

Grading

* Harriet Davis (hadavis@CRUZERS.COM) on December 23, 1999:

A while back, someone asked about grading with a rubric since he/she had not done it before. When I first saw holistic grading, I thought I could never do it; I was so used to analytic grading! Now, I use it every chance I get.

IMP has a general rubric.

SPECIAL

6 points: Writeup is elegant. Response is completely justified, and all parts of writeup are included with appropriate explanations.

5 points: Response includes an extension or generalization.

ACCEPTABLE

4 points: Response is complete with accurate solution(s). Appropriate investigation(s) and a clear explanation, sketches, and/or patterns are evident.

3 points: Response demonstrates that the student has the ability and tools needed to explore the problem (even if the exploration is incomplete and the conclusion is incorrect).

MISSED THE POINT

2 points: Student shows understanding of the problem but fails to progress.

1 point: Student gives an attempt to solve the problem, but shows no understanding of the problem or no meaningful progress toward arriving at the solution.

0 points: Paper is blank or completely off track.

We work out each problem with another IMP teacher and then decide where the kids might have difficulties. With the common understanding that in order for a student to earn 3 points, he/she must address every part of the problem, we determine what a 3 (C) paper should look like. We then go up from a 3 (each one above must include what was below with additions). We add points specific to the problem, also.

An art teacher helped me get started, too. Before grading her students' artwork, she put the papers in 3 piles with one each representing super, okay, and not so okay. Then, she proceeded to grade them. I did this when I started using rubrics. Now, my bottom line question is, "Did the student SUBSTANTIALLY answer the problem?" That is a 3.

Good luck with rubrics!

* Eddie Izzard AKA Mike Caudill (MCaud@AOL.COM) on March 1, 2000:

We are to grade what we value. I happen to value homework, POWs, presentations, and

portfolios. But, I teach in a school that does not value these things to the same extent. And, when I weigh these things to reflect how much I value them, as many as 80% of my students in some classes should fail.

So, I must de-value these things, at least as far as the arithmetic goes. I value the classroom experience and cooperative behaviors a great deal, because these have the greatest, most immediate effect on me. However, when I have tried to figure classwork into my grading scheme in an organized and objective way, I find that keeping score takes away from what I should be doing. Namely, this is teaching! Therefore, I tend to override the grade indicated by the numbers with what I feel is a more accurate account of the students' effort, growth, and knowledge. Pretend you are me, and just try to imagine justifying this inherently subjective process to students, parents, bosses, etc.

So, I am giving quizzes a try. Quizzes are not in the style of IMP, and I know this because I read as much in one of those articles brought back from TOPS. I do not really believe in them either; I already know the results, and, for some students, it is unfair for me to expect certain knowledge at a certain time! I know which students can do what anyway. Quizzes just take away from instructional time to confirm my IMPressions. Learning is a longer process than what weekly or bi-weekly quizzes allow for. Oh yeah, I said that I am giving them a try - just try explaining this to students!!!

Without quizzes, tests, and such, there develops a sense that I, as a teacher, do not hold my students accountable for learning what they are supposed to. I do, of course, but I think POWs, presentations, and portfolios are more authentic assessments. My students, for the most part, just do not understand that (which is no wonder in this testing-crazed climate).

* Janice A. Bussey (jbimp@TELIS.ORG) on March 1, 2000:

You bring up some interesting thoughts about issues that seem to plague most of the IMP teachers I train and support.

I happen to agree with you that what goes on in the classroom is, by far, the best indication of what students are learning. You can SEE it, and you can HEAR it. I feel homework and POWs are also important, because they are done mostly outside of the classroom. But, I do not have as much control over how that work is being accomplished. Unit Assessments have their place, but many kids freak out about tests. So, generally, I like to include a wide variety of assessment devices so that I get a balanced picture of each student. No one category of work should be weighted so heavily that a kid would fail if he/she performed poorly in that one area.

About Classwork:

Once again, I believe this is the STRONGEST indication of what a student is learning. If you use rubrics and/or performance criteria for presentations and class products, you will not have a problem justifying this part of the grade to a parent, boss, or anyone. It is not subjective or wishy-washy. It is about trying to get students to perform to a certain standard.

About Quizzes:

Quizzes are indeed another diverse way to assess what students have learned. When my students have completed a major concept in an IMP unit, I find myself using an IMP homework or classwork assignment as a quiz. I tell the students ahead of time, "You are at the point now

where you should be making sense of this particular concept. I want to see what you can do. This homework/classwork is going to be used as an assessment, and it will be worth more points. Show me what you can do! Show me what you have learned!" The students usually come through, but when some do not, I am able to intervene with the individual students who need help. Quizzes are not an IMP evil, but they should be used sparingly (certainly not once a week - that IS a waste of time), and their structure should be similar to the regular IMP work that students do.

* Harriet Davis (hadavis@CRUZERS.COM) on March 1, 2000:

In the work world, employees are measured by their everyday contributions. One of the things I like best about IMP is that it allows me to measure my students in the same way! I grade participation (about once a week), classwork (graded with more points than a stamped HW), infrequent quizzes (about every 2-3 weeks depending on where we are), and the normal assessment tools. If a student is absent, they do not earn participation points (illogical), but they have the opportunity to make up those points by doing and presenting a supplementary problem. Assessing all things, I believe, is the way to go!

Once a marking period, I also grade notebooks to help my students (in IMP 1 particularly) get organized!

* Tom McDougal (Tom.McDougal.84@ALUM.DARTMOUTH.ORG) on March 1, 2000:

I have spent all sorts of time thinking about grading and tinkering with my grading system. Given how important and how difficult grading is, it is funny how little my teacher education covered grading (NOT AT ALL).

Once upon a time, the only thing that got credited into my gradebook were tangibles on paper. This was mostly homework, then some classwork (as long as it was written), and also the occasional tests or quizzes. Those kids who did not do homework failed, unless I allowed them to do make-up work. That, of course, led to terrifying piles of paper at the end of the quarter, and most of it was poorly completed.

This year, I took a big plunge and abandoned point-based grades.

My system is still a moving target, but the last several grades have been based on a fairly detailed rubric **which the kids fill out themselves** and then I review. It is divided into 4 sections:

1. classwork
2. cooperative learning
3. independent work (HW, POWs, coming after school)
4. math skills and understanding

For each category, the kids check off various descriptors, give themselves a grade for the category, and then assign a single overall grade. Most of the time, I agree with their grades. (Often they'll say, "hopefully, C+ or B-" when I think it's a C/C+.) A few times I disagreed, and twice I had conferences with students to go over the rubric in detail. In one case, the student agreed with my grade; in the other case, I agreed with the student's grade.

Using this system, my students will not necessarily fail if they do not do the homework, as long as their work in class is good. So, as a general rule (with exceptions), I don't accept late work.

* Bill Blatner:

Does anyone have sample rubrics for in class presentations or performance? This is the missing link in my assessment scheme. Thanks.

* Janice A. Bussey (jbimp@TELIS.ORG) on March 2, 2000:

This is one generic rubric for class presentations. Many modifications are possible:

If you want maximum credit for your presentation, the following criteria should be met:

- * Everyone in the group has an active role.
- * The content of the presentation is clear.
- * The group is able to justify their process and thinking.
- * The group is able to answer questions from the audience.
- * The group members are polite and attentive audience members.

I posted this and used it a lot with IMP 1 students. Sometimes, I would be the only one assessing, but other times, I allowed the class to score the presentations, too, so they would know what each piece looked like. Then, we discussed the characteristics of each criteria.

I used the criteria less with IMP 2, and it was virtually unnecessary with IMP 3 students. Those students gave great presentations, and we had delightful class discussions. They were more mature and much more "into the math" by then.

* Cowhey/Blatner (cowblat@MASSED.NET) on March 4, 2000:

Thank you, Janice, for the rubric. This will be helpful. Could you, or anyone else, elaborate on how this translates into a grade? Do you have your grade book in hand through the whole class so you can enter presentation/participation points? Do you go down the class list at the end of the day and give checks or check minuses?

I do not like to over-emphasize the grade aspect, but without some record throughout the marking period, a grade at the end of a marking period becomes extremely subjective. I want to find a material way to account for good participation on an ongoing basis so that I can justify my numbers to parents. It is the logistics of this on a day-to-day basis that I am having difficulty formulating. I do not like to institute changes in grading/expectations unless I can implement them consistently. I have had many "great ideas" and then found out I had created another hour or two of work for myself outside of class. I love teaching IMP. Managing the assessment is my challenge now. Thanks again.

* Dan Branham (DanLeeannB@AOL.COM) on March 5, 2000:

I have a fairly easy way of maintaining a record of participation points for my classes. I get enough 3 x 5 cards for each student to have one. Each student then writes his/her name in the upper left-hand corner and draws a horizontal line to divide the card in half. The upper half is for positive points, and the lower half is for negative points.

Each student begins the semester with 80 of a possible 100 points. (Sometimes, I have adjusted this to 70 points if students are getting too many points.)

I use the cards in two ways:

1. During class, I have students randomly select cards (just turn them face down) to name "volunteers" who will present the homework, POW, etc. to the class. The "volunteers" then go to the white board or overhead to do the problem. Sometimes we select the "volunteers" at the end of class for the following day's homework review.
2. When I am doing a lot of questioning of the class, I just hold the deck and keep selecting cards myself so I can randomly ask the questions and keep things moving.

Scoring is simple. Two positive points are earned when students do the problem correctly, one positive point is scored for an attempt, even if it is wrong, and two negative points are given if a student refuses to participate or is absent.

I only total the points at the end of the semester. The participation grade is 5% for my junior and senior classes and 10% for my freshman and sophomore classes. It is very easy to maintain, requires very little of my time and attention, and provides a justifiable manner for grading student participation. Let me know how it goes if you try it. I picked this up during my first year of teaching.