

### Module Summary

#### In this module, teachers will:

- Explore how to assign grades that are accurate representations of what students learn.

### Module Key Takeaways

#### Essential knowledge:

Grades should be accurate representations of what students know and can do (Brookhart, 2013; Guskey & Bailey, 2001; Wormeli, 2006). Grading students based on a normative scale is ineffective because it only communicates how well each student did in relation to his or her peers. Grading with a criterion scale allows teachers to evaluate how well students are doing based on a pre-established bar of mastery (Brookhart, 2012; Haldayna, 1999). One common practice is the misuse of zeros in grading. Zeros should not be used when a student has not done an assignment. This would distort their grade because it does not accurately reflect what the student knows about that learning objective. Additionally, scoring assignments below a 50% can skew a student's overall grade and therefore, should be avoided (Wormeli, 2006).

#### Essential skill:

Thus, teachers should only grade summative assessments that are objective, based on student mastery of standards, and can be easily explained to students and their families (Haldayna, 1999; Popham, 2011; Reeves, 2011; Wormeli, 2006).

When grading, some things that teachers should do are:

- Emphasize the importance of learning rather than grades.
- Ensure that grades reflect the student's current ability and understanding.
- Use high quality evidence to inform student grades.

#### Essential mindset:

It's important that teachers proactively communicate with both students and families about what grades represent and what different assignments make up those grades.

### The Skill in Action

Students, families, and teachers can all describe exactly what the grades mean and what assignments are incorporated into the grades. No one is surprised by the grades that each student receives because there has been consistent and frequent communication with students and families as objectives are mastered. The teacher does not spend an excessive amount of time scoring every activity/assignment but focuses their attention on the assessments that are objective and truly demonstrate a student's skill and understanding certain learning objectives. The teacher does not incorporate homework, effort, or participation into their grading system because these do not accurately capture or represent what a student knows about a given learning objective.

## Questions for Discussion

The following is a list of suggested questions for engaging in a reflective dialogue with the teacher, either before or after he or she attempts to implement the skill.

- What questions or concerns did you have after viewing the module?
- What are your key takeaways from the module?
- Describe some of the assignments you have recently collected and graded.
- After watching this module, what are some current grading practices that you might change?
- Which grading practices should you maintain and why?
- What would your students or families say if we asked them what your grades mean?
- How can I help you in your process of deciding what to grade and how to grade?

## Coaching Moves

*Situation:*

**The teacher struggles to decide which activities or assignments to grade.**

*Ask:*

- What learning objectives students are expected to master in this unit?
- Which assessments will best capture students' mastery of the learning objectives?
- Are assessments objective and aligned to grade level performance of the standard?

*Suggest:*

- Work with the teacher to identify learning objectives that students should master within the unit. Help distinguish which assessments best measure student mastery of those objectives.
- Have the teacher complete the *Authentic Assessment* module to help them create assessments that accurately measure a student's knowledge and skills.
- Have the teacher refer back to grade level standards and learning objectives when deciding which assessments to grade.

## Standards Alignment

**InTASC standard:**

**6(a)** The teacher balances the use of formative and summative assessment as appropriate to support, verify, and document learning.

**6(o)** The teacher knows when and how to evaluate and report learner progress against standards.