ALTERNATIVE GRADING SCHEMES

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Why do it?

Because there are problems with points and averaging... That you already know about!

Problems with Points

"How did Johnny end up with an A???"

There will always be kids who accumulate enough points for a grade you don't think they deserve.

"How did Mary end up with a B???"

There will always be kids who don't accumulate enough points for the grade you think they deserve.

Is it possible to design a system of points that won't have unintended consequences??

And in any case the conversation always revolves around points, instead of learning.

Problems with Averaging

Averaging is one of the few statistical measures that is sensitive to EVERY DATA POINT.

A Tale of Two B's

grade 1	grade 2	grade 3	grade 4	grade 5	grade 6	AVG	
90%	91%	92%	90%	93%	80%	89.33%	
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grade 1	grade 2	grade 3	grade 4	grade 5	grade 6	AVG
75%	78%	79%	76%	74%	95%	79.50%

Often, the student who most needs to do this calculation is least able to do it. Can you?

pass!

grade 1	grade 2	grade 3	grade 4	grade 5	grade 6	AVG
44%	72%	79%	50%	42%	???	64.50%

And then there's the NUCLEAR OPTION!

mushroom cloud!

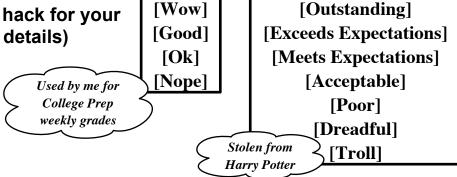
grade 1	grade 2	grade 3	grade 4	grade 5	grade 6	AVG
92%	93%	91%	90%	94%	0%	76.67%

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Not a panacea, but when used properly, can alleviate some of these symptoms.

Suggestions:

- Points are the middle man; cut out the middle man.
- Call a spade a spade (descriptive grades).
- Set benchmarks for each letter grade A, B, C, D.
- Use a spreadsheet or use a hack for your grading program (ask me for details)



[All Correct]
[Physics Errors]

[Math Errors]

Sample 1

Used by me for College Prep classes for the last 10 yrs.

- Assign a grade based on all work for a given topic or skill (weekly).
- Allow (limited) reworking of assignments and/or assessments.
- Give feedback on what needs to be fixed or re-taken.
- Focus on learning, not volume of work. (Quality vs quantity.)
- Marking period grade is based on the MINIMUM GRADE. (Any Nopes=D, Any Oks = C, All Goods = B)
- A = all Goods with specified # of Wows (extra going-beyond assignments.)

[Wow]
[Good]
[Ok]
[Nope]

Used by me on AP assessments

Sample 2

Used by me for AP Physics C classes for the last 6 yrs.

- Assign a base grade for completion of non-assessments (labs, homework, etc).
- Grade assessments according to type of error.

- [All Correct]
 [Physics Errors]
 [Math Errors]
- Only math errors? Corrections required.
- Physics errors can only be fixed by a retake after conference/tutoring (limited tries).
- Base grade is shifted a letter grade up or down by assessment grades, or left where it is.

Scheme for Making Retakes Do-able

- Normal Assessment: Take a selection of homework problems and change the numbers and/or situations.
- Give each student a randomly selected one or two (or however many you like).
- BONUS! Each student will have different questions than their neighbors.
- Retakes consist of ANOTHER random sample of these problems. Same ones? Different ones? Who knows??

"But the College Board uses points."

Yes, but they do not use the 10-point 90% - 100% = "A" scale.

And they do not average scores.

And in any case, PREPARING someone for something does not always mean SIMULATING it exactly.

Otherwise swimmers would never lift weights.