

# Grading for Learning

## ACCURACY

Grades should be an accurate reflection of what a student knows and can do on his or her own. When grades include both learning and non-learning factors (e.g., a signed syllabus, participation points, paying a class fee, attendance), they lose their meaning. By basing a student's grade solely on academic factors, the teacher creates a clear picture of what the student has learned. These other factors are still essential, but should not be part of the student's academic grade and can be communicated separately.

**Ask: Do the grades I report accurately reflect my students' true level of understanding?**



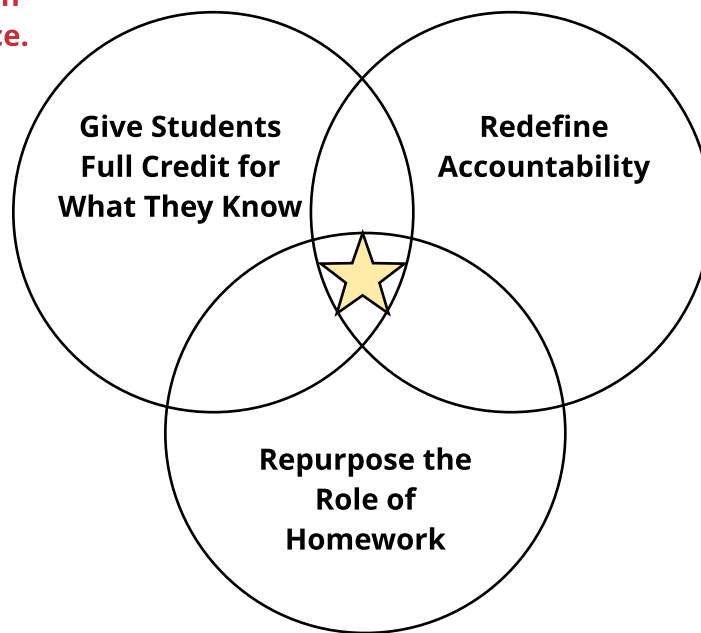
**True North**

## CONFIDENCE

Grading practices should contribute to student confidence. Confidence is not about lowering standards or inflating a sense of entitlement; rather it's about a sense of real optimism about the possibility of success. Confidence increases the likelihood that students will try harder, persist, and feel optimistic when facing challenges and obstacles along the way. Students must emerge from the grading experience feeling more confident about their potential achievement than they did when they began the course.

**Ask: Do my grading practices contribute to student confidence, or do they raise anxiety?**

**Watch the combination of old and new evidence.**



**Punishing irresponsibility doesn't teach responsibility.**

**Treat homework as practice, focus on feedback.**

# Guiding Principles

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## USE PRACTICE EFFECTIVELY

A balance between formative (ungraded) and summative (graded) assessment replicates the healthy distinction between practice and performance. Using more formative than summative assessment is a major shift for students. Anxiety is dramatically lessened when students realize that every mistake won't cost them in a grade book, and their willingness to try significantly increases.

## HARNESS THE POWER OF REASSESSMENT

Reassessment is not about hitting the reset button or establishing a series of do-overs. It's about creating another opportunity to verify new levels of proficiency. Targeted instruction and learning must happen between attempts.

## TEACH RESPONSIBILITY

Punishing irresponsibility doesn't teach anyone to be responsible. If we want students to learn to be responsible, we must TEACH them how to be responsible. Create expectations and criteria that give students a clear understanding of what it means to be successful and then teach them those skills.

## PROVIDE A LOT OF FEEDBACK

Feedback that's timely, specific, accessible, actionable, transparent, and ongoing—is one of the most powerful influences on student achievement.

## USE THE MOST RECENT EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

One practice educators should adopt is to base grades on the most recent evidence of student learning, which not only makes grading more accurate but also maintains or increases student confidence. Using the mean average in grading, in contrast, works against both accuracy and confidence because the resulting grade is usually much lower than the most recent results would show.

## EMPLOY ACCURATE GRADING PRACTICES

Practices like late penalties and zeros contribute to negatively distorted grades, whereas practices like extra credit contribute to positively distorted grades. Inaccurate grades are misleading; they leave students feeling more or less proficient than they actually are.