

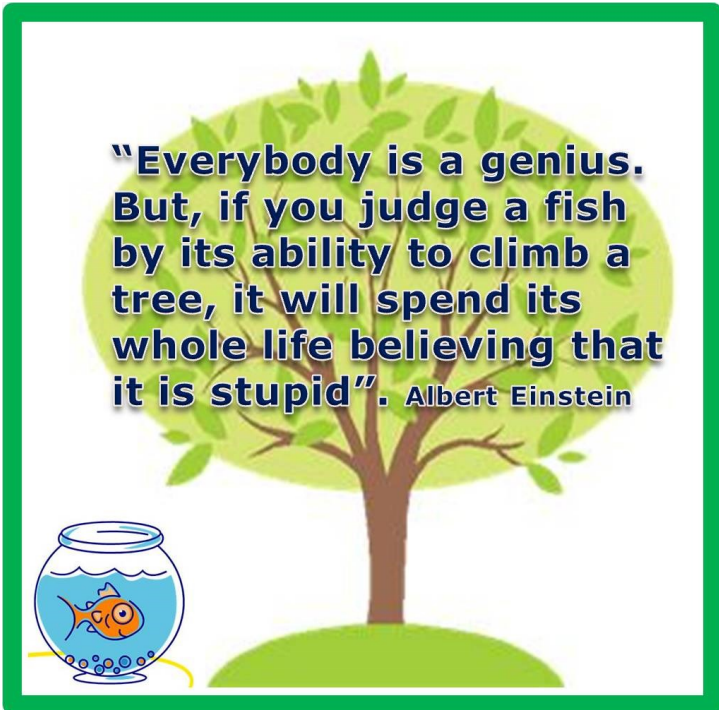
Revitalize teaching and learning in your classrooms

PG 2—In the Spotlight


“Equity in Grading”
with **Courtney Kluth**
and **Blaze Rogers**

and

“What is Standards Based Grading?”



Inside this issue



PG 3—How might i-Ready help teachers differentiate instruction?

Transformation Possibilities

PG 4—Should we consider “The Case Against the Zero?”

Technology Corner

PG 6—What digital tools might we use to enhance student learning?

In this issue...

A brief examination into grading practices

Grading practices have the ability to inform students and teachers about learning and growth. In this newsletter, we examine some issues that may help teachers consider how different grading practices may impact student learning.

Connect with one of our P2P Coaches here

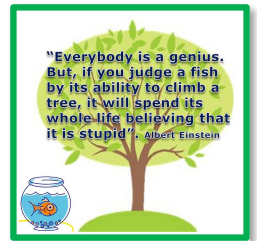
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|----------------|------------------|
| Vicki Curtis | Stephanie Kiesel |
| Kelee Davey | Tamara Marks |
| Craig Gastauer | Sophie Monaco |
| Jameson Gavin | Brittany Sola |
| Jen Grainger | |

For additional resources go to the VHS Instructional
Webpage: <http://toolkit-vhs.com/>

In the Spotlight

Courtney Kluth & Blaze Rogers

Written by Jen Grainger



Equity in Grading

Recently, the English department has been discussing alternative grading options. What is the best way to assess a student's true skills? What is the fairest way to assess a student? Fifty percent rule? Mastery and Competency? Point system? Rubric system? Many of us have relied on the traditional point system where students earn points according to their accomplishments on each assignment or test. While this is an easy way to determine an overall point average, it might not be the best way to represent student learning.

Courtney Kluth is a sixth year teacher at VHS and a member of the English department. In an effort to bring more equity to the grading process,



Courtney is now implementing a 4 point rubric scoring system that focuses more on the student's mastery and competency of skills and standards that are set forth. She shared a few thoughts about making the change as well as the impact it has made in her classroom.



"After using the 4 point rubric scale, I have noticed a tremendous change in the way I evaluate my students and their learning. I am now able to assess my students on their competency of specific goals, and standards, rather than having to rely on an overall point system to determine an overall grade. At first,

[Learn more! Click here.](#)

What is Standards Based Grading?

Written by Vicki Curtis, Kelee Davey, and Jen Grainger



Imagine 2 classrooms: the first has a traditional points based grading system, the second has a Standards Based Grading system. The

at the beginning of a grading period haunt them throughout the semester.

While most classes more than likely focus on skills and standards, it's the way assignments are graded that impacts students so greatly.

A mastery based classroom typically uses a different grading scale than most teachers are used to. "In traditional grading, students are primarily measured by the percentage of work successfully completed. The assumption is that higher completion rates reflect greater mastery, and earn higher grades. Often 90% achieves an A, 80% a B, etc." However in a mastery based classroom, the grades are based on a proficiency rubric that measures their level of competency,

student in the first classroom has a 40% and feels the weight of failure, knowing they cannot turn their grade around before the end of the semester. It is simply mathematically impossible. The student in the second classroom is also failing but has finally started to grasp the concepts in the curriculum and knows they can improve their score to a passing grade in time. How do these two students have such different outlooks on their grade?

But how do these grades actually translate to a gradebook? Do students know what these grades mean when it comes to their learning? Do teachers? And what about the parents?

This is because instead of averaging grades like in the first scenario, the second class looks at growth over time based on a student's mastery of skills/standards. Students are rewarded for their learning, instead of having the low scores

[Learn more! Click here.](#)



Using Data to Inform Instructional Practice

i-Ready: What is it? How might I use these data to help learners?

Written by Kelee Davey and Stephanie Kiesel

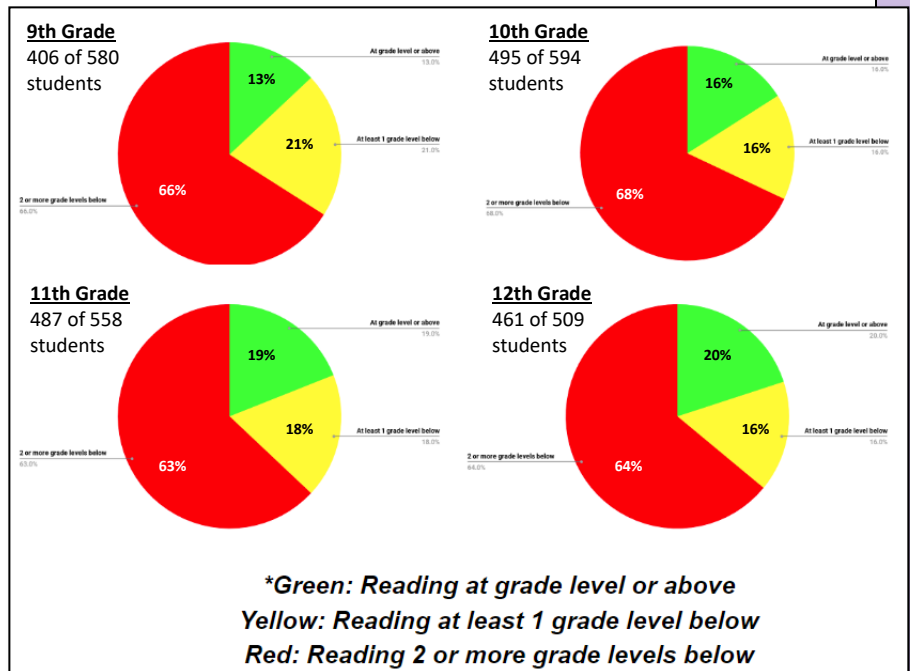
If you don't teach Math, English or Special Education classes, you may not know what i-Ready is, but you've most certainly heard your students complaining about it! i-Ready is an online platform for math and reading data and instruction. Included on the site is a diagnostic that students take three times a year (August, January, and May). The diagnostic is an "adaptive assessment that identifies students' strengths and weaknesses, measures growth, and supports data-driven differentiated instruction. It provides comprehensive insight into student learning across K-12 skills to help (teachers) meet the needs of all students." In addition to the i-Ready Diagnostic, there is an online instruction component to provide "a personalized learning pathway for students based on their Diagnostic results. Online instruction targets skills gaps to help students who are behind access grade-level content, and it provides challenges and enrichment for students who are on grade level." Teachers can also use i-Ready Standards Mastery to "measure mastery of individual standards to help (them) understand progress through grade-level instruction, identify needs for reteaching, and determine common misconceptions and errors."

What do the data mean?

Math, English and ELD teachers, along with Education Specialists, may want to use i-Ready throughout the year to supplement their instruction; other content teachers may

not see why they should care about this online tool. As many of us already know, our students struggle with reading. In August 2019, 1,849 out of 2,241 students took

the reading diagnostic. Of these students, only 17% were reading at grade level or above. 18% of the students were reading at least 1 grade level below while 65% were reading at 2 or more grade levels below. Breakdowns for the individual grades are shown below:



How can we use the data?

These scores may come as a shock to some of you...but English teachers know that it is far too common for our students to be scoring at elementary school levels. So how can we use this data to help our instruction?

Students read across every content, and therefore, literacy can be supported school wide. If a Science class is reading an article, a History class is analyzing a primary text, or an elective class is reading about how to perform a certain skill, consider **frontloading vocabulary** or **incorporating small group instruction** where students can make more meaning from the text. You may not be able to cover as much material this way but if students cannot understand what they are reading, are they really getting anything out of what you are trying to teach?

[Learn more! Click here.](#)



Transformation Possibilities

What can transformation look like? Highlighting examples at VHS

Examining the “Case Against the Zero”

Written by Sophie Monaco

Some teachers have adopted a new grading system that eliminates grades less than 50%. This is often referred to as a “no-zero” grading policy or sometimes the 50% rule. Perhaps you have heard of this grading system before, but for those of you who have never heard of this policy, it usually works like this: If a student completes an assignment, even if the quality of work is poor or the assignment is turned in late, the students will receive no lower than a 50% grade on this assignment. Some teachers apply this policy even when students have turned in no work at all. The no-zero grading policy can extend beyond homework and classwork and can be applied to tests and quizzes in some classes.

The popularity of this controversial grading policy is rising as schools across the nation are working to move away from the letter grading system and avoid placing importance on standardized test such as the SAT and ACT. Teachers who support this policy say that it gives every student the chance to succeed.

Zero grades are believed to make school more difficult for struggling students and can make passing a class seem impossible. Supporters of a no-zero grading policy believe that the policy gives students a second chance to learn and succeed



academically. As we know, there are many home-life factors that can impact a students’ learning. With a no-zero grading policy, a student who misses an assignment due to a difficult home-life situation has an easier time bouncing back academically if they are given a 50% on that assignment rather than an 0%. Teachers who support this grading policy feel that if this student receives a 50% on the first assignment, then the second assignment would improve their grade immediately and represent more accurately what they have and have not learned. Some teachers feel that students who receive grades lower than 50% are more likely to withdraw from school and academic work rather than put in extra effort to succeed. Giving students a 50% instead may make it easier for them to motivate themselves to do better next time.

This table compares students’ grades on a “no tolerance” grading system (which allows zeros) and a no-zero grading system.

Students	Assignment 1	Assignment 2	Assignment 3	Final Grade
Student #1 (no 50% rule)	0	80	90	56.7%
Student #1 (with 50% rule)	50	80	90	73.3%
Student #2 (no 50% rule)	0	0	100	33.3%
Student #2 (with 50% rule)	50	50	100	66.7%
Student #3 (no 50% rule)	0	40	75	37.3%
Student #3 (with 50% rule)	50	50	75	58.3%

Continued on the following page

Should students be given scores of 50% or less on an assessment or assignment?

Examining the “Case Against the Zero”

Continued from the previous page

As you can see in the table above, this allows students who are struggling to have a better chance to pass. It does not give students a free passing grade in the class, but allows them the chance to recover when they exert effort and show learning progress.

Critics of the no-zero grading policy say that students are not learning responsibility when they are able to get a grade of 50% for turning in little to no work. Students can put in almost no effort most of the time and are still able to pass the class by doing a minimal amount of work. This allows students who have not mastered a concept to slip by and move into a hard subject or class that they are actually unprepared for. These students may start struggling even more and might not ever be able to dig themselves out of this hole. For this reason, some teachers feel that a no-zero grading policy will have the same long term effects as giving grades below 50%. Some teachers find the 50% grading rule to be unfair and do not want to pass students along to the next grade level with a D when they actually have not mastered the content.

One more example also illustrates the negative impact one zero can have on grades. Imagine an “A” student who, for some reason, never made up an exam. In the semester, six 100 point exams were administered and the student received the following scores:

100, 100, 100, 0, 100, 100 → 500 of 600 points

The student, never missing a single question on any exam, would end up with a “B” for exams in the class (500 points ‘earned’ /

600 total points possible = 83% or the equivalent of a low “B” in most classes).

Is it ‘wrong’ for the student to have not made up the exam?

Is the final grade appropriate?						
Test	Test	Test	Test	Test	Test	Final Average
70	70	70	70	70	70	70
						passing
80	80	80	0	80	80	67
						failing
90	80	70	75	85	0	67
						failing

Undoubtedly, the answer is ‘Yes.’

Is it ‘right’ for the student to be penalized an entire letter grade when her scores indicate that she truly understands what she is being asked to learn in the class? Should the student be ‘given’ a 50 / 100 so that the average changes (550 / 600 = 92% → “A” or “A-”)? Do either of these grades accurately represent what the student has learned?

These are the types of questions we are wrestling with.

No matter what side of the argument you fall on, it is important to remember that grading is more about the feedback and expectations set by the teacher. Without this feedback, the grade given to a student has no meaning. It is important for students to understand why they received the grade so they can learn from their mistakes or misunderstandings.

Would you like to explore this idea further? Here are a few links to learn more about different sides of the issue.

[The Case Against the Zero](#)

[Do No-Zero Policies Help or Hurt Students?](#)

[Teachers Divided Over Controversial ‘No-Zero’ Grading Policy](#)

[Fifty Instead of a Zero Misses the Point](#)

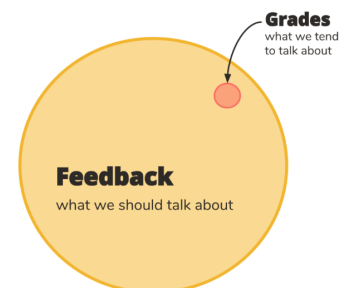
What Does It Look Like to Provide Effective Feedback

If we want students to use each assignment and assessment as a stepping stone for continuous learning, then we must understand that **giving students feedback**, not only a score or grade, is what students need to help them learn from their mistakes.

However, *not all feedback is equal*. To be effective, feedback needs to help students understand:

1. What they are doing well in regards to learning targets / expectation criteria.
2. What needs rethinking and revision / improvement compared to learning targets.
3. What potential strategy or idea that a student may do next to improve.

Finally, *teach students how to use the feedback and give them time to act on it.*



To explore more, begin [here](#) and [here](#)!

Tech Corner

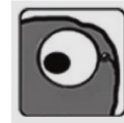
Written by Vicki Curtis and Jen Grainger

Google Classroom has revolutionized the way teachers and students manage coursework. With the click of a button, students can easily submit work into one nice and neat location and keep track of their assignments and missing work. Teachers on the receiving end, however, often struggle with managing the assignments submitted. One of the difficulties many of us face is incorporating rubrics into an assessment neatly. What is the best way? Printing and highlighting a paper copy? Cutting and pasting the rubric into the document? It can get messy. What if a rubric could be generated directly into the student assignment? There is a way. With the combination of the **Goobric extension and a Doctopus add-on**, you can quickly grade an assignment, give meaningful feedback, and generate a customized rubric with comments embedded into each student's Google Classroom assignment. Read on for [more details](#) and [a video about how to do it](#). Or [click here to be connected with a coach](#) who can help you set it all up!



Digital Rubrics

With



Doctopus and Goobric

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4 Sources	Careful and accurate records are kept to document the source of 95-100% of the facts and graphics in the brochure.	Careful and accurate records are kept to document the source of 94-85% of the facts and graphics in the brochure.	Careful and accurate records are kept to document the source of 84-75% of the facts and graphics in the brochure.	Sources are not documented accurately or are not kept on many facts and graphics.
3 Writing - Mechanics	Capitalization and punctuation are correct throughout the brochure.	Capitalization and punctuation are correct throughout the brochure after feedback from an adult.	There are 1-2 capitalization and/or punctuation errors in the brochure even after feedback from an adult.	There are several capitalization or punctuation errors in the brochure even after feedback from an adult.
3 Writing - Organization	Each section in the brochure has a clear beginning, middle, and end.	Almost all sections of the brochure have a clear beginning, middle and end.	Most sections of the brochure have a clear beginning, middle and end.	Less than half of the sections of the brochure have a clear beginning, middle and end.
2 Content - Accuracy	All facts in the brochure are accurate.	99-90% of the facts in the brochure are accurate.	89-80% of the facts in the brochure are accurate.	Fewer than 80% of the facts in the brochure are accurate.
Comments				
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email rubric score to student			
	<input type="button" value="Submit and paste to Doc"/>			

Hot Topic

Voice your thoughts on learning and teaching issues



In your opinion, what should we consider regarding grades, grading systems, and feedback?

Are you in favor of one of the grading explorations described in this issue of *EMPOWER*?

While using Mastery Grading in my class, I notice that my students...

vs.

While using a "no-zero" policy in my class, I notice that my students...

-OR-

While using a different system in my class, students...

[Click here and add your thoughts to the discussion](#)