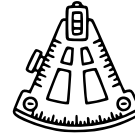




DOCTRIVA LEARNING
Keep Teaching and Learning Alive

Core Teaching Framework Assessing with Purpose



The teacher grounds assessment in learning.

Assessing with Purpose addresses how teachers navigate the sometimes competing purposes of grading: documenting progress, ranking performance, and influencing learning. The teacher's view of student performance includes observations of the student work that produced particular scores and grades. It is closely interwoven with planning and instruction.

Part 1: Understanding Assessment

First Principle: Grades are a subset of assessments.

Assessments flow along a spectrum, moving from informal and ungraded observations through lower-stake formative checks, ultimately reaching higher-stake summative grades.

Second Principle: Parents, administrators, and students should be able to look at grades and gain accurate information about student performance.

The grades in a grade book should tell a story or paint a picture of how a student has performed over the course of a grading period. Where possible, grades should show the progression from the introduction to and initial work with learning goals towards greater, summative assessments. This can help students, parents, and administrators see patterns and help adjust a student's trajectory.



Third Principle: The complete picture of student performance is complex and imperfect.

The complete picture of student performance includes grades, ungraded process observations, and external assessments such as standardized testing. There can be discrepancies in these various measurements which makes the overall picture more complex, but that is a reflection of the overall imperfection of the process. It is not a flaw, just a reality.

One student might test well but not complete daily work. Another student might struggle with timed tests but demonstrate deep understanding in projects and discussions. Yet another might perform well in class but poorly on standardized measures.

The teacher's professional vision, developed through daily observation, interaction, and assessment, is what makes sense of these discrepancies. The teacher serves as the anchor that keeps grading grounded in the reality of student learning beyond just grades and scores.

Summary grades tend to be volatile when there are few grades in the system such as at the beginning of a grading period. By the end of a grading period, summary grades should be stable enough that any anomalous grades show very little impact on the summary grades.

Part 2: Designing Assessment Systems

Fourth Principle: Taking grades is a process of strategic data collection.

As with any exercise in data analysis, more data points can lead to a better understanding of the whole but only if those data points are meaningful and manageable. Quality matters as much as quantity. Grades should build from smaller, more frequent assessments toward larger, more summative ones. This progression provides early warning when students are struggling. Small daily grades reveal problems before they become larger failures.



Having too many assessments, however can create noise rather than clarity, overwhelming both teacher and students and leading to assessment fatigue. Different kinds of assignments and assessments contribute to a more complete picture of student performance, but this must be balanced with the time and effort both students and teachers must invest.

The goal is strategic assessment: enough data to understand student learning clearly, varied enough to capture different dimensions of performance, but focused enough to remain manageable and meaningful for everyone involved.

Fifth Principle: In K-12 education, we are not just teaching subjects, we are introducing students to the importance of consistent and sustained effort in learning and achieving goals.

Consistent effort and work should have value in the grading system. Including them in the grading system demonstrates a commitment to them. Doing so can also address two particular problem areas common to the grading process. The first is the student who does well on assessments but ignores daily work. Small assignments that are easy to create and grade can keep this kind of student from achieving the highest levels of distinction without regular participation and engagement. The second is the student who works hard and steadily, but may struggle with certain kinds of assessments. These same small assignments can help recognize the real achievements of these students.

The consistent work dimension of grading teaches students that sustained effort matters, and that the process of learning has value beyond just the final demonstration of knowledge. It also provides the teacher with ongoing information about student engagement and understanding.

Sixth Principle: Understanding how a summary grade is calculated is essential to calibrating assessment.

Point systems, weighted grades, and standards-based systems all have strengths and weaknesses. The teacher must understand the mechanics of those systems to create a calibrated and accurate description of student performance. Choices of what and when to grade, point values, and categories can have a tremendous impact on summary grades.



Decisions should be made intentionally with the goal of presenting the most accurate view of student performance.

Part 3: Using Assessment to Support Learning

Seventh Principle: Grading should be aligned with expectation, instruction, and practice.

This may seem obvious, but it isn't always easy to see and do. Even the most experienced teacher can create an assignment to be graded then discover that what was actually being assessed was different from expectation, instruction, and practice or activity.

When grading reveals gaps in student understanding, the teacher must make professional judgments about next steps. The assessment itself may have been misaligned with what was taught or practiced. More practice or engagement with knowledge may be required. In some cases, the teacher's judgment may be to move on recognizing that this content will need to be reinforced at another time.

Eighth Principle: Calibrate grades to challenge strong performers while supporting weaker performers.

Part of strategic assessment is making sure that strong performers are challenged and academic rigor is maintained while weaker performers are nurtured.

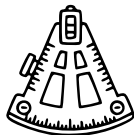
This requires careful planning and thoughtful design of assessments and assignments. Strong students should encounter work that stretches their thinking and doesn't allow them to coast on natural ability alone. Struggling students should have opportunities to demonstrate growth and mastery without being buried by tasks that are inaccessible to them.

This doesn't mean different standards for different students. It means providing multiple pathways to demonstrate learning, scaffolding that provides access without lowering expectations, and extension opportunities that push high achievers beyond minimum competency.



Ninth Principle: Teachers can and should reflect and adapt when grades seem misaligned.

Any assessment may have a degree of imperfection in it or in the preparation for it. Teachers can and should reset, revise, or replace when a set of grades seem out of the norm. This may involve adding a new grade or replacing a grade if a significant discrepancy in alignment is discovered. Teachers should make sure that any steps they take in this regard are consistent with their school, district or system administrative policies.



For more information about Core Teaching go to doctrivalearning.com.



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