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Using Grading Practices That Motivate Students

Joe Feldman, EdM; Author & Consultant; Crescendo Education Group [00:00:05] Equitable grading means that we want students to be intrinsically motivated in their learning. So rather than doing every assignment or doing any given task because the teacher's assigning a certain amount of points or they're going to lose points if something happens, it's about how do we build students' self-regulation skills and sense of self-efficacy?

Candice L. Freeman, PhD; Department Chair; Medical Laboratory Technology Program; Fayetteville Technical Community College [00:00:39] Our grading system is pretty much set by our division. Just Health Sciences. Now, because of the critical nature of our fields, we have to demonstrate 80 percent in every course. That's not anything that an instructor in our division can control. However, I can control the ability to allow them to revise and allow them to go back and dig deeper into what they're doing. So they know that everything in their course, everything can be revised for an increased grade.

Jennifer Whitley, PhD; Lecturer of Mathematics; Department of Mathematics; Park University [00:01:16] Part of my philosophy is the growth mindset. And so I want my, if I'm teaching them all this growth mindset behavior and all these success steps, I need to make sure that my instruction and my grading aligns to that. So the mastery-based grading system is part of the framework of it. It's all about, I'm focusing more on the process versus the product. And so the homework, they recognize that they have multiple opportunities to show me that they have mastered each objective versus thinking that I have one shot to complete this homework and get an A on it, I can't review it. The course that I mostly hammer this and I work the hardest on, is making sure it's consistent, is my developmental math course. And so I know that I'm breaking down a lot of barriers if they're in that course, a lot of fixed mindset. And then too, they, they know the developmental math course is not their last course. They have to take maybe multiple math courses after it. So they need to master the content. So they know that they can't just get, like, get their way with getting a C and only learning half of the content. You have to know every single objective.

Earle M. Crosswait III; Academic Specialist; Mathematics; Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College [00:02:36] Students need to see the value of doing the homework so that they can learn, adequately master the material. They do have homework, and they get feedback from that homework, but that homework does not go into their final grade. So that the revision isn't doing anything but giving the students more opportunities to understand the material, master the concept, and then demonstrate that in a proctored assessment.

Mike Wesch, PhD; Professor of Cultural Anthropology; University Distinguished Teaching Scholar; Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work; Kansas State University [00:03:09] So the way that I grade is, instead of giving A, B, C or D, I basically give people an "A" and a "Congratulations," or I give them a "Not yet." And I tend to not even give a score at that point. Instead, I try to describe where they're coming up short so that they can redo it and achieve mastery.

Mike Wesch, PhD [00:03:28] I'll give you a little "not yet" score. The "not yet" just means like try again, push a little harder. And, of course, the model here is that, you know, the more we push ourselves, the more we grow. And that's what I want to ask you guys to do.

Stephanie, Student, Kansas State University [00:03:40] The most recent time that I got a "not yet," I read back through it and was like, Oh, absolutely. Like, I see where I could have pushed myself harder, where I could have presented this in a more clear way, or where I could have just learned more.

Jennifer Whitley, PhD [00:03:51] For their quizzes, I do... If students are showing me through their quizzes that there is a disconnect, they can review them and go back and do a second shot. But usually, if they're doing the homework, that doesn't happen very often. So if you design your class well, it's not that much more grading.



Because students are doing enough homework, they're recognizing what they know and what they don't know, that by the time they get to the quiz, they do understand the content usually.

Jordyn, Student, Park University [00:04:22] Ms. Whitley's grading system encouraged us to keep trying, because it wasn't that she would simply mark the test question that we got wrong, she would provide feedback. So it really helped to retain the information because we would have to go back and rework it. And you, a lot of the times it was just a silly mistake. When you have anxiety and you're trying to do a test in 40 minutes, you just skip over a certain spot. So it just was one more way to help retain the information so that we would do better on the final.

Earle M. Crosswait III [00:04:50] It doesn't matter at what point during the semester a student demonstrates mastery, but they do demonstrate mastery. After the assessment, they get an evaluation that has those key individual points and then their evaluation is 0 to 4 on each of those points. And then in the Notes section, there are specific observations. What is it that I am seeing them do on the test? As well as possibly the lesson that it came from or that even sometimes the page number. I think that students are more likely to do that rather than me saying, "We'll go back to the book," right? I'm giving them a roadmap to be successful. I'm not assuming that they know what that looks like.

Candice L. Freeman, PhD [00:05:46] When they take an exam, a lot of factors come into play. They know they're being assessed. They're know they're being monitored. They know that someone is going to find out what's in their brain or what's not in their brain. And that's a lot of stress and anxiety. Plus you're bringing an invisible, an invisible backpack of other stressors that have nothing to do with the content. So when they score poorly or even not poorly on an exam, they actually get a chance to revise their incorrect responses. And I provide them a template. They have to identify the questions that they missed. They have to explain why they missed it, why that answer's incorrect. Then they have to explain why the correct answer is the correct answer and provide reference for it. I give them back half credit if they do it. And they know that they're going to learn what they don't know after the test.

Zanita, Student, Fayetteville Technical Community College [00:06:41] I loved it because it's another way to study. You know, the first time you thought you had the correct answer, so you want to go back and figure out why your answer wasn't correct and why the answer that is correct, you know, how it brings value to that question. But at the end of the day, it teaches you. You know, it's nothing better than being your own teacher and student at the same time. So at least to know that you know, you get the option to learn from it and give some points back? That's a win win.

Hugh Broome, PhD; Associate Teaching Professor; School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences; The University of Southern Mississippi [00:07:04] I encourage students to learn from their mistakes through my modified exam wrapper activity. So after students complete a multiple-choice exam, I actually don't tell them what the correct answers are. I just mark the incorrect questions and then students are encouraged for half the credit back to go and find the correct answer and write me a paragraph for each question. So that paragraph has to answer why they chose the incorrect answer, what was the correct answer, where they found the incorrect answer, and why it's the correct answer. So by allowing students another chance at the exam, you focus on that mastery aspect of the outcome as opposed to the grade. And so you're triggering that intrinsic motivation to learn.

Rosemary, Student, The University of Southern Mississippi [00:07:49] It really tells a student that it's OK to mess up, and that the point of this class is learning. You shouldn't be worried about the grade. You should be worried about the learning process.

Hugh Broome, PhD [00:08:01] In the fall of 2018, I had 600 students, so I adapted the assignment. And I identified the top five most missed questions on the exam. And I developed alternate questions that come from the same learning outcomes. And so in that way, they basically were able to still learn from their mistakes and recover from



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that. It also encourages them to learn that material before we move on to the next unit, which is crucial in chemistry because each unit builds on the concepts from the last unit.

Cynahmon; Student; The University of Southern Mississippi [00:08:35] Whenever you were able to go back to the most commonly missed questions and— They weren't the same exact question, the numbers were different. But you could compare the work. Like, you can look at your own test and see where you went wrong with doing the math, and then you can apply that new knowledge.

Earle M. Crosswait III [00:08:50] Students can then reassess any elements that they have scored less than a 4 on. Those reassessments automatically are included in their next exam. So, for example, today my students in Statistics are having their exam over module three. One of those students also has questions for module one and module two that they had missed, or they had scored less than a 2 on their evaluation. So that's automatically going to be included. They get a document that is the module exam, and then they get an addendum, another set of questions that are added to the very end of that, that are specific to those previous assessments that they've done. I have files for each one of them that are the evaluations that were given. As I do reassessments, the evaluation column just gets new boxes added to it. So I can see how they did on the first assessment, what specific elements they tested, that they reassessed, and what their scores were for those reassessments every time they reassess. And then both the student has that, and I have that. And, like I said, no matter when they meet that level of a 2 or higher, they will earn full credit for that.

Alicia; Student; Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College [00:10:08] The reassessments show that he cares about, that we actually learn the material. Because I feel like if we just had one test, and that was the final grade, and that's it, then we would kind of just forget about it after that test was done. With the reassessments we're allowed to keep learning, keep growing, and get it really stuck in our brain about the material he's teaching us.

Candice L. Freeman, PhD [00:10:29] Things are gonna happen that may impact why that student made a 20 on that exam. That may not truly reflect their knowledge base. Why not give them a chance? That's what we're here for. That's why we are here to teach them. We're here to help them grow in their knowledge base and strive for their goals. And if they're gonna learn it, they're gonna learn it. The final exam will tell you that. So why not let that be the grade, the only grade they can't revise? Because if they truly don't know it, and they make a 20, they're going to make a 20 on the final. It all boils down to student success.

Candice L. Freeman, PhD [00:11:14] I give due dates, but I tell them that these due dates should be understood to be flexible. One, it helps them not rush through content just to hit a date, but it helps them learn it. Number two, it lets them know that you're there for their learning and not just to check a box that you've got it in on time.

Michelle Pacanksy-Brock, EdD; Associate Faculty; Photography; Mt. San Jacinto College [00:11:37] All of my assignments, everything my students do, has a due date. And I tell my students those due dates are really important. You know why? Because they create structure for a course, and they're gonna keep you on track for success. And I know from my years of teaching online, the number one thing that's gonna derail you is getting behind. Because it's really hard to get caught up again. And so I really want them to understand why I stress the due dates and how they support them. And then I tell them, I think about due dates kind of like a bullseye. And actually have a little video of me talking about why due dates are like a bullseye, and it's like a two-minute video, and it's actually in my liquid syllabus. And, you know, I tell them, shoot for the bullseye. That should always be your target. But if you miss it, don't feel shameful. It's OK. You know, just pick up that dart and try it again. And you're gonna get there.

Michelle Pacanksy-Brock, EdD [00:12:37] So when you do have a late assignment, again, don't take it out on yourself. Just know that you are human, and you're doing your best. And also know that I'm gonna reach out to you. And I'm gonna nudge you. And I'm gonna remind you that that assignment is late. And I'm going to tell you



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what you need to do to get back on track. And I'm not doing that because I don't like you. I'm not doing that to be annoying. I'm doing that because I want you to succeed in this course. I'm doing that because I know you can do it. And because I care.

Neal; Student; Mt. San Jacinto College [00:13:16] As long as you turn in the assignment, you will get the grade. She leaves it for the students to communicate with her, request a deadline that you have to set, which is a good skill set to have in the future, you know?

Candice L. Freeman, PhD [00:13:34] I have learners who stick to the due dates, and I have learners who stretch them. But I do tell them, if you can't hit the due date, email me, contact me beforehand, and ask me, is it OK if I have an extension? You don't have to give me a reason. Ask, just let me know. If you don't let me know, then, then I'm gonna be concerned. I'm going to think there's something going on. What's happening? And I never think they just don't want to do the work. Nobody starts a program and wants to fail, right? So why not help them when life throws them a curveball and say, Yes, you know what? Take your time. I'd rather you learn it, solidly, then rush to get it done.

Earle M. Crosswait III [00:14:18] I think this goes back to the, am I including behavior or other things in the grade? If something happens in their life and they get pulled out of school for a time, right? If it's an elder in the community that passed away, that could be more than a week of things that's gonna pull them out of school. And so they know that they have time to come back and meet those, those learning outcomes. That it's not too late. That it's never too late, right? And so many of our students are used to that. They had enough mistakes in the beginning that they can't possibly overcome them with the grades that are, that lie ahead. Well, that just doesn't happen in my class, because they always can do the work and get full credit for doing it.