducted before entering a missing assignment that impacts the student's final grade. Assume the student may be struggling with barriers to accessing their education before communicating failure. If unsure about the student's barriers or the help the student has received to mitigate them, use the ***missing indicator or exempt feature*** for assignments.
- ❏ **Do** use a score of 55 or higher if entering a missing assignment that will impact the student's final grade. 55 or higher makes it mathematically possible for the student to pass; grades <54 make it much harder to obtain a 65. Do not enter 0's.
- ❏ **Do** use the ***MIS code***, ***missing indicator,*** or ***exempt*** from final grade features.
    - ❏ Add a comment to indicate if giving the student extra time, help, and make-up opportunities
    - ❏ Use this gradebook guidance to see how the *missing indicator* shows that a score was entered for the week and the student can still receive two scores without it negatively impacting their grade
- ❏ **Do** provide students opportunities to revise assignments before moving onto new assignments. Entering two scores a week for a student does not mean they need to have two new assignments each week.
- ❏ **Do** provide feedback and grades on assignments and not on participation or engagement.
- ❏ **Do** use a rubric to prepare for conversations with teachers about their gradebook.

Case Study

A student hands in two assignments and one doesn't reach mastery. The teacher conferences with the student and gives her feedback (both verbal and written). Afterwards, the teacher provides her with one week to make up the assignment. The teacher uses the missing indicator in PowerTeacher so the one assignment doesn't impact the student's overall grade. The student hands in the revised assignment the following week and attains mastery. The teacher does not change the missing indicator for last week, but adds a new score for this week that is passing. The teacher only provides the student one new assignment for this week. This ensures the student has 2 scores per week and extra time to revise an assignment without a negative impact.

Considerations as a Community

- ❏ How are grading expectations and policies documented clearly for students and families?
- ❏ What opportunities are provided to students and families to review the grading policies, as well as answer their questions?
- ❏ How can the expectation of two scores added a week, per the CMO guidance, be met without creating anxiety for students?

- ❏ Review the different ways to use the *missing indicator* in PowerTeacher and norm as a community about how it will be used (i.e. an assignment can be missing with a 55 or missing with a comment that they are being given extra time).
- ❏ Determine how to get assignments to students who do not have access to Google Classroom or regular internet access. How are scoring guidelines modified to be equitable for these students if assignments are living in Google Classroom? Where will this guideline be stated?
- ❏ Determine how students will be given a chance to receive extra time, extra support, or multiple opportunities to revise an assignment and how that will be entered into PowerTeacher.

Consideration 2 - Assessing Maintenance of Skills

Teaching and Assessing Skills Learned During SY19-20

- ❏ **Do** fous on maintenance skills more than introducing new skills until the students have demonstrated consistent ability to transfer and generalize the skills that have been taught.
- ❏ **Do** give students asynchronous assignments they can be successful at independently for maintenance skills. Asynchronous work provides opportunities for teachers to individualize assignments for students based on their skill needs and provide them individualized feedback. See how to give students feedback on their writing here. It can be generalized to other subject areas.
- ❏ **Do** use the ***missing indicator*** and not the ***MIS*** code if an assignment has not been individualized or has feedback.

Case Study

Prior to remote learning, the teacher placed emphasis on an annotation strategy that helps students identify relevant evidence to respond to text-dependent questions. Currently, the teacher is noticing that students are copying directly from the text (cutting and pasting) to respond to assignment questions. Answers vary with correctly and incorrectly identified text responses. Although the assignment states to take annotations, the teacher is only grading the questions. For the next assignment, the teacher decides to ask students to take annotation notes on the who, what, where, when, why in the text in addition to answering the questions; here the teacher can confirm if students can identify the main idea of the reading and can also address misconceptions from students' notes that may be leading to incorrect question responses. The teacher will enter the annotation notes and questions as one grade.

Considerations as a Community

- ❏ Is teaching being approached with the summative assessment in mind? In other words, when a learning cycle is launched, has the summative assessment been designed and key skills for assessment determined?

- ❏ What are the priority skills taught to students before switching to remote learning and what support is provided to students to maintain those skills?
- ❏ How many assignments are designed to assess the maintenance of key skills needed for the summative assessment?
- ❏ What data student and class level data is being used to determine if maintenance skills need to be re-taught? How is time built in to reteach these skills before the summative assessment?
- ❏ How is feedback provided to students beyond a grade in PowerSchool? How are students able to use this feedback to demonstrate deeper learning?

Consideration 3 - Assessing New Skills

Teaching and Assessing New Skills for the Remainder of SY19-20

- ❏ **Do** place more emphasis on assessing maintenance of skills (i.e.80%) than introducing new skills (i.e. 20%)
- ❏ **Do** provide students a minimum of three attempts to practice a new skill, after receiving explicit instruction. This includes two rounds of feedback before the third attempt is submitted. See an explicit instruction checklist here. One way teachers can provide explicit instruction is to create short videos students can watch and rewatch asynchronously and synchronously before being given opportunities to practice.
- ❏ **Do** provide multiple means of expression (i.e. discussion, audio recorded think alouds) to help scaffold practicing the new skill.
- ❏ **Do** record these attempts in PowerSchool. One way to do this is using the ***missing indicator*** and not ***MIS*** until the final attempt is submitted. See how to here.
- ❏ **Do** give students positive feedback in order to emphasize what they ARE able to do in a remote learning context, not just what they are struggling with. For example, two glows and a grow. Keep feedback clear, concise, and when possible, connected to a rubric or inventory of skills being assessed. See how to give students feedback on their writing here. It can be generalized to other subject areas.

Case Study

The original scope and sequence for Living Environment stipulated that students should meet all of the Biology-related NY State science learning standards by the end of the year. How should the science department work together to prioritize which skills they want to make sure the students maintain and which new skills and standards will be addressed before the end of the year? They decide the 5Es protocol will be the skill they want to ensure student's maintain. They aren't sure how to do this via an asynchronous model so they begin brainstorming ways teachers can do this. The team decides to record a model of thinking through the 5Es protocol so all teachers can post and send out. They also decide to make a short checklist of the 5Es and add that checklist to the bottom of the assignments they give to students. This will help them to give students feedback on their use of 5Es to think through a problem but also feedback on if they

developed a correct answer. As for new skills, they decided to review the content for the rest of the year and decide on which content is most important for success in the following year if they move on to another area of science. Once they decide this, they will design the summative assessment together and make a pacing calendar to determine how many opportunities for practice they will provide each learning cycle. Their goal is to provide at least three practice attempts with rounds of feedback.

Considerations as a Community

- ❏ Have pacing calendars been adjusted by backwards planning and identifying the high priority new skills to teach by the end of the semester and/or each learning cycle?
- ❏ How are new skills being modeled for students and explicit instruction being provided?
- ❏ What modifications have been made to formative and summative assessment scoring rubrics so students understand changes to scoring during this time?
- ❏ How many opportunities will a student have to practice a new skill taught and receive feedback on their practice before a score that will be entered into PowerSchool?
- ❏ How will all teachers enter scores for student practice attempts and how will all teachers give feedback to the student?
- ❏ How will assessment grades of new skills be weighted in comparison to weighting of assessments that measure maintenance of skills?
- ❏ For students who are unable to access instruction online or struggle to learn through online platforms, how will all teachers use the grading options in PowerSchool to communicate progress to the student while still being supportive of their situation at home?

Resources

- Do No Harm Rubric for Equitable Grading
- Equitable Grading - Do No Harm Case Study Activity
- PowerSchool Guidance for School Leaders
    - Using codes and comments to communicate with families
    - Tracking grade submission to communicate student progress to families