A Grading And Assessment Workbook For Teachers
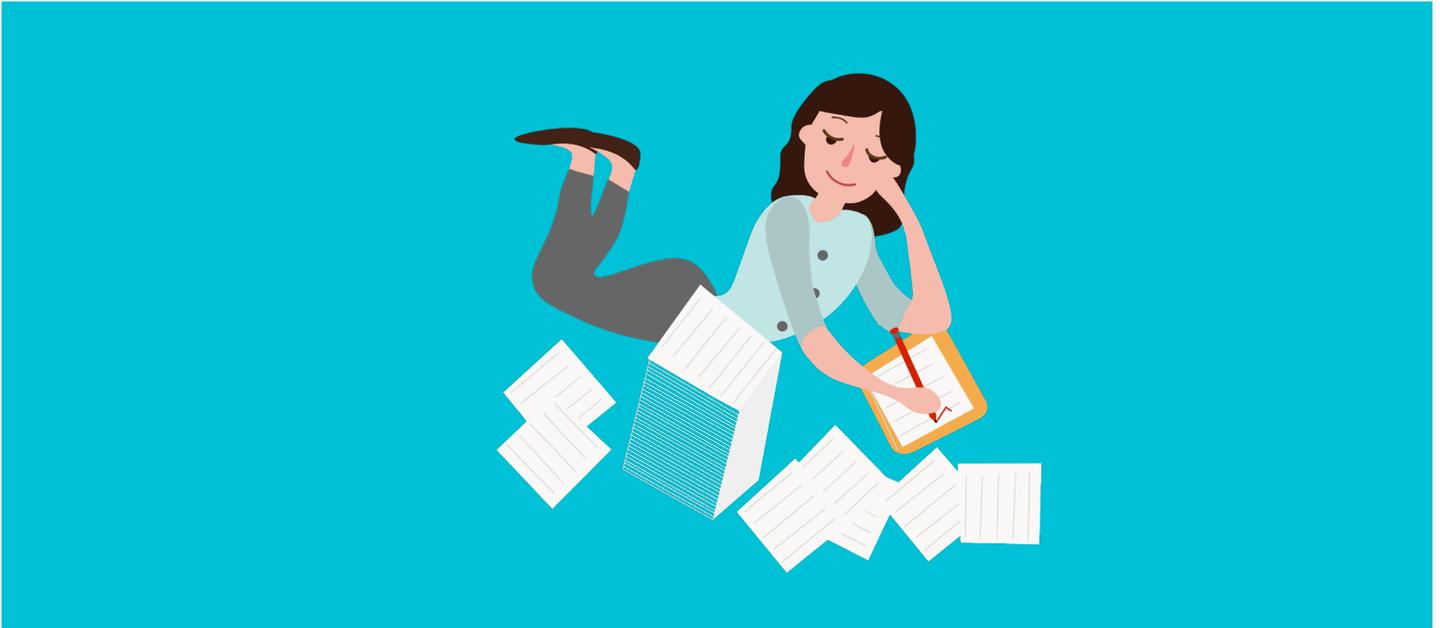
GRADING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SAVE YOU TIME AND RESTORE YOUR SANITY

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TeacherVision®

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Why We Created This Workbook

Ask any teacher what her least favorite part of the job is, and she might likely say, grading. There isn't a lot of time built into the school day to grade, and as a result, we end up taking stacks of papers home over the weekend.

We can begin to resent grading, and too much grading and not enough time often contributes to burnout.

We have learned from experience that creating grading systems can help us grade smarter, not harder. We created this workbook so we could share those systems and best practices with you.

Each system is designed to save you time and make grading more productive. Our hope is that when you use these systems, the tote bag you carry home after school starts to get lighter, and your spirits do to.

Happy Grading,

Julie

Create A Comment Bank (Or Use The One We Created For You)

Chances are while grading a stack of essays or writing feedback at the bottom of a project rubric, you find yourself writing the same comment over and over, but you are us different words and phrases. For example, a student's evidence from the text doesn't connect to her thesis, so you write, "the connection between your argument and your evidence isn't clear." A few essays later you encounter a similar issue, and write," your evidence isn't connected to your overall argument." The comment is essentially the same. However, it takes time to come up with your words and phrasing, and the more time you spend formulating your comments, the more time your grading takes.

This is why I was always grading. I graded while standing in line at the coffee shop. I graded while cooking dinner. I graded on Christmas Eve. I was always grading, and it took so much time.

Create Categories

This process is very similar to creating a rubric. When you create a rubric you begin with the categories that you are planning to assess. You then create a set of criteria for that category and adjust that criteria to fit your assessment scale (somewhat meets, meets, exceeds), for example.

Begin by identifying the categories that you assess regularly. If you are an English teacher, that is likely reading comprehension and writing. If you are an elementary

teacher, it may be spelling, handwriting, and punctuation.

Identify the Common Mistakes You Are Correcting

If you have graded work, look at the mistakes students are making most frequently. Begin to develop a list of those mistakes. This list is going to help you determine the comments that you want to write and have access to so all you have to do is copy and paste. If you handwrite your grades, you won't have to waste time trying to formulate your comments and words.

Write A List Of Frequently Used Comments

Open up a Word Document or Google Document on your computer. Or, if you would prefer, handwrite your list. Start with the category: Grammar, Mechanics, Work Habits. Then, underneath each category write the comments that will address the most frequent mistakes.

Teaching Tip: it can be helpful to have this list out while you are grading, as you will likely continue to add to it as you are grading.

Use Your List While Grading

In order for this system to work, you have to use it. You may have some of your most frequent comments made into rubber stamps. I know this works especially well for elementary teachers. If you are a paperless grader, make sure your Word Document or Google Document is easily accessible so you can cut and paste. Share your list with a colleague, and ask for theirs.

At TeacherVision we have categorized grading comments for you. Please put these comments on your lists if they are helpful.

Writing Feedback:

Positive

You vary your sentence structure throughout, which shows sophistication.

Your writing shows a strong understanding of grammar rules.

Your writing is organized, and your reader can follow your argument.

Your writing is spelled correctly.

Your evidence clearly supports your argument.

You use sensory details to show the reader, rather than tell what is happening.

Suggestions For Improvement

Try to vary your sentence structure to bring sophistication to your writing.

You make many grammar errors, which distract your reader.

Your writing is disorganized, which makes it challenging for your reader to follow your argument.

You make many spelling errors, which distract your reader.

Your evidence doesn't clearly support your argument.

You tell the reader what is happening, rather than using sensory details to show what is happening

Math Feedback

Positive

You show your work, and how you found the answer to the problem.

You used an effective strategy to solve the problem.

You followed all the necessary steps to solve this problem.

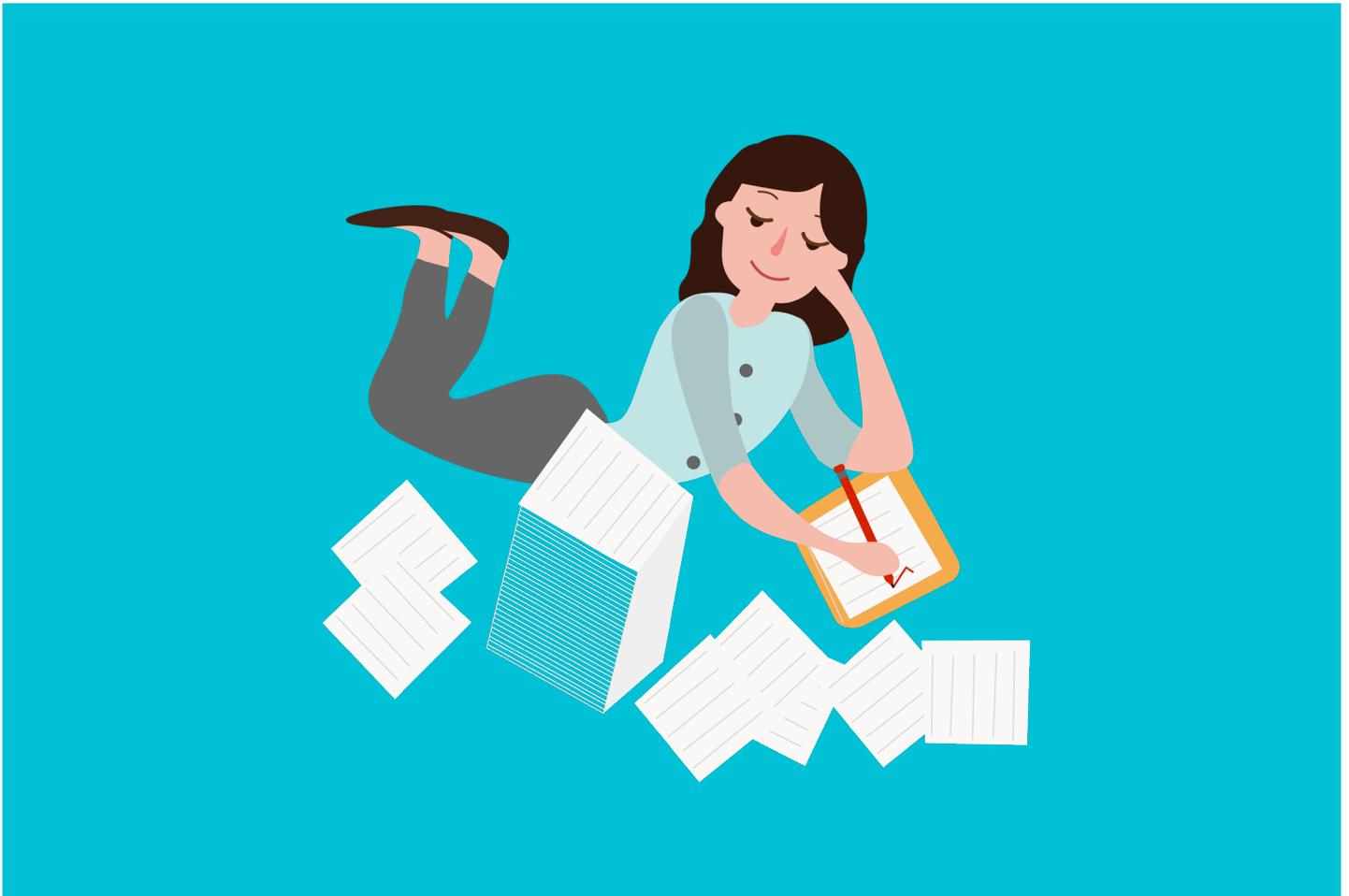Your work shows that you understand this math concept.

Suggestions For Improvement

You got the right answer, but you didn't show your work.

It isn't clear what strategy you used to solve this problem.

You didn't follow all the necessary steps to solve this problem.

Your work shows that you need more practice.

Report Card Comments

Rather than write your grades and comments from scratch, use these sentence starters to save time.

Report Card Comments For Math

_____ has a good attitude towards the math work at this grade level. Please continue to work on _____ nightly.

_____ has worked hard in math this quarter. However, her progress has been slower than I would have liked. Can we meet to discuss some helpful strategies?

_____ would benefit from more practice with _____. If possible, could you please spend some time nightly on this skill?

At this point, _____ has successfully learned _____. He is now able to start nightly practice of _____.

Thank you for your interest in our room. It would be helpful if _____ practiced his/her _____ nightly.

_____ is struggling with motivation in learning math. I know he/she can put in more effort than he/she has been recently. If possible, could you please reinforce this nightly?

_____ still needs strengthening in the concept of _____.

_____ is having trouble with many of the basic skills in math. Can we meet to discuss some helpful strategies?

_____ has a true enthusiasm and gift for math. His effort is reflected in his high grade. He is also an excellent classmate, as he frequently assists other students with concepts, not answers.

Report Card Comments for Language Arts and Reading

_____'s reading has improved considerably throughout the year. Please continue to practice reading with her nightly.

_____ speaks very well in front of the class. However, her written work needs much improvement. With greater effort, the improvement should slowly come.

_____ has shown a great amount of improvement with her creative writing. She has learned to use more colorful words.

_____ is making excellent progress reading sight words. Please continue to practice with him nightly.

_____ 's spelling scores have improved greatly since the beginning of the school year. Studying his spelling words nightly has made much of the difference. Thank-you for your help.

Although _____ is trying very hard, she is having difficulty writing smooth, fluent sentences. Can we meet to discuss some helpful strategies?

Report Card Comments For Academic Achievement And Improvement

If _____ will continue to put forth the effort he has shown in the past two reporting periods, he will receive a great deal from his schooling.

The following suggestions might improve his _____.

I am hoping this recent interest and improvement will continue.

_____ is making progress in all academic areas. She is having some difficulty with _____, but if she continues to work hard she will see improvement soon.

_____ takes great pride in all of the work he does and always does a neat job.

_____ volunteers frequently and makes wonderful contributions to class. She does tend to work too quickly, which results in many careless errors. We can help her to correct this at home and at school.

_____ is a very hard worker and has excellent vocabulary skills for his age. He enjoys reading and writing.

_____ 's excellent attitude is reflected in the work she does. Thank you for your efforts.

Although _____ tries to do his best, he often has difficulty keeping up with the rest of the class. Can we meet to discuss this?

I am concerned about _____ 's progress this year. She has shown some improvement but her growth is not where it should be at this point in the school year. Please call to schedule a conference so we can discuss this.

As we discussed in our recent conference, _____ 's work is below grade standards. I am sure with that with more effort and concentration he will show rapid improvement.

_____ has great enthusiasm for everything we do in class. However, she is having some difficulty with _____. Please continue to review this with her nightly.

Academic Achievement Strengths

_____ is strong in _____.

_____ has earned a very fine report card.

_____ has a vast background knowledge of _____.

_____ is a very fine and serious student and excels in _____.

_____ is working well in all basic subjects.

_____ is working above grade level in _____.

_____ is especially good at _____.

_____ 's low rate of achievement makes it difficult for her to keep up with the class .

_____ is capable of achieving a higher average in the areas of _____.

_____ has had difficulty with learning _____, so in the coming term we will focus on _____.

_____ is capable of much better work.

_____ still needs guidance and support from both you and me.

_____ has been most cooperative and only needs strengthening in social studies skills to bring her up to _____ grade level.

_____ has been receiving low quiz/test scores.

_____ does not work up to her ability.

_____ has difficulty understanding the material.

This subject is being modified to better match _____ 's ability.

Academic Improvement Challenges

_____ is continuing to grow in independence.

_____ has improved steadily.

_____ has been consistently progressing.

_____ has shown a good attitude about trying to improve in _____.

_____ seems eager to improve.

_____ has shown strong growth in _____.

_____ is making steady progress academically.

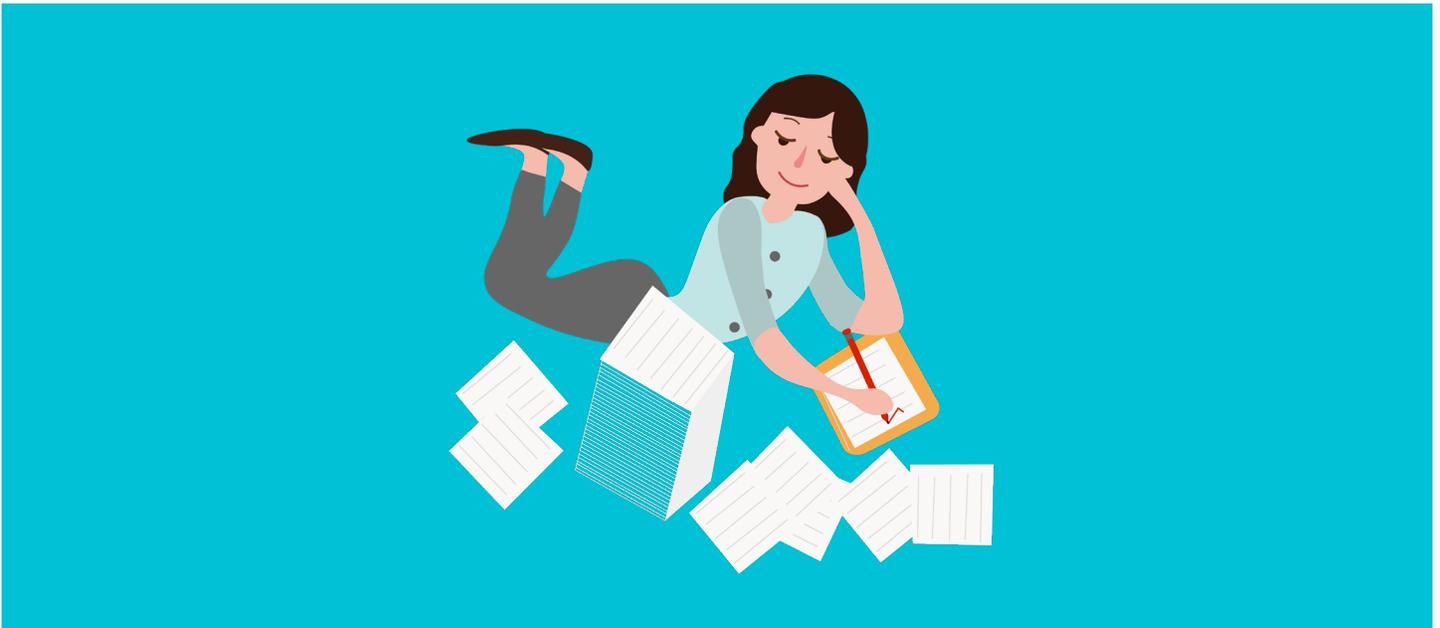_____ 's quality of work is improving.

_____ has strengthened her skills in _____.

_____ has shown an encouraging desire to better herself in _____.

_____ would improve if he developed a greater interest in _____.

_____ has made nice progress this reporting period.

_____ is maturing nicely, and I hope this continues.

_____ 's classroom attitude shows improvement.

Assign and Grade in Batches

Have you ever planned a workout and then dreaded it? A whole hour of running can feel impossible after a long day at teaching. Or maybe you decided to clean out your kitchen cabinets, and once took everything out, you wish you hadn't? Grading is similar. Taking home a stack of 120 papers is not an ideal way to leave school on Friday.

When I first started teaching this happened to me a lot. I had four sections of English, and in order to keep myself sane, and my pacing on track, I would assign the same due dates for each section. As a result, I had some very rough weekends where my only interaction was with stacks of papers.

Not Every Student Has To Hand In Work At The Same Time

One of my favorite grading strategies is to provide students a window of time that they can turn an assignment in. For example, I might assign the work on Monday, and ask that students hand it in starting Wednesday and ending Monday morning. Initially I worried that all students would wait until Monday, but that wasn't the case. Many students handed their work in on Wednesday. This system worked especially well when students had class time to work on the assignment.

Don't Assign and Collect All At Once

If you have four sections of the same subject, don't assign a large project or paper at the same time, and don't give students the same due date. If you do, you are going to

have too much grading at the same time.

I know that this can be challenging and doesn't always work. However, whenever possible try to space it out. For example, two sections might start the essay on Monday and hand it in on Friday, while the other sections start the essay on the following Monday and hand it in on Friday. That means for two Fridays you are getting 50 papers instead of 100.

Assign and Grade Plan

Section	Assign Date	Deadline

Try Focus Area Revisions

If you teach writing, this system is for you. It completely changed how I graded my students' writing. I found that I would spend hours doing line edits and writing comments on my students' writing, only to see the same mistakes in their next essay. I began to wonder if my students were even reading my feedback at all.

It occured to me that while my intention was to provide as much feedback as possible so my students had a lot of help with their writing was actually working against me. Too much feedback meant that they weren't really taking it in.

This is where the Focus Area Revision was born.

Here's how it works. Before students begin a writing assignment, they write goal for that assignment that focuses on one area. It is helpful to provide students with a list of writing categories that they can choose from. Some examples include: structure, word choice, syntax, grammar, evidence, argument.

Students hand in their goals, and you provide support if needed.

As students are working on the assignment, the goal drives their focus. They know that the only feedback they will receive from you will be specifically about that goal.

When students hand in their work, they write or type their goal at the top of the assignment. You only give them feedback on that goal.

Name:

Focus Area Revision:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Teacher Feedback:
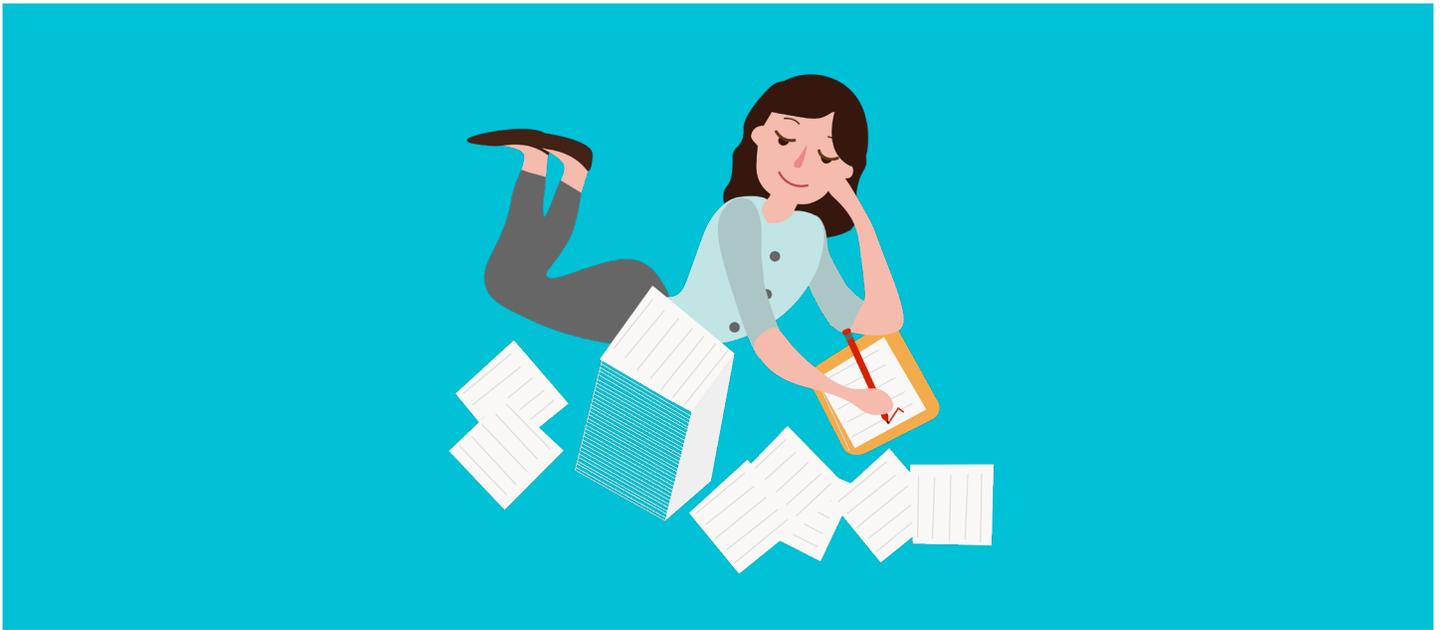
_____

_____

_____

_____

Student Assessment:

Based on my teacher's feedback, I need to (circle one):

Continue to work on this goal
Meet with my teacher to plan my next steps
Pick a new Focus Area Revision

Use Grading Checklists

Similar to a rubric, a grading checklist eliminates a lot of writing and typing and forming comments. It takes much more time to write a complete sentence than it does to check a box. Also, you will likely reuse your grading checklists for different assignments. Here's how it works:

Identify the topics or skills that you will work with students on throughout the entire school year. For example, editing.

Create a checklist that students can use to review their work, and you can then use to assess their work.

This approach to grading also holds students accountable for making changes and revising their work. When you return the checklist, you can ask students to correct the mistakes they made, which will only deepen their learning, and make less likely that they will make the same mistake again.

Name: _____   **Date:** _____

My Editing Checklist

DIRECTIONS: Answer each of the following questions by putting a check in the "YES," "NO," or Corrected boxes.

Questions	YES	NO	Corrected
1. Did I re-read my writing to check for mistakes?			
2. Did I start each sentence with a capital letter?			
3. Did I end each sentence with a period, an exclamtion mark, or a question mark?			
4. Did I space my words and write neatly?			
5. Did I indent at the beginning of each paragraph?			
6. Did I circle any words that I think are misspelled?			
7. Did I use a dictionary of ask for help spelling words?			
8. Did I use adjectives in every paragraph to add details to my writing?			
9. Did I tell, "WHO?", "WHAT?", "WHEN?", "WHERE?", "WHY?" and "HOW?"			
10. Did I ask someone else to read my writing to check for mistakes I might have missed?			
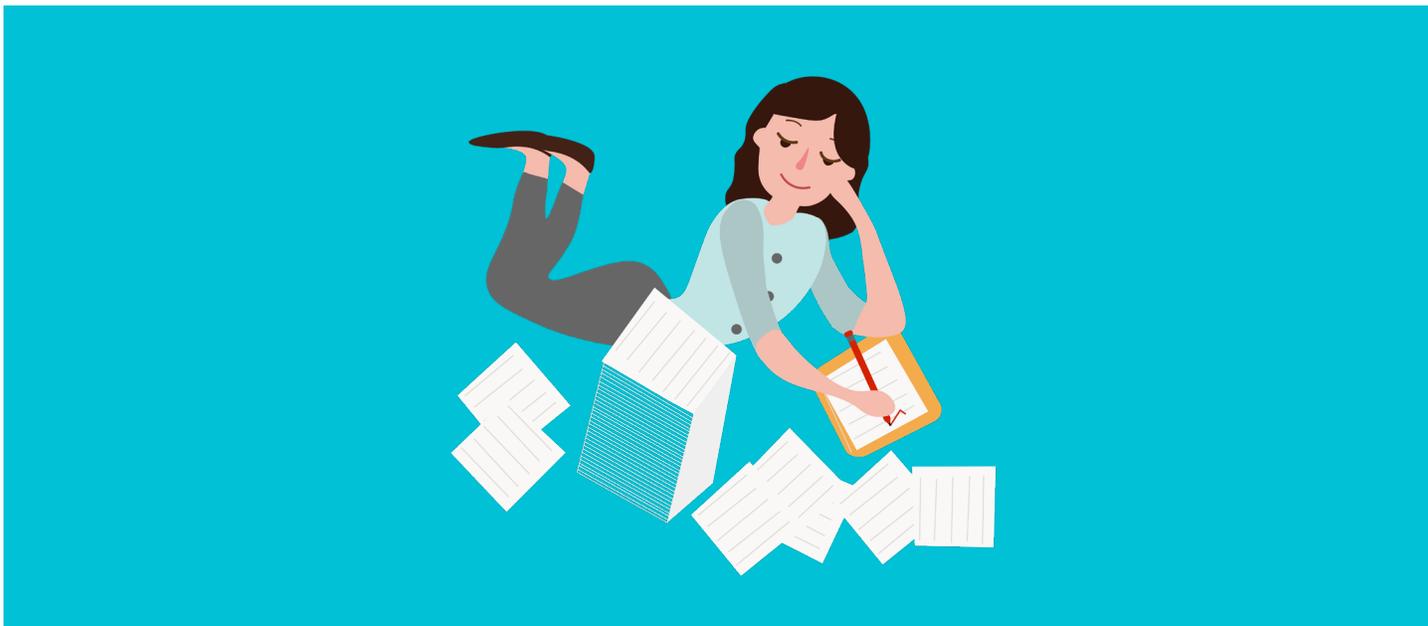
Invest in Highlighters And Create A Code

If trying a new grading system feels daunting, you might want to try this one first. Whether you handwrite your comments or type them, either process is time-consuming. Using highlighters can save a lot of time.

Here's how it works. Create an anchor chart in the classroom that conveys what each color represents. Herre is an example:

Pink=Grammar Error
Yellow=Didn't Follow Directions
Orange=Incomplete
Green=Unclear

You can create whatever code makes the most sense for the topic or skill that you are teaching. For Math, your code might look like this:

Pink=Didn't Show Your Work
Yellow=Didn't Follow Directions
Orange=Incomplete
Green=Incorrect

My favorite part about this system is that you can then ask students to go back and correct their mistakes, and by doing so, you are holding them accountable for the feedback given

Writing

Pink=Grammar Error

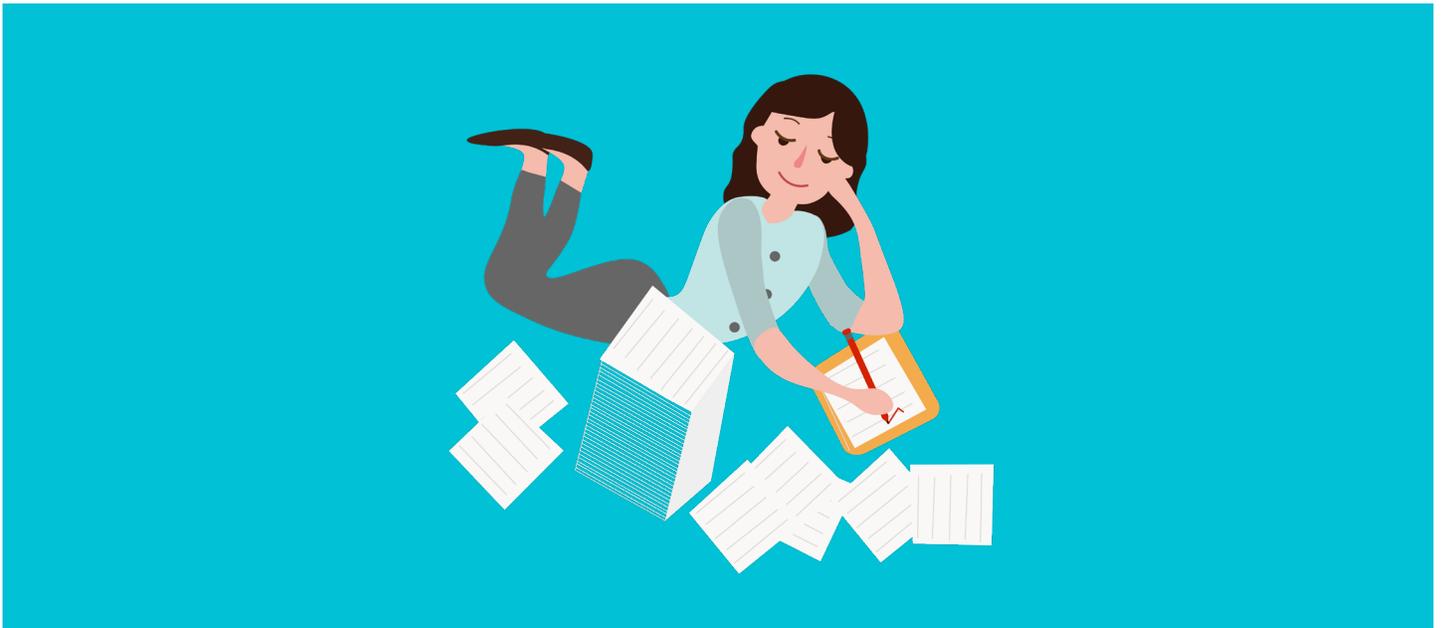Yellow=Didn't Follow Directions

Orange=Incomplete

Green=Unclear

Math

Pink=Didn't Show Your Work

Yellow=Didn't Follow Directions

Orange=Incomplete

Green=Incorrect

Formative Assessments For Students

When I first started teaching, I graded everything. While I knew the difference between summative and formative assessments, I didn't integrate student self-assessments into my teaching practice.

It is possible to gather enough data without grading everything you give your students. In fact, grading an assignment doesn't necessarily tell me anything about the student's experience. Was this assignment challenging? Does he need more practice? Is he ready to move on?

The power of formative assessments is twofold. First, your students complete the assessment rather than you doing it for them, which saves you time, and is more meaningful for them. Second, you have helpful data to determine strategic small grouping, whether to re-teach or move on, etc.

Here are some of our favorite self-assessments so you can add them to your current grading and assessment routines.
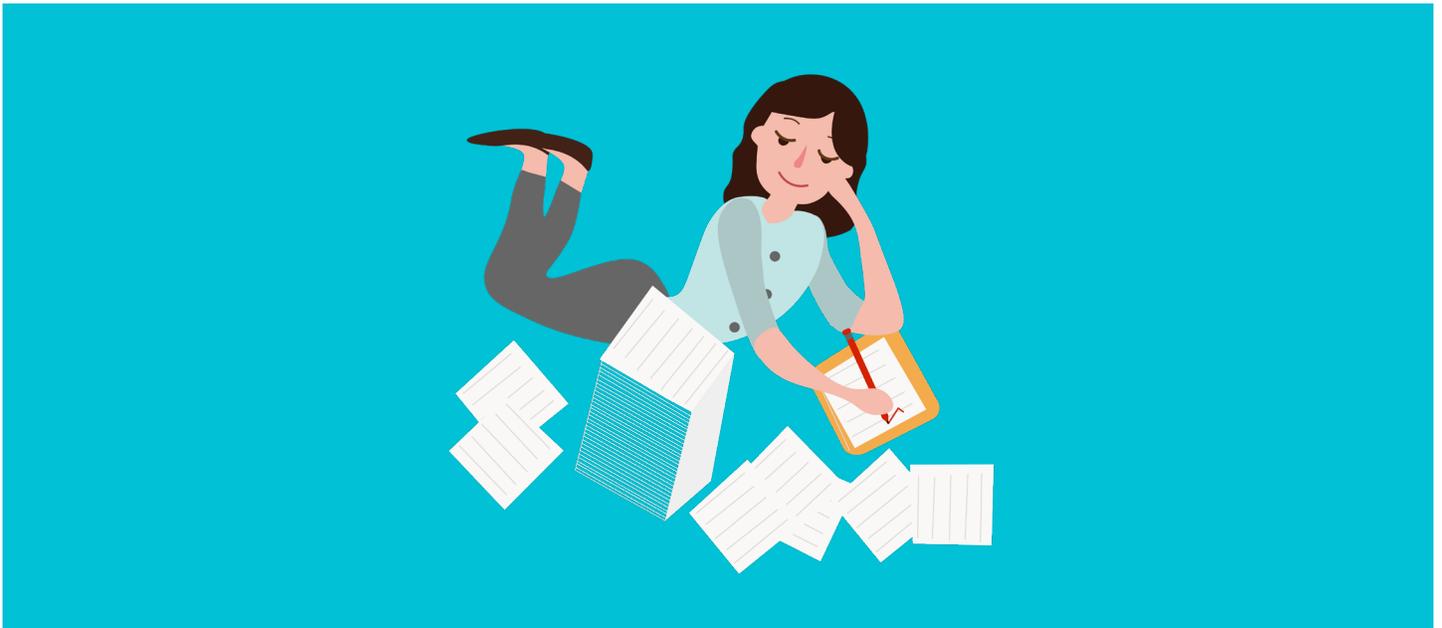
Formative Assessments For Students

One of the most effective ways to improve your grading systems and save you time, while still gathering the data you need to meaningfully assess your students is student self-assessments. These checks for understanding hold students' accountable for taking ownership over their learning process.

Here are some of our favorite formative assessments for students.

Self-Assessment Scale

1	2	3	4
Even with help I don't get it.	Help me a little, and I got it.	I need some more practice.	I need a challenge or can help someone else.

I chose the number _____ because...

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3-2-1 Reflections

Three ideas I learned in class were _____, _____, _____.

I can use these ideas by doing _____ and _____.

What confused me most in class was _____.

Daily Tasks Checklist

Task	Did you complete it?	How did it go?
		🙂 😐 🙁
		🙂 😐 🙁
		🙂 😐 🙁
		🙂 😐 🙁
		🙂 😐 🙁
		🙂 😐 🙁