



## *My Assessment Philosophy - Angela Jurgensen*

Assessing students is one of the most crucial portions of teaching. Without it, there is no way to tell if the student understands the subject; assessment keeps students from falling through the cracks. Not every assessment policy is beneficial for students, and so, what constitutes proper assessment?

A metaphor for assessment is as the net that holds hundreds of different, colourful fish. As the net holds the fish, they glisten under the sun, and no one really notices the net; but without it, there would be no way to lift those fish from the water. The fishnet of assessment weaves through and holds the content together, making it possible for the fish of knowledge to be consumed. My goal is for every student to be able to gain this fish of knowledge. Assessment is the main tool I can use to see how well I am doing in passing the knowledge forward, and make necessary adjustments.

Assessment must be done daily and often, as a formative experience. Assessment as learning is useful, and I sometimes ask students to assess their own work or their peers' work, but my favourite tool is assessment for learning. By using questions throughout class, non-graded quizzes, tickets out the door, discussions, signals such as thumbs up or thumbs down, games and many other ideas, I can feel the pulse of the class and see if they understand the subject. I will continue the double-entry reflection journals throughout my practice, as this has proven to be an extremely valuable tool to connect with students and find out what they don't quite comprehend.

Summative assessment is also important. In the end of a unit, students should complete a task showing me the culmination of their learning throughout that unit. Their final grade for the unit

should never come as a surprise, neither for the students nor for me. By keeping the students accountable for their learning and interacting with them often about their level of comprehension, it will be easy to see the trajectory of this student and what can be expected as a final summative grade.

Proper assessment must be varied, frequent and fair. It must also consider the growth of a student without merely focusing on a particular test's grade. Progress and learning should be the focus of assessment. My assessment of a student is a holistic, student-centred, comprehensive exercise, peppered with very specific feedback in all the areas that need improvement, so that the student has a clear direction to go towards his or her final goal.

## *My Grading Policy*

Final grading should always reflect the overall achievement of the student by the end of the term, in a fair, absolute and consistent manner. With that in mind, I believe that grades should be left "open" until the very last minute, that is, the student's grade should be modifiable until the end of the term. A student should always be able to improve their grades and resubmit an assignment.

I do not give grades for formative assessment, and also do not dock marks for late assignments. Every student has the ability of handing in homework and assignments late without punishment. I remind all students about missing work, as well as contact the families when needed. Behaviour such as late assignments and missing work, besides classroom etiquette, is communicated to parents, but does not influence grades. All my expectations are clearly delineated to students and families from the beginning, and communication is frequent and ample; as a result, the final grade should not be a surprise for anyone.

I believe that no zeros should be awarded, unless as a last resort – as in, the term is over and all other viable alternatives have been exhausted. In my experience, some students would rather have a zero here and there instead of actually completing the work. By following through with the student and giving them a no-opt-out policy when it comes to assignments, I am making the student more accountable. Tests have a clear scoring guide, so students know how many marks a question is worth,

and how they can get full marks; however, students are able to retake a test in a different form, such as an oral presentation, to prove they have learned the subject matter. They are also able to resubmit the test and get half marks for any question they resubmitted correctly. I focus my assignments on desired outcomes rather than simply a list of projects and tests. My grading policy is, therefore, student-centered and focused on learning. Moreover, students are encouraged to continue improving their work until they achieve at least a 75% mark. What I want most of all is for every student to succeed in their path towards knowledge.

- *Grade Calculation*

To calculate final grades, I use a blended median approach. Every broad outcome is awarded a particular grade based on a median approach, providing the outcome that most closely reflects the student learning for each outcome; then, an average is taken from the different category grades. This is done carefully, and sometimes my professional judgment will supersede the grade. Marks for the tests are given based on points for correct answers and could rely on score sheets or a combination of score sheets and rubrics. As far as projects, writing assignments and artwork, every one of these will have clearly defined rubrics with exemplars for every category of the rubric, from the lowest passing score to the highest. The calculation of grades will be strongly based on the achievement of learning outcomes. Some assignments will have more weight than others, according to the number of learning outcomes they entail; however, all grades – rubric or otherwise – are converted to the same weight system, and can be added together to clearly reflect a student's learning.

- *Collation of grades*

Grades will be organized in a grading book.

The first section of the grading book is organized by student name and by assignment. In turn, assignments are categorized by learning outcomes. The outcomes I focus on are divided into knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation; different activities would be best suited for analysing these different outcomes, and I will collect at least three pieces of evidence for every learning outcome I assess. A subpar assignment will not be graded, but left as “need resub-

mission” in the grading book. The grades are collated online and backed up often, and a hard copy is printed every week.

The second section of the grading book is divided by student, and in this section, I record student’s growth and other notes.

- *Communication of summative assessment information*

Students receive frequent updates through a grading system such as Jupiter grades; if the grading system is not available, grades (section 1 of grading book) and notes (section 2 of grading book) about a particular unit are given to students at the end of each unit, or biweekly, whatever comes first. On a more daily basis, through the use of our double-entry journal, I keep a steady channel of communication with the student; when I need to give suggestions for grade or assignment improvement, these are added to the journals on a sticky note. All feedback is clear, specific and very direct towards improvement. Communication with parents will be send home at the end of each unit, most likely via email. Paper communication will require a signature to ensure the parents are notified. In case the parent uses email, a response email acknowledging the receipt of grades will be requested.

