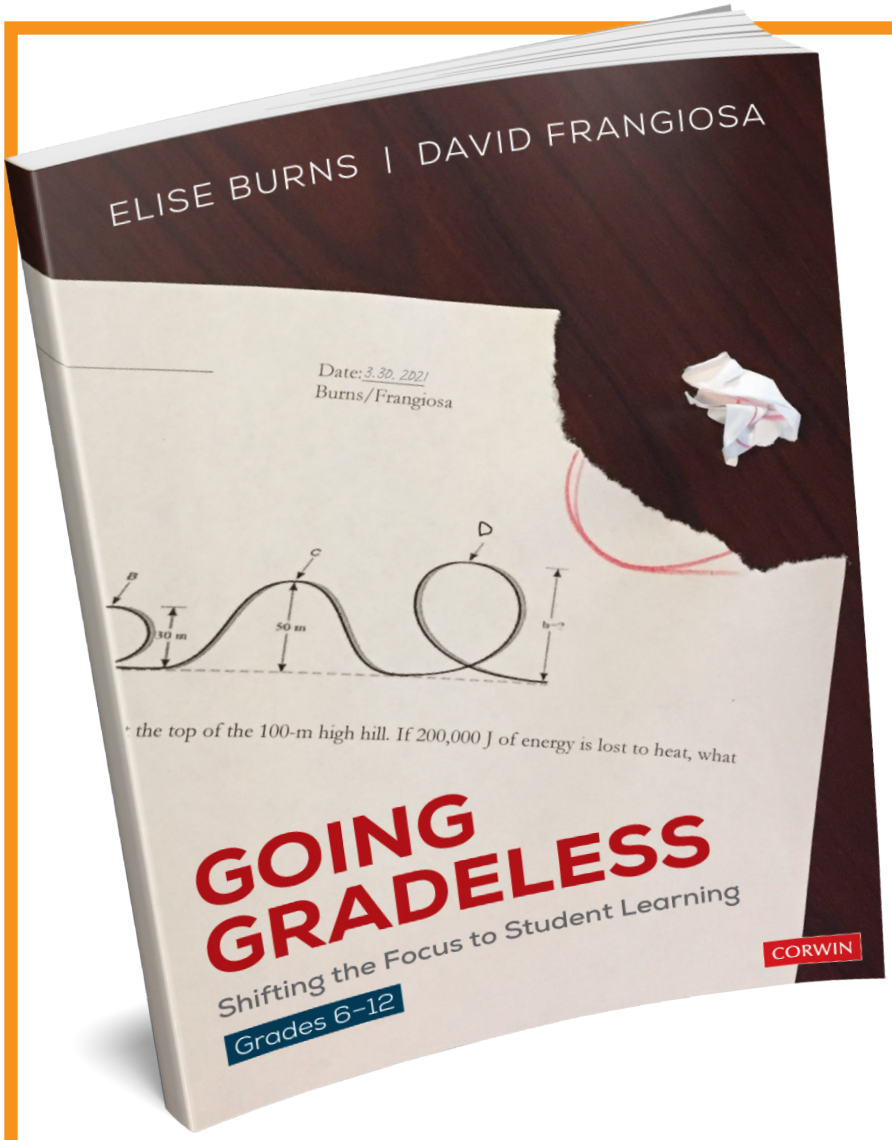

Thank you

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CORWIN

Aligning Progress With a Traditional Model

The big question is "How do we fit this model into a traditional framework?" While our particular administration is highly supportive of our goals, at the end of the semester we too have to post grades A to F. In this chapter we will demonstrate how our three-pronged approach—minimum requirements, progress on all nine of our process standards, and individual conferencing, all detailed in Chapter 4—is used to address this quandary. In the process we will dig deeply into common questions about tracking, grade translations, and scaling for course leveling.

Let's set the stage by first summarizing a typical, more traditional model of the classroom. In most classrooms students receive individual grades on each assignment and some type of averaging happens. Generally, a percentage is reported, ranging from 0% to 100%, associated with A–F (with pluses or minuses, depending on the district). Anything below 60% is considered an F, or failure, and the class must be retaken.

In contrast, with our gradeless system every assessment is a snapshot of the skills demonstrated when that assessment was done. What do we use instead of an average of all graded assignments at the end of the year? We use a final unit in which the theme is an engaging project. During these last three to four weeks of school, students have several opportunities to produce work that measurably assesses each of our nine skills. There is no new content delivered, but an application of several bodies of knowledge taught during the previous nine months of school. Therefore, the very last assessment of each standard is a true demonstration of accumulated skills *at that point in time*.

Grade Translations

Schools are like all institutions: by definition, they are slow to change. Until the reporting (and the mindset) adapts to our needs, we have to be prepared to work within its constraints. One of the most common questions that we field in workshops is how to use a standards-based model even when the rest of the school is not using one. How does one translate these descriptive outcomes to a letter grade? We struggled with this at first but came up with a great solution.

In our Physics classes, students are assessed on our nine process standards (see Resources C). These are published for students and parents to view in our gradebook (Genesis) and learning management system (Canvas), or LMS, on day 1 of the school year. These competencies are continually assessed from September through June, with detailed feedback provided at every assessment. Our expectation is that students will exhibit *incremental improvement* over the course of the year. As described in Chapter 4, we set benchmarks regarding the expected performance for each unit, but all that students have to do is continually and gradually develop skills over time. The grade reported *at any point in the year* should be viewed only as a *progress report* of where the student is *at that moment*. Due to this expectation, the final scores will be based solely on the most current submissions, those assessed during the last weeks of school.

How achievement in the nine competencies is translated to a course grade is illustrated in the charts in Figures 7.1 and 7.2. The first chart is the progress reporting in January (end of the first semester; Figure 7.1), and the second one is the final grade at the end of the school year (Figure 7.2).

How do we use this scale? For example, let's say a Physics student has earned five standards at the Developing level and the other four at the Proficient level. Using the chart in Figure 7.2, first find the rows that show "With no standard lower than Developing" (see Figure 7.3).

Then use the left-hand column to find the highest level of achievement. If this student has four at the Proficient level, he or she has three but hasn't earned six, so this means that he or she earns a B– at the end of the year. How can teachers help students use this as a tool for

Figure 7.1 Midyear translation

At the end of the semester (January), for a student taking Physics

PROCESS STANDARD SCORE REQUIREMENTS TOTAL OF . . .	MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	WILL EARN A PROGRESS REPORT OF . . .
Any 3 standards at Advanced level	With no standard lower than Proficient	A+
All standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Proficient	A
Any 8 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	A–
Any 5 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B+
Any 2 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B
All standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Developing	B–
Any 8 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	C+
Any 5 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	C
Any 2 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	C–
Met all minimum course requirements	With no standard lower than Beginning	D
Not enough evidence to evaluate 1 or more standards		F

Figure 7.2 End-of-course translation

At the end of the school year (June), for a student taking Physics:

OUT OF 10 PROCESS STANDARDS, EARN . . .	MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	WILL EARN AN END-OF-YEAR COURSE GRADE OF . . .
Any 9 standards at Advanced level	With no standard lower than Proficient	A+
Any 6 standards at Advanced level	With no standard lower than Proficient	A
Any 3 standards at Advanced level	With no standard lower than Proficient	A–
Any 9 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B+
Any 6 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B
Any 3 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B–
Any 9 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	C+
Any 6 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	C
Any 3 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	C–
Met all minimum course requirements	With no standard lower than Beginning	D
Not enough evidence to evaluate 1 or more standards		F

Figure 7.3 Using the translation

OUT OF 10 PROCESS STANDARDS, EARN . . .	MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	WILL EARN AN END-OF-YEAR COURSE GRADE OF . . .
Any 9 standards at Advanced level	With no standard lower than Proficient	A+
Any 6 standards at Advanced level	With no standard lower than Proficient	A
Any 3 standards at Advanced level	With no standard lower than Proficient	A–
Any 9 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B+
Any 6 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B
Any 3 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B–
Any 9 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	C+
Any 6 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	C
Any 3 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	C–
Met all minimum course requirements	With no standard lower than Beginning	D
Not enough evidence to evaluate 1 or more standards		F

learning? We would coach that student, noting that with two additional standards at the Proficient level, B– changes to a B. The student needs to move two skills from Developing to Proficient. Which ones does he or she want to work on? And then we would look at individual work to pinpoint specific changes that could be made. Note that this does not require getting two more questions correct; it means identifying two skills that are weak and making them stronger in demonstrable and clearly implementable ways.

There are a few features worth highlighting here. First of all, notice that the semester benchmarks are "easier" than the end-of-year ones. Hopefully that seems logical to you. Students have only had half of the school year to assimilate and perform the skills; after another five months they should be able to move to a higher level of achievement. Progress is often swift earlier in the course as the ladder rungs are closer together. Higher in the learning progression there are a lot of pieces to put together, so that moving from Proficient to Advanced is a bigger step, taking more time to assimilate.

Let's look at a specific example. To earn a B+ for the midyear grade, a student must earn at least five standards at the Proficient level, with the remaining standards at a minimum of Developing level (see Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4 B+ requirements midyear

Any 5 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B+

Getting those same scores in June (aka no improvement) would earn a B– (see Figure 7.5); the next level up, a B, requires six Proficient, not five.

Figure 7.5 B– requirements end of course

Any 3 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B–

The student has not grown over the five months of school, therefore the score translates to a lower grade. Our goal is growth!

Therefore, to maintain a B+, that student is required to move four more standards up to the Proficient level (see Figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6 B+ requirements end of course

Any 9 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B+

This is a manageable task for a student working conscientiously and systematically from February through June.

By now you will have noticed that the course grades are steps in a ladder, as opposed to a continuous scale. Moving from a B to a B+ requires earning three more Proficient-level standards, not just one. Therefore, any students earning six, seven, or eight standards at the Proficient level with nothing lower than Developing will earn a B. This is consistent with how the traditional model has a range of scores between 83 and 86 all translated into a B.

Another important aspect to note is that students need to complete the minimum requirements in order to pass (get a D in the traditional model). As discussed in Chapter 4, these are the interactions and assessments that we consider to be the absolute minimum work that we would need to see in order to say that the student took our Physics class and passed. For us, this included a foundational knowledge of all the relevant vocabulary, completion of all seven projects and unit tests, submission of at least 14 of 20 formal lab reports, and meeting for at least two out of the three one-on-one conferences. Students don't have to do these things *well*, but they must be completed. Our justification is that without students doing these things, we would not have enough information to effectively evaluate their learning. And once we set these minimum requirements as the foundation of the course, we were able to figure out how to move them through the learning progressions.

For example, in September, when we are teaching students how to write a lab report, we have them do a sequence of five labs, with explicit guidance (no independence). They score their own product using the rubric, but the expectation is that they will achieve Beginning level on experimental design, Beginning level on data analysis, and Developing level on arguing a scientific claim. If they achieve those levels during unit 1, they are on the right track. However, if they *stay* at that level at the end of unit 2, it may be an indication that we need to approach their learning from a different angle. As time moves on, we will coach them to higher skill levels. Since it is where they end up in June that will determine their final grade in the course, there is no pressure on teachers or on students to master the skill faster than they are able to.

It should be mentioned here that there are two positive side benefits to this system: student goal setting and easy adjustments by the teacher. We cannot ignore the fact that students and parents are used to letter grades. Our grade translations still allow students to set these grade-oriented goals but couch them as specific learning targets. Since the grade is based on mastery of skills, they have to examine the rubric to see what they have to produce in order to hit that target, and choose what personal challenges they need to address. It's not just a numbers game anymore! They must master each standard to the benchmark that we have set. Another benefit of this type of grading is that the teacher can make adjustments when confronted with unforeseen circumstances, such as when we had to suddenly shift to full remote in March 2020, or if your expectations were unrealistic the first time you did this or for a

given group of students. You can simply publish a new version, given enough notice. This is what we did in April, once we realized that we were not going to have the contact time needed to move students higher in the learning progressions on several standards. So we dropped one entire standard and slightly amended the scale used, shifting it down one level. It was an easy fix, and it eliminated all stress associated with school due to a situation completely out of our control.

Development

Let's get into the nitty-gritty! How exactly did we determine these benchmarks and grade translations? We first identified what we wanted our *best* student in that class to be able to do. In general, our best AP student should be able to achieve Expert level in seven of the nine standards because to get a 5 on the AP Physics 1 exam requires mastery of all skills except feedback, engineering design. On the other hand, the best CP student, who doesn't have the pressure or interest in the external exam, should be able to achieve Advanced in three skills (arguing a claim, creating explanations, and problem solving). That's where the focus of that particular class lies; and this is where the teacher tailors the grade translations to the particular group. More on this in the section "Scaling" below.

Let's continue thinking this through, using the CP-level Physics course to illustrate. After identifying where our best student should be able to end the course by the last unit (three Advanced and the rest Proficient), we went through our standards to see how we could get there. There were two things we were looking for: (1) reasonable pacing, with time for assimilation of skills, and (2) the ability to spread the learning out. Would we have time enough to practice enough to master the skills? Would students be overwhelmed with too much to do at once (see Chapter 3 regarding cognitive load theory)? We chose only a few skills for each unit, which provided six or more weeks to assimilate each skill. We found it helpful to make a chart (Figure 7.7) with our seven units in order to plan which skills we would work on and for how long. The circled ones are units in which we moved to new levels. You can see that each unit had a handful.

We counted three Advanced, with the rest at Proficient; we made this our cutoff for our A– in this class. Students who aspire to this level of achievement must be well-rounded, meaning no skills should be assessed at the Developing level or below. Students who earn more Advanced levels would be highly motivated and receive individual instruction on how to move from Proficient to Advanced if and when they are ready to do so.

(A side note: You may be wondering, "Why not have a student be at Expert level to earn an A?" Those students who are able to get to that level in 10 months are in our Honors and AP classes. That's mostly because they come into our class at a higher level—usually able to start unit 1 at

Figure 7.7 Benchmark planning

Course: Conceptual Physics

STANDARD / UNIT	DC CIRCUITS	MAGNETISM	KINEMATICS	NEWTON'S LAWS	ENERGY	MOMENTUM	2D MOTION
Experimental design	B	(D)	D	(P)	P	P	P
Data analysis	B	(D)	D	D	D	(P)	P
Arguing a claim	(D)	D	(P)	P	(A)	A	A
Using feedback	B	B	(D)	D	D	(P)	P
Creating explanations	(D)	D	(P)	P	(A)	A	A
Problem solving	(D)	D	(P)	P	(A)	A	A
Graph interpretation	B	(D)	D	D	D	(P)	P
Graph creation	B	B	(D)	D	(P)	P	P
Engineering design cycle	B	(D)	D	(P)	P	P	P

Note: B-Beginning, D-Developing, P-Proficient, A-Advanced

the Developing level for most skills—and progress more quickly, whether due to previous exposure, innate talent, or internal drive. We do not even introduce Expert-level skills in our CP Physics due to time constraints.)

Once you identify that "ideal student," then you can identify what is the minimum that is acceptable to say that the student passed your class. Is it simply performing at the Beginning level on all nine skills? That's what we determined: students may not have any "Not enough evidence" and must complete the minimum requirements for the course (see Chapter 4) in order to pass this course. We then created a roughly evenly divided scale between those two extremes.

When this design was fully fleshed out, we found that it made sense. And when it makes sense, then it's easy to explain and use. The letter grades and percentages used in traditional grading now had meaning to us. A student who earned a B was one who had proficiency in most categories. *Proficiency* is more than a word; it represents a very specific set of skills.

Scaling the Course

Ideally, the same courses will use the same standards. For example, we have five different physics courses: AP Physics 1, Honors Physics, Physics, Conceptual Physics, and Replacement Physics. All five courses use the same nine standards in the same types of assessments. Most of the assessments themselves are identical, but the pace and breadth of the courses differ. Do you have curricula like that? Or maybe you have English for grades 9, 10, 11, and 12, which have scaffolded or spiraled skills from year to year. Instead of making brand new, unique rubrics for each course, consider that you may be able to use one rubric that spans multiple years and simply adjust what defines mastery at that grade level or in that course!

As an example, compare our AP Physics grade translation with that of the Physics grade translation in Figure 7.2. For a student to earn an A, AP Physics requires mastery of all skills at a high level. If students want to earn a 4 or 5 on the AP exam, they must have all skills at the Advanced level and several at the Expert level (see Figure 7.8). Therefore, the requirements to excel in this class are much more rigorous, which won't come as a surprise. This is baked into most of our courses, traditional or not. We have higher expectations for Honors and AP classes, and we assess students accordingly. What we don't do traditionally is see where this fits into a continuum.

We also thought through what a student going through the motions would earn. Imagine a student in an average-level class, who is just showing up, doing enough work during class to get by but not much more. Those are generally students who earn a C in an average course. But what if a student like that was in an Honors or AP-level class? I know that in AP Physics 1, those barely trying will earn a 1 on the AP exam;

Figure 7.8 AP end of course

At the end of the school year (June), for a student taking AP Physics 1

PROCESS STANDARD SCORE REQUIREMENTS TOTAL OF . . .	MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	WILL EARN AN END-OF-YEAR COURSE GRADE OF . . .
Any 6 standards at Expert level	With no standard lower than Advanced	A+
Any 3 standards at Expert level	With no standard lower than Advanced	A
Any 9 standards at Advanced level	With no standard lower than Proficient	A–
Any 6 standards at Advanced level	With no standard lower than Proficient	B+
Any 3 standards at Advanced level	With no standard lower than Proficient	B
Any 9 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	B–
Any 6 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	C+
Any 3 standards at Proficient level	With no standard lower than Developing	C
Any 9 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	C–
Any 6 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	D+
Any 3 standards at Developing level	With no standard lower than Beginning	D
Met all minimum course requirements	With no standard lower than Beginning	D–
Not enough evidence to evaluate 1 or more standards		F

Note: AP, Advanced Placement.

that should translate roughly to a grade in the 60s, or a D. This helped shape our lowest levels in the chart above. To get into the C range, AP students must have all nine standards at a minimum of Developing. You can continue this process to scale any course while keeping the standards themselves uniform.

Using for Quarterly or Semester Grades

First, it is extremely important to communicate that these are solely progress reports. They will not get factored into the final grade at all. We use this opportunity to have a conversation about whether or not the current rate of progress puts students on track to meet their goals. As noted in the section "Development" in this chapter, we evaluated the opportunities we were providing to students to practice each skill in every unit we study. When we must translate to a letter grade for the quarter or semester, we refer back to Figure 7.7. We look at the unit that we are in

at the time of translation and identify the targeted level of development for that unit, which translates to an A–. We then use a similar approach to the one described earlier to scale the rest of the grades.

Reporting Skills Progress in the Gradebook

There are many different ways to organize your gradebook. While we report the same major categories, we differ slightly in our reporting. When an approach is individual, we note this by changing to the first person.

The most important change we made to the gradebook is removing numerical feedback until we absolutely must have it. In many cases we can customize our reporting tools, substituting with our learning progression language instead of points. We can weight these as 0 points and have this be informative. At the end of unit 2, our gradebooks looked something like Figure 7.9.

Note that each row represents a different student. Each of the nine standards is updated with the most current achievement level for that student. The pins signify comments, such as "At the end of unit 2 (on 11/18) our targeted performance level is Proficient. If you have not attained that level yet (you are at Developing, Beginning, or No Evidence), please come see me for help." This note helps students and parents evaluate if the student is "on track" or not, without having to open up the grade translation chart. There is no number or letter grade associated with this progress report. At the end of the next unit we replace all of the scores with the unit 3 achievement levels and a new note.

Elise

I track student results unit-by-unit using an Excel spreadsheet, which allows me to examine trends, analyze individual and class progress, and determine grades at key points during the year. My LMS allows me to download the most current scores as a CSV file, which I copy into Excel. Figure 7.10 shows a screenshot of the unit 3 page. Note that along the bottom of the page there are tabs for each unit. While in the Genesis gradebook I replace scores at the end of each unit, I keep a permanent record for myself like this.

I should explain that in Excel, I use numbers to represent levels instead of letters or names: Beginning = 1, Developing = 2, and so on. This is for ease of analysis so I can create averages, make graphs, and identify trends. (This is for my information only, and I never share it with students in this format.) As can be seen in the far-right two columns, I compared the unit 3 average with the unit 2 average to get a quantitative snapshot of whether students were improving, plateauing, or regressing and, with this identification, target kids to talk to.

Figure 7.9 Gradebook #1

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	PROBLEM SOLVING *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	DATA ANALYSIS *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	ARGUING CLAIMS *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	ENGINEERING DESIGN *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	USING FEEDBACK *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	GRAPH INTERPRETATION *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	GRAPH CREATION *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	CREATING EXPLANATIONS *NO DUE DATE* 0.0
Developing	Proficient	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Beginning
Proficient	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Beginning
Developing	Beginning	Developing	Beginning	No Evidence	Developing	Beginning	Developing	Developing
Developing	Proficient	Beginning	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Developing	Developing	Proficient
Beginning	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Beginning	Beginning	Beginning	Developing
Developing	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Developing
Beginning	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing
Developing	Proficient	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Beginning	Developing	Developing
Developing	Proficient	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Beginning
Proficient	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Beginning
Beginning	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Beginning
Proficient	Proficient	Developing	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Developing	Developing	Developing
Developing	Proficient	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Beginning
Developing	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Beginning	Developing	Beginning
Beginning	Developing	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Developing	Developing	Proficient
No Evidence	No Evidence	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Developing	No Evidence
Developing	Developing	Beginning	Developing	Developing	Developing	Proficient	Beginning	Developing
Proficient	Proficient	Developing	Beginning	Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Developing	Proficient

Figure 7.10 Excel tracking

CLASS PERIOD	PRO.1 - EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN RESULT	PRO.2 - PROBLEM SOLVING RESULT	PRO.3 - DATA ANALYSIS RESULT	PRO. 4 - ARGUING A SCIENTIFIC CLAIM RESULT	PRO.5 - THE ENGINEERING DESIGN CYCLE RESULT	PRO.6A - PROVIDING FEEDBACK RESULT	PRO.6 - USING FEEDBACK RESULT	PRO.7 - GRAPH INTERPRETATION RESULT	PRO.8 - GRAPH CREATION RESULT	PRO.9 - CREATING EXPLANATIONS AND MAKING PREDICTIONS RESULT	UNIT 3 AVERAGE	UNIT 2 AVERAGE	UNIT 1 AVERAGE
	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	2.6	2.2	1.3
3	2	3	2	***2***	***1***	2	***1***	***2***	3	***1***	1.9	1.89	0.6
3	3	***2***	2	***1***	***2***	2	***1***	***2***	***2***	***1***	1.8	1.68	1.5
3	2	***1***	2	***1***	***0***	***1***	***1***	***1***	***2***	***2***	1.3	1.23	1.1
3	2	3	***1***	***2***	***2***	2	***1***	***2***	***2***	3	2	2	0
3	***1***	***2***	***1***	***1***	***1***	***1***	2	***1***	***1***	***2***	1.3	1.33	1.4
3	2	***2***	2	***1***	***1***	2	2	***2***	***1***	***2***	1.7	1.67	1.7
3	***1***	***2***	***1***	***1***	***1***	2	***1***	***2***	***2***	***2***	1.5	1.55	0.1
3	2	3	2	***1***	***1***	***1***	2	***1***	***2***	***2***	1.7	1.67	0.7
3	2	3	2	***2***	***2***	***1***	2	***1***	***1***	***2***	1.8	1.78	1.3
3	3	***2***	2	***2***	***2***	2	2	***2***	***1***	***1***	1.9	1.79	1.4
3	***1***	***2***	2	***1***	***1***	***1***	***0***	***1***	***1***	***1***	1.1	1.11	1.3
3	3	3	2	***2***	***2***	2	2	***2***	***2***	***1***	2.1	2.01	1.6
3	2	3	2	***2***	***2***	2	2	***2***	***2***	***2***	2.1	2.11	1.5
3	2	***2***	2	***1***	***1***	***1***	***1***	***1***	***2***	***1***	1.4	1.34	1.3
3	***1***	***2***	2	***1***	***1***	2	2	***2***	***2***	3	1.8	1.88	0.6
3	***0***	***0***	2	***1***	***1***	3	***0***	3	***2***	***0***	1.2	1.32	1.2
3	2	***2***	***1***	***2***	***2***	3	2	3	***1***	***2***	2	2	1.7
3	3	3	2	***1***	***1***	2	***1***	***2***	***2***	3	2	1.9	1.2

The first row (highlighted light green) represents the benchmark that I was aiming for with this class during this unit. The numbers in bold highlight any scores below the benchmark. I could visually identify which standards needed more practice, and I amended our class goals (from the chart in Figure 7.7). In the sample shown, no one in the class was able to achieve Proficient on arguing a claim by the end of unit 3. Therefore, I spent more time in unit 4 on the skills required to achieve Proficiency. In contrast, most students earned Developing on data analysis by the end of unit 3, so I could move them forward to Proficient in unit 4, working one-on-one with the few students still having difficulty. Being able to easily target the strengths and weaknesses of individuals as well as of an entire class makes me a much better teacher. This is why I love this system!

Create and use a tracking method that suits you and your school system best.

Reporting Habits of Scholarship

Like tracking achievement, we report desired habits to suit our own values, courses, and school system. We use the term *habits of scholarship* to describe observable behaviors that can have a great impact on student achievement but should not (or cannot) be directly assessed. Traditionally, this includes things like participation, preparation, punctuality, and coming forward for extra help. We all know that students who participate, come to class prepared, come to class on time, and attend extra help time usually do better overall. Therefore, the purpose of reporting these "habits" is solely to provide information. If a student does not participate, it might explain why the student might not be meeting with success. One method of reporting habits of scholarship is shown in Figure 7.11. If any of these are observed/perceived to potentially negatively affect student growth, they are reported with a U. Any area that is marked as U is discussed during our conferences. There is nothing punitive about this designation. It is meant to be merely a point of discussion.

Elise

I recently began using a different method of tracking assignment completion and participation. As shown in Figure 7.12, I simply kept track of daily participation in video conferencing and submission of assignments. At the end of the week I counted up how many checkmarks the students earned and recorded it. Again, notice that these are worth 0 points. They are just a point of discussion. For example, notice the second row; during weeks 7 and 8 a student didn't show up for any video conferences but handed in all assignments. I contacted guidance and called home to check on this student, who was having trouble managing the shift to remote learning (as so many did). It's purely informative and a way to spot issues and problems before they get out of control. A side benefit is

Figure 7.11 Gradebook #2

PARTICIPATES *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	PREPARED FOR CLASS *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	ON TASK *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	COMPLETES ASSIGNMENTS *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	PUNCTUAL/ PRESENT *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	USES EXTRA HELP *NO DUE DATE* 0.0
					U
U					U
					U
					U
U					
					U
U					U

that some kids hate having any imperfections; knowing that you will be recording, regardless of whether or not it counts, is an external motivation to be diligent.

A third method of encouraging good habits might be using a Pass/Fail system. In the snapshot shown in Figure 7.13, you can see how we tracked content mastery checkpoints, for which students must get 100% before the end of the unit (see Chapter 4 for more details). While the checkpoints themselves are worth 0 points, students need to pass them in order to pass the course. Students struggling to pass these vocabulary quizzes must continue to apply themselves with appropriate coaching.

In this section we have presented several options for reporting "softer" skills in a nonpunitive, communicative manner. It encourages conversation between students, parents, and teachers in order to construct a bridge to success for all students while reinforcing good habits.

Figure 7.12 Gradebook #3

WEEK 6 VIDEO CONFERENCE *FRI 5/01* 5 x0.0	WEEK 6 ASSIGNMENTS *FRI 5/01* 5 x0.0	WEEK 7 VIDEO CONFERENCE *THU 5/07* 4 x0.0	WEEK 7 ASSIGNMENTS *THU 5/07* 4 x0.0	WEEK 8 VIDEO CONFERENCE *FRI 5/15* 5 x0.0	WEEK 8 ASSIGNMENTS *FRI 5/15* 5 x0.0
5 x0.0	5 x0.0	3 x0.0	2 x0.0	4 x0.0	4 x0.0
5 x0.0	5 x0.0	2 x0.0	2 x0.0	4 x0.0	4 x0.0
5 x0.0	4 x0.0	3 x0.0	3 x0.0	3 x0.0	3 x0.0
5 x0.0	5 x0.0	4 x0.0	4 x0.0	2 x0.0	0 x0.0
5 x0.0	4 x0.0	2 x0.0	0 x0.0	3 x0.0	3 x0.0
4 x0.0	4 x0.0	3 x0.0	3 x0.0	3 x0.0	1 x0.0
3 x0.0	2 x0.0	0 x0.0	0 x0.0	4 x0.0	4 x0.0
4 x0.0	4 x0.0	3 x0.0	1 x0.0	2 x0.0	1 x0.0
5 x0.0	5 x0.0	4 x0.0	3 x0.0	4 x0.0	3 x0.0
5 x0.0	5 x0.0	4 x0.0	4 x0.0	4 x0.0	4 x0.0
3 x0.0	3 x0.0	2 x0.0	1 x0.0	2 x0.0	1 x0.0
5 x0.0	4 x0.0	2 x0.0	2 x0.0	3 x0.0	3 x0.0
5 x0.0	5 x0.0	4 x0.0	3 x0.0	4 x0.0	4 x0.0
5 x0.0	5 x0.0	4 x0.0	4 x0.0	5 x0.0	5 x0.0
4 x0.0	4 x0.0	3 x0.0	3 x0.0	4 x0.0	3 x0.0

Conferencing

Communication is one of the cornerstones of any well-designed learning environment. In many disciplines, one-on-one conferencing is built into the curriculum. For example, language arts and history teachers may sit with a single student while the rest of the class works on an assignment, giving feedback on their essay draft or research paper, guiding them toward the next step in their personal journey. A World Language teacher may have a short dialogue with a student to assess their conversation skills in the language. This, more personalized feedback, is part of conferencing. In our teaching experiences, whether due to our personalities or the curriculum, we never did this unless a student requested it. But now it is an integral part of the class, ensuring that all students have one-on-one time to set goals, discuss progress, and get individual attention.

For formal conferences, students make appointments outside class time three to four times per school year. During this time the student and

Figure 7.13 Gradebook #4

DC CIRCUITS *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	MAGNETISM *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	KINEMATICS *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	NEWTON'S LAWS *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	ENERGY *NO DUE DATE* 0.0	MOMENTUM *NO DUE DATE* 0.0
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Fail	Pass	Pass	Fail		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass		

teacher together review the student's portfolio, focusing on their individual goals and rate of progress. As part of these discussions, we jointly revise their goals, provide targeted feedback, highlight areas of strength, and give tips for how to approach areas of opportunity. Each student leaves these formal conferences with an individual action plan to help them achieve their goals.

Informal conferencing is also extremely important to student development. This happens daily during our lessons. As we circulate the room, we're having conversations with students either individually or in small groups. We discuss the targeted level of development at that point in the year and, for the students who need a little more assistance, we ask them guiding questions and provide tips on how to approach a given task or concept. Students who are easily moving through the task will be met with extension questions as we coach them to the next developmental level. In addition to helping us keep students on target for their goals, this approach provides an excellent opportunity to get to know the students personally, which reinforces that we are in this with them. We are their coach in the classroom.

We understand the importance of grades for students. Although we want to minimize the focus on grades, we also want to ensure that their final grade is not a mystery or surprise. Frequent discussions enable students to fully understand what we are trying to accomplish with this method, and they understand that their grade is tied to authentic learning. In addition to the information that is relayed through the rubrics and grade-reporting software, these personal conversations, both formal and informal, have led to improved understanding and outcomes in our courses.

Missing Work and Extra Credit

No discourse about grades can be complete without addressing missing work and extra credit. In the traditional model missing work is given a zero. These zeroes can have huge effects on overall grades and are often used as a battering ram to get students to do work. Extra credit is often provided to "help" students who are struggling, were neglectful, or are grade obsessed. This carrot-and-stick method of grade manipulation means that the end-of-year score is not necessarily correlated with learning and skill acquisition but is more about compliance. This extrinsic motivation—or antimotivation—is actually one of the major obstacles that teachers voice about switching to a gradeless system like this. Initially, I too wondered, "How do I get students to do work if I can't give them a zero when they *don't* do it?" In the gradeless system, every assessment is an opportunity for feedback. Items that are on the list of minimum requirements must be done; everything else is simply practice. If work is handed in late or not at all, the student loses out on practice and personalized, constructive feedback. This means they will not likely improve and achieve their goals. The goals are not ours but theirs. The conversation must revert to putting the ball in their court. And that's all it is: a conversation, over and over again. A student who is missing work is one who doesn't need to be punished but does need to understand the consequences of their actions. They may need support in class and/or at home, and again, only a conversation can help you figure out the answer

to that one. What I found, once I wrapped my head around it, is that this wasn't about me. I didn't need to feel badly, get angry, or be upset. The other huge benefit of this approach is that a student who is missing work doesn't have to make up for *everything*, because more practice is coming up, over and over again. This is especially helpful with a student who is absent due to extenuating circumstances out of their control. Since skills are assessed repeatedly, it is easy to simply excuse them from missed assignments, knowing that they will have ample opportunities to practice those same skills in the next unit. There is no need for extra credit either, because achievement isn't tied to accumulating points. Either you have the skills, or you don't.

Concerns and How We Address Them

Especially about parents, and honor roll, and college.

"*Students won't complete work unless you give them points for every assignment.*" We discussed this issue in Chapter 4. It definitely can be a problem because students are rarely taught time management. The funny thing is that students tend to do whatever you pay attention to. We began to simply record the completion of daily assignments. They still didn't count for a grade, but I put a check in my grade log and posted the number of assignments completed each week. The column in the gradebook was weighted exactly 0 points. Students began submitting much more work than they had previously, as described in Chapter 4 and with further evidence in Chapter 8.

"*Parents want to see a grade.*" This requires education. We report progress at the end of each unit. We call any parent who wants an explanation. Most parents are extremely supportive once they understand what you are trying to do.

"*Students won't take assignments seriously if they don't count.*" While there are some students who share this sentiment, our experience has been quite the contrary. Students are often excited to test their ability and take academic risks in a scenario that they know will not negatively affect their grade. It is common for students to take the entire period for a test even though they know that it doesn't count.

"*Administration needs grades for end-of-term (or honor roll, end-of-semester, college transcripts, etc.).*" One way to handle this is to scale the scoring chart so that the trajectory makes sense. Where do you expect the majority of students to be at the beginning of November? That's your B. You'll see on our grade chart that

we have a column for the semester (mid-January). We have to report to parents; this grade is simply a progress report, and it does not count. So we scaled down, assuming that if a student has five standards in the Developing level and the other four at the Proficient level, in order to earn a B– at the end of the year, he or she should have at the midyear six standards in the Developing level and all the rest at the Beginning level. This will keep them on the path to successfully earning that B–, as in the next four months, they need to move three standards up to Developing and four up to Proficient. This is very doable.