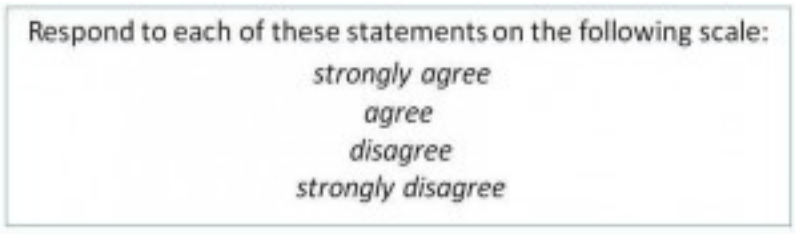
What Does a Grade Mean?

I've spent the past week prepping to facilitate an upcoming workshop about grading for high school teachers. I thought I'd share some of the information I found, as it seems to me a valuable conversation for administrators to explore at a faculty meeting, coaches to examine with teachers, facilitators to discuss with PLCs, and mentors to investigate with beginning teachers.

- Here are some conflicts that exist among many teachers' practices regarding grading:
- *How to use formative assessments for progress monitoring that is not part of grading?*
- *Are grades raised or lowered by behavior? Attendance?*
- *What consistency exists within a school regarding what a grade represents?*
- *Do extended learning opportunities enrich student learning or raise grades for working more?*
- *What is learning and how do we "record" that to a grade?*
- *Can I require assignments that aren't graded?*

I found a blog by Robert Ryshke where he examines grading, sharing some key discussion questions from Susan Brookhart, the author of Grading and Learning: Practices that Support Student Achievement:

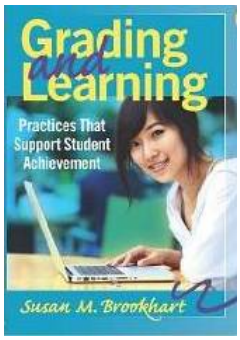


- Grades should reflect achievement of intended learning outcomes.
- The primary audience for messages conveyed in grades are students and parents.
- Grades should reflect a particular student's individual

academic achievement only.

- Grading policies should be set up to support student motivation to learn.
- Grades should be based on a student's standing among classmates.
- When students receive "poor grades" for their performance, they are motivated to do better next time.
- A grade should reflect the student's achievement, work habits on responsibilities like homework, class participation, and behavior.

In her book, Brookhart explores information to be reported as differentiated from graded:



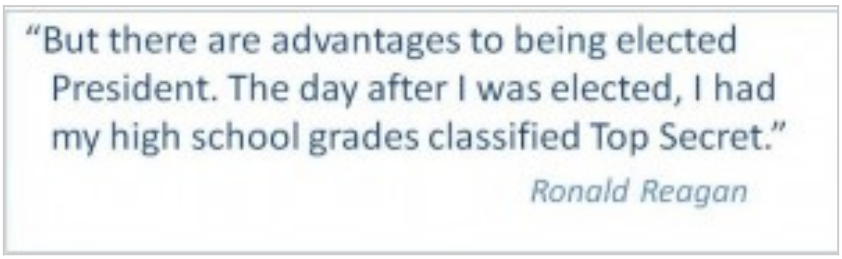
Growth and progress information – Change in achievement of learning goals within subject area over time…used to report progress

Learning skills information – Information from observing student behaviors that promote learning (like effort and work habits).

Grading Information – Information from summative classroom assessments used to communicate achievement of intended learning goals against standards.

Here are the questions I'm planning to ask the teachers to explore.

- *What key learning standards have been mastered by anyone receiving a grade of C? B? A?*
- *What assessments will be graded and how will they be weighted to measure learning standards mastery?*
- *How will test be used to measure learning standards met?*

- *What additional items or criteria will be included in a grade?*
- *How will you present your plan for grading to your student?*
- *In what ways do you see your plan for grading motivating students?*

My power point with this information is available to you. If you use any of what I presented, I'd love to hear your experiences.