

GRADING & ASSESSEMENTS

A resource that every teacher must have.



Assessment and grading are words that are often used interchangeably and understandably so since they are closely related. As a result, many equate assessment with grading.

However, assessment and grading differ, starting with their goals.

The goal of grading is to evaluate individual student performance against a set of criteria for a given unit or course. Grades may or may not be an accurate measure of student learning, depending on what is being evaluated. For example, attendance, on-time assignment submission, formatting, and participation may reveal little about how much a student has learned. Still, they can offer indicators or signals for instructor intervention.

Grades alone, while useful as a standardised measurement, don't provide enough personalised feedback for what a student does or does not know and what they need to do to further their learning. According to Thomas Guskey, when grades are used alone, "even accurate, task-involving grades don't lead to improved student learning. Students get no direction for improvement from a letter, number, word, phrase, or symbol attached to the evidence of their learning. Only when grades are paired with individualised comments that offer guidance and direction for improvement do they enhance achievement and foster learning progress" (Guskey, 2019).

The goal of assessment, on the other hand, is more expansive because it is not solely about grading and includes low-stakes formative assessments void of summative evaluations; it can further student learning by incorporating feedback and guiding students towards the next steps in learning. Assessment includes low-stakes and frequent assignments that educators give students in class or as homework and summative tests or exams. Qualitative feedback is also a component of assessment that operates as a checkpoint in the student learning journey.

Assessment does not always include grades, but grading is always a part of the assessment.

Therefore, grading is a subset of assessment.

Why is this important?

Assessments are not just tests but also low-stakes assignments and daily check-ins. They uncover more data about student learning than grades. While grades may communicate student progress in general or serve as warning indicators, assessment can identify specific learning gaps that may require teacher intervention. Grading alone doesn't reveal this level of granularity.

Assessment is a critical part of teaching and learning, providing cohort-based and individual-level data insights to educators. Are students learning what we are teaching? Is there a way to increase teaching efficacy to foster better student learning outcomes? In other words, are the goals of education is met?

The above questions can be answered via assessment, which provides the following:

- Diagnostic feedback about what students do and do not know,
- Information as to what demonstrates deep comprehension of the subject,
- An opportunity to encourage student learning,
- And teacher self-evaluation on what is and is not working and the next steps to bridge student learning gaps.

It's easy to see how assessment and grading are often interchanged, given their close pedagogical juxtaposition. Both grading and evaluation are necessary; grading to communicate student progress succinctly to inform placement and other institutions, and assessment to gain deep insights into this progress. But it's also essential to

understand and acknowledge the differences as we help students navigate the educational journey.

Source:



How do they differ and which is better?

- Grading is a way for educators to evaluate each student's performance and learning. Grading can include letter grades, percentages and even a simple pass/fail. Grades can be attached to physical activities like writing assignments, lab work, projects, reports and tests. They can also be assigned to more nebulous activities that a teacher feels are important to the learning experience. These can include participation, attendance, classroom behaviour and even effort.
- Using an assessment as a ruler to measure student learning often includes analysing grades. This, perhaps, is why some people confuse the two terms. Grades should be a "major source of data" when evaluating student progress; however, the assessment goes beyond grades. A teacher might, for example, look past grade averages and examine individual areas of strength and weakness. If a child consistently gets B's in math, the grading model would tell that child's teacher that the student is learning successfully. If, however, that child always misses all the math problems that concern weights and measures, then there is a deficit in his or her education. The assessment would identify that deficit, while a system of evaluation based purely on grades would not.

So, which is better: grades or assessments?

Grading

This is the traditional method of measuring whether or not students are participating successfully in their classroom experience and whether or not they are learning. It has the advantage of being codified. Letter or number grades are easy to add up, and record and a teacher can quickly get a sense of a student's success or failure by scanning that student's grades. On the national and state-wide levels, grades are used extensively to measure the overall success of our educational system. The federal government has particular grade standards for many areas of study. These standards

can be found on the National Center for Education Statistics “National Assessment of Educational Progress”

Other benefits of a grade-based system of student evaluation include:

- Grades are easily understood by students, and their parents
- Grades can be measured objectively since they are usually based on measurable data
- Grades can give students concrete goals to aim for when they assess their own progress

Assessment

Assessment, on the other hand, has many advantages of its own. Assessment can look past the blurring data of grade averages and identify areas of weakness in the course of study or in an individual student’s education. It can also be highly individualised because the educator who designed the course and its materials plays a significant role in choosing assessment goals. Because that teacher knows what information and skills he or she intends to impart, that teacher is often the best judge of whether those learning goals have been met. Students are judged on their final understanding of the material, not just their accumulative grade point average. Students don’t have to bring past failures made during practice “in the final match.”

Other benefits of assessment-based evaluation are as follows:

- Student involvement in the evaluation process
- Individualised goals for measuring success
- Less paperwork and more time with student

Grading vs. assessment: room for both methods

While grading may seem as old-fashioned and assessment progressive, there is room for both of these methods in the modern educational system. Grading is best for evaluating large amounts of student data as when the individual states need to assess

their educational systems while assessment gives teachers a valuable tool for measuring the individual progress of students in their classes.

Source:

