

## TEACHING

# Riled Up: Stop Grading Homework, Please

APRIL 27, 2010 Shawn

*Stop grading “completeness” for Pete’s sake. How meaningless do you want your final grades to be? Little Johnny doesn’t understand crap, but he sure can copy. That’s a solid “B” in some classes! Yeah, “B” for Barf.*

I’m taking this to the streets: **No more grading of homework.** Stop It. Please. There, I said it, and I’ll say it again until the entire world gets it. I know that I’m not a pariah here in our little world of edu-bloggers, but out there in the vast expanse that is secondary ed there are many who think I’m a quack. (and I do love ducks)

I just spent my at-home time this morning at about 3,000 K reading about teachers who are struggling with homework in their classes. They want to count it for points, but yet they have this nagging little troll (probably me) in the back of their minds saying something like, “You’re punishing your students unfairly for practicing, of all things! You are creating a culture of cheating mixed with a healthy dose of anti-intellectualism.” Not to be crass, or anything.

So, here’s the deal: I want this thing to get bigger. I know that there’s a core group of us who have tried this system and have seen the benefits — the almost miraculous changes in classroom character — that this brings. I want to bring this to those of us who are not blogging. By definition, those of us who are blogging are taking our professional development into our own hands. What about those of us who don’t spend all hours of their day pouring over GoogleReader just hoping that Kate Nowak or Dan Meyer has posted something new? I’m not saying that these non-bloggers are a part of a uneducated mass waiting for us to enlighten them, but I am curious as to how the bravery to ditch homework grades will ever manifest without a support structure as awesome as all of you who read and comment here.

Here’s my plan. I’m modeling this off of the way that it was done to me. A great educator came into my room and started asking questions about what I do. He posed this interaction as a great opportunity to learn from each other and he was right. He asked me what I thought different classroom practices meant to myself and my students. He focused on all types of graded work (assessments) with simple questions like:

- What does it mean to give homework a grade? (That it’s not practice, it’s a test.)
- What message does that send about the purpose of homework? [ Get it right or pay the price :( ]
- What do you want a quiz to mean to the students? (To tell them where they are)
- How do they react when you hand one back? (They shove it in their bag after maybe reading the score)



## SHAWN CORNALLY

### Curriculum Vitae

Hello! I teach physics, calculus, object-oriented programming, and gastronomy at a rural Iowa high school. I also moonlight as a lecturer at the University of Iowa.

I love curing bacon, the Oxford comma, and getting students into the narrative arc of a lesson. I hate traditional grading, non-sparkling water, and being boring.

Yes, I want to be a part of your next project: shawn dot thinkthankthink at gmail dot com

I do NOT speak for the Solon Community School District (IA). They don’t swear as much, not even close.

@ThinkThankThunk

## BLUEHARVEST

I built this so we can all grade nicely together:



www.BlueHarvestFeedback.com

That was all it took for me. I realized my assessment practices were broken.

I would suggest these kinds of conversations with colleagues. I'm not asking you to cover up your revolutionary ulterior motive, but you must remember that no one will make a change unless they see a need for one. Kindly prod towards these motives. If your colleague appears to be still in the Freudian rationalization stage, perhaps it's time to let off. If they start saying things like, "Yeah! Hey? Shouldn't they be doing homework because it makes them get better at something?" You've got them. ~~Go for the kill.~~ Recommend some great reading. Here are some points, if you'd like. There are plenty of other people writing on this subject that I will also link that the bottom of this post:

## Homework is Practice:

Most teachers will agree with this idea. Homework is practice. Some "homework" teaches new material, which just makes the situation that much worse. Why are you grading a student's first attempt at understanding something? Shouldn't this be an opportunity for feedback? Grading homework is like a professor giving a summative quiz at the end of every lecture based on the material s/he just talked about. How do you feel about that?

If you really believe that homework is practice, then students should get to decide how much they need to do to master a topic, when they need to do it, and how they want you to give them feedback on it. I have students that are equally successful doing about 5% of the problems I "assign" as other students that do every problem and ask for help outside of class. How is that bad? It's not; "fairness" be damned.

## Graded Homework Breeds Cheating:

I know we as teachers don't like to talk about this, but it's true. Anytime you give points (or money) for something, people will find a way to skip the process to get the reward. So, stop giving the reward so directly. Stop grading completeness for Pete's sake. How meaningless do you want your final grades to be? Little Johnny doesn't understand crap, but he sure can copy during lunch. That's a solid "B" in some classes! Yeah, B for Barf.

Instead, adopt a practice of controlled in-class assessments and feedback. Give the students a chance to practice the idea, and then you can give feedback to each student about how they need to close any gaps. Then give an assessment of that idea to let the kid know where their practice has gotten them. Since you're already using Standards-Based Grading (right?!), these are indexed by idea, and the scores are dynamic based on future assessments. Now the students can see how their practice has correlated with actual ability, and they can form ideas about their own study habits without you giving out secret-magical-flying-pony points for copying during lunch.

## Assessing for Learning:

Ditching the homework grades frees up a lot of your time. It also places a really large weight of proper assessment on your shoulders. How do you know what each student knows? Are you assessing it in multiple ways? Are you assessing the things you actually want these kids to know? These are all the right questions teachers should be asking. When homework becomes ungraded practice you end up with students and teachers really thinking about the road to understanding, instead of the road to more points. Want to know more? Just Google "[Standards-Based Grading](#)." Or you can read my [stuff](#) on it.

## Links For Further Reading:

1. [More](#) from Cornally on homework.
2. A new blogger dealing with the same issues: [A Drop in the Bucket](#).
3. The man himself weighing in on not grading homework: [Matt M.F. Townsley](#).
4. The obligatory Dan Meyer [link](#).

## BLOGROLL

[Action-Reaction](#)

[Always Formative](#)

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[Point of Inflection](#)

[Quantum of Progress](#)

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## MOST RECENT

[Like Moths to a Flame \(Help?\)](#)

[Inquiry Stylee: First Day of Physics Fall 2012](#)

[Standards-Based Grading: Every Thursday, A Love Note](#)

## RECENT DISCUSSION

[Shawn on Like Moths to a Flame \(Help?\)](#)

[Shawn on Like Moths to a Flame \(Help?\)](#)

[Julia on Like Moths to a Flame \(Help?\)](#)

[Evan on Like Moths to a Flame \(Help?\)](#)

[jsb16 on Like Moths to a Flame \(Help?\)](#)

## USAGE AGREEMENT

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I feel a little silly putting this here, but I've been asked about reproducing this blog's material more than once, so here's the copyright info: United States fair usage applies. An [email](#) would be nice for anything using more than a few paragraphs.

5. **Alfie!**

## What's It All Mean, Basil?

I'm asking for some sanity here. I'm asking for us to stop playing games with our students. I'm asking us to stop hiding behind minus-ones, and to come out in front and say, "Hey, Johnny, you suck at factoring. Here's how you can get better, and I promise your grade will reflect your improvement."

I suppose you could just continue on saying, "Hey, if you copy, and cobble together just enough random practice on ideas you may or may not understand, maybe the magical grading fairy will come into your room at night and leave that ambiguous "B-" you've been waiting for!"

I feel like the Lewis Black of grading right now. Sorry for all the yelling. (Kind of)

### **Inquiry Style: Why They Invented Second Floors Tic-Tac-Toe Artificial Intelligences & Student Responsibility**

Comments are disabled.

33 thoughts on "Riled Up: Stop Grading Homework, Please"

**"Check homework." « Work in Pencil** *says:*

MAY 4, 2011 AT 7:25 PM

[...] based on lots of kinds of assessments this year, but I have not been including a homework grade. (Shawn explains better than I could.) I explain that it's the best way to get good, and I grade based on how [...]

**Think Thank Think » Bioethics: Planning** *says:*

JANUARY 11, 2011 AT 5:58 AM

[...] makes me feel like my teeth are wearing sweaters. This is one of those "responsibility" things that seems un-gradable. I even worry that assigning points for anything along the [...]

**Ellie** *says:*

JULY 14, 2010 AT 5:54 PM

I teach college students, and I grade homework. I tell them that they need to spend time on the material outside of class, that I have a list of problems that will guide their thinking, and that I will (re)grade their homework until they demonstrate understanding. Some of them do perfectly on the first go; others need a few goes at it until they master; others never quite get around to mastery.

I'm curious what your take is on this.

**frustration leads to anger, anger leads to... change « Math is a shovel** *says:*

JUNE 30, 2010 AT 12:03 AM

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[...] grading homework. Cornally The motivation has to come from somewhere other than points. I couldn't understand this [...]

**Laura Mae says:**

JUNE 24, 2010 AT 4:12 PM

I agree with what you said about those who get it don't need as much practice! If they only need to do 5% of the problems to fully understand the concept...GREAT, let's move on!! I teach 3rd grade though and it gets a little tricky here because you have more parent involvement...those parents saying "Why does Mary do less homework than Johnny?! That's not fair!!" You've given me a lot of insight on the topic though... thank you! Laura

**Jacquelyn Crum says:**

MAY 28, 2010 AT 9:26 AM

Hehe am I really the only reply to this amazing read?

**Brendan Murphy says:**

MAY 20, 2010 AT 12:32 PM

I think about the comparisons to professional athletes. If they miss practice they get fined. The best of course will often practice or at least work out on their own.

As for my classroom, when I was in a classroom, I would start the year explaining my grading system. I explained that homework was worth 10% of the grade. If they choose not to do homework they could still earn an A by being perfect everywhere else.

Today I think I would still hold a similar view.

Homework for me does not always have to be practice. Why not assign work that forces them to stretch their thinking. The next day in class we have a pre-made topic complete with questions born of frustration.

Of course this mode of thinking would require students to attempt homework, but not necessarily lose points for wrong answers.

**Shawn says:**

MAY 21, 2010 AT 6:48 AM

@Brendan: These are not professional athletes. They are student athletes. I guess I just can't buy homework for credit (obviously from the post). Especially if it's for "extension" purposes. Practicing shouldn't be stressful. The kid should feel able to come in and ask. I know you'd probably encourage that, but when it's for point, that changes the culture of the assignment. Playing the 10% game doesn't help much either, because then you're saying, "Hey smart kid who hates homework and doesn't need it: You can't get an A+." That's infuriating.

I totally see where you are coming from, but I have to disagree at least for the sake of my street cred with my kids.

=shawn

## Think Thank Think » Standards-Based Grading: FAQ *says:*

MAY 18, 2010 AT 1:15 PM

[...] Your grade book transforms into a laundry list of learning targets; some overarching, some quite specific. Student work on things like quizzes, projects, and tests, which yield information about each learning target, and these assessments are fractured into a billion little pieces reported across learning targets rather than under the meaningless, "Rome Project" heading. Students can then identify their de/proficiencies and design remediation techniques targeted specifically at the standards they don't know. As a teacher, you replace their previous grades with their more recent demonstrations, whether these are improvements or backslides. To be clear, a quiz or a project may affect the same grade. This gives an accurate and timely report to all interested parties about the current level of understanding of the student, and forces the student to care about learning over points. Yay! Oh, and Stop. Grading. Homework. Please. [...]

### Philip *says:*

APRIL 29, 2010 AT 11:33 AM

I think part of the discussion also must be the complexity of assessment. I teach physics at a community college and some of my students are going to be engineers (so they say). I do project based assessment, and I do tests, but in many of the more complex problems (we just got done with kirchoff's rules, but projectile equations fit the bill too)the math is simply to time consuming to put on tests/quizzes or to utilize to much time in class repeating how to solve complex algebra/calculus. One could argue that in a physics class, it is the set up of the problem that is important but obtaining a final answer with the correct units is just as important (ask JPL about their mars program). So I feel I have to assign and grade complex problems. Sure I know some copy, but I also keep tabs on them in the hallway, and usually there is some collaborative learning going on, the free loaders never make it past the second test, either because the others quit allowing them to copy or they self select themselves out by performance on other assessments.

### Denise Herrenbruck *says:*

APRIL 28, 2010 AT 1:42 PM

Three good points here:

1) About academic integrity. Academic integrity is not something we get from students — it is something that is "reflected" by students; we earn it from them through our own practices. When homework demands are considerable (and they are over the top for the typical college bound student racing to accumulate AP credentials on their transcripts), when we demand one-size-fits-all practice assignments, when we presume to know better about how individual students can best balance their overall academic demands to maximize their learning, and when we grade rote-style homework assignments (or give points merely for completion), we force our students to be academically dishonest. If an honor student can't complete his homework because he runs out of time, and he refuses to copy the assignment from others, he is punished because no credit is given for his academic integrity.

2) Summative Grades are supposed to accurately communicate the level of proficiency with the course standards. We have an ethical responsibility in a standards-based system to grade according to proficiency and not render our grades inaccurate by generating grades based on subjective measures of a student's study skills, behavior or compliance. When we assign a grade that is depressed due to non-completion of homework we also have an ethics problem because we submit a grade that we know is

an invalid measure of proficiency.

3) Using Grades to Teach Study Skills: According to the writings of Douglass Reeves and Thomas Guskey, there are no studies to show that using grades to punish students for missing work will prompt greater effort or learn study skills. In fact, low grades often cause students to withdraw from learning. Study skills require meta-cognitive regulation, and that is gained when teachers provide opportunities for students learn how their own habits will affect their own learning. (Instead of grading homework, have students track their own study habits and it's impact on their achievement of your course standards, as a matter of formative assessment.

**Shawn** says:

APRIL 28, 2010 AT 5:22 PM

Denise:

Wow. Great comment. I agree with all three of your points, and I'm certainly glad you're on my side! I especially agree that trying to grade study skill is absurd. What a terrible way to get someone to learn something intrinsic than by motivating them with extrinsic rewards. Thanks!

=shawn

**Russ Goerend** says:

APRIL 28, 2010 AT 12:48 PM

LSquared,

It sounds like you've put a lot of thought into your system and that it works for your parameters. College and high school (and middle school, for that matter) are very different animals, that's for sure.

**Elissa** says:

APRIL 28, 2010 AT 12:16 PM

I'm to the point where I am grading very little homework and when I do, we trade and grade in class. Would it be beneficial to train students to give feedback on other students homework? (i.e. You left off a negative, you divided instead of multiplied, etc)

Right now I am assigning homework that most students finish in class and during the next class I show all the answers and I just ask how many they missed. I can tell from that if we are heading in the right direction.

If we are not grading/assigning homework at all, what are we assessing besides quizzes? Anything? How are we giving students opportunities to practice and improve? What kind of meaningful, purposeful assignments are we creating? What is a meaningful, purposeful assignment?

I wonder if we could assess a standard with a quiz such as, "Do you understand how to \_\_\_\_\_? Prove it." And then it is up to the students to prove their knowledge, whether it is by creating and doing an example, writing an explanation, etc. What would that look like?

**LSquared** says:

APRIL 28, 2010 AT 11:50 AM

Russ—they pass because 1) they learn more because they do the homework and 2) they learn more because they have to come to class to turn in the homework which means they come to class (college freshmen if left to their own devices often do neither). I grade just enough points worth of homework that I find that their homework % is almost always close to their test %. Homework only counts for 10 or maybe 15% of the grade. Sometimes I calculate the grades with and without homework, and the grades are almost never more than 5% different. Nobody passes on the basis of homework so far as I can tell.

Colin—Assessment something I'd like to improve, but I have the opposite time trade off from the one in the "Assessment for Learning" section. I only get 14 weeks x 4 days x 50 minutes with these students for a Calc I class, and every minute is precious. When I give quizzes instead of collecting homework (which I do when I'm not collecting homework) not only do the grades go down on tests, but I'm also losing at least 1/8 of my already not-enough class time (the number of minutes we meet every semester has been cut at least twice, and yet the course content remains the same). For me collecting homework is a net gain of useful time, rather than a net loss. How can I get in useful, timely assessments without losing precious class time?

**Matt Townsley** *says:*

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 9:58 PM

@Mike – great to hear! Start up a blog. Tell us all about it. Share your journey so that others may benefit, too.

@Karl @Russ @Riley – just like a former speaker of the house said, "all politics is local"...the same can be said about education. Our local contexts allow us to make certain adjustments. Some could probably get rid of grades, but not too many of us. More of us could move towards standards-based grading. Still some of us also get rid of grading homework. Each one of these steps moves us closer to the ideal (learning for learning's sake) and that's a good thing, right?

**Karl Fisch** *says:*

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 9:49 PM

Sorry, apparently didn't close a bold tag in that last comment.

**Karl Fisch** *says:*

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 9:48 PM

**Russ – From his book (The Homework Myth), as well as some of the pushback on his book (some of which I think is justified, some not), the data looks stronger than that for high school students. One of the problem with that data is that it looks at *all* homework, including the kinds that most of here presumably would agree is "bad" homework.**

**And, again, I'm not suggesting we "grade" homework, but I'm suggesting that *if* we believe that some kind of purposeful out-of-class work can be beneficial for students, how can we encourage them to do it (given the rest of the system we're working within). And, if like me you think that learning shouldn't stop when the bell rings, how do we structure our classes to allow/encourage that, without giving meaningless or overly time-consuming homework. That's what I'm struggling with.**

Shawn – absolutely, if I was in a school (or even a math department) that bought into the same philosophy. Then the work that I was doing with students would pay off in the long run. Despite my best efforts, my colleagues aren't there yet. I'll see some of my freshmen for only 60 days in the fall semester, and then some of them will have a different teacher for the next semester of Algebra. The rest I'll have for about 65-70 days second semester, but then they'll have other folks. So, like many folks reading your blog, I'm trying to practice the "art of the possible." How can I do what I think is best for kids, but within the framework of the rest of the system? (And, to be clear, I'm at what I think is a great school. But they just aren't quite at the same point I am philosophically at this point.) Can't wait to hear more about how you give feedback – that's something I need to learn to do better.

Gary – As always, we seem to agree about 98% of what we're talking about, but we spend all of our time focusing on the 2%. I agree and struggle a lot with the "second shift" point, although the culture/structure of my school does provide them some time at school to do what we're referring to as "home"-work.

Mike says:

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 9:15 PM

I'm in. Next year, no more grading homework assignments for me. I've never thought so much about my teaching as I have done this year after reading the many blogs out there discussing homework and standards based grading. And I have started sharing these ideas with others not quite in tune with these ideas. I only wish I would have found these blogs earlier.

Gary Stager says:

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 8:37 PM

Karl,

Of course you're right regarding the research and reading for joy or knowledge is always good.

I still would resist homework for a myriad of educational and social reasons notably my distaste for coercion, making kids work a second shift, the poor one-size-fits-all quality of most assignments and the myth that studying is learning.

Russ Goerend says:

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 8:35 PM

Karl,

From Gary's first link:

"At the high school level, the correlation is weak and tends to disappear when more sophisticated statistical measures are applied."

Doesn't seem like anything to base a "Let's grade homework" argument on.

If we, as a **system** could refocus on what you note in your second paragraph, I believe it would go a long way toward allowing students to focus on learning — not points, not getting work done to please the teacher. I believe purposeful practice is part of that focus, but, as you said, it has to be purposeful.

## Karl Fisch *says:*

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 8:23 PM

Actually, **Gary**, Alfie's stuff says that there is evidence for older students, I believe about 15 is the cutoff. Conveniently, that's the age we're talking about here. And he recommends reading as appropriate homework for younger students (as long as it's reading the student wants to do).

Having said that, I generally agree with what Alfie has to say. Our default stance should be "no homework" and we should make sure we have a purpose to any homework we assign (as opposed to the default being homework every night, even if we don't have a purpose for it). From reading Shawn's blog, I'm pretty sure he's thought through his homework pretty carefully, and I'm struggling mightily right now trying to figure out what homework I want to give next year in my (one) Algebra section.

## Shawn *says:*

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 8:36 PM

Thank you all for the great comments. This is why this blog exists!

@Karl: Just to play the role here: wouldn't ninth grade be a great to teach the lesson of how a student should practice and self-assess? I know each school culture and student are different, but the change from middle to high school might be a great time to make the jump?

@Alison: I feel like you see both sides of this coin, but I would argue that any student who won't do something unless it is for points is developing a slightly skewed view of motivation. I was where you are a few months ago, but since I've dropped grading homework, my kids are still doing it, and some are choosing even more. It all depends on the kid and how they assess themselves, which is my goal. It does sound as if we have different goals with our room, though. Thanks for the comment!

@Riley: It's always great to hear from you! I agree with you totally. I suppose I find it easy to place my arbitrary grading line on the opposite side of homework because I just don't view it as an assessment. When I want to know their ability level, and I want to report it to them so they can get better, that's when I use a grade.

@Stacy: I pretty much only give feedback on homework when students ask for help on a problem they've decided to do. I work in explicit feedback into my lessons, which I haven't talk too much about, so I understand your question totally. I'm going to write about feedback really soon. Thanks, and welcome to the circle!

=shawn

## Stacy *says:*

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 6:07 PM

Thanks for the link Shawn! I feel like a real member of the community.

You said ditching homework frees up a lot of your time. Does that mean you don't give feedback on homework? I had imagined that I would still \*try\* to at least skim over

homework, even it's not for a grade. Do you even collect homework at all?

**Riley says:**

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 4:42 PM

These arguments against grading don't really stop at homework, either. We'd love it if we didn't have to grade at all, but could stop at giving feedback and helping students see how to improve. We like SBG because it most closely correlates grades with skills, but ideally we could do away with the whole grade metaphor and just focus on the skills, right?

There are lots of reasons I feel I have to give grades (e.g. clear feedback, accountability, keeping my job), but I'd rather not. I recently wrote about teaching responsibility (<http://larkolicio.us/blog/?p=308>) and how grading homework takes responsibility off of students (usually bad), but grading tests takes responsibility off in the same way.

This is all to say that the line between "it's ok to grade x, y, and z" and "it's not ok to grade t, u, and v" is pretty fuzzy and I can't imagine it falls in the same place for every teacher. I feel very fortunate that I don't have to grade hw (and I actually only barely have to grade at all), but if 20% more students gained the skills to pass my class when I graded homework, of course I would grade homework! Their skill level is my highest priority.

**Alison says:**

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 4:29 PM

What about the fact that students are motivated to do the homework more by the fact that I check it every day than by the fact that they need it to understand the material? I have students who act as though homework doesn't exist unless I at least check to make sure it is done, and somehow fail to notice the correlation between their quiz scores and their failure to do any practice at all. Even for me, an extra measure of accountability like someone looking at your work and checking it off really helps me actually do the things I know I should. Heck, I have my boyfriend go over my to do list at the end of the day! Some students will get the picture that doing the homework results in better quiz performance, some always do the homework anyway, and some never do the homework and truly don't need to. But for the considerable percentage that need that extra push to do the work that would benefit them, I check homework for completeness daily, and include it as a relatively trivial 5% of their grade. I recognize this as a pollution of what their grade reflects, but consider it an acceptable price to pay for more of my students getting the practice they need and succeeding on quizzes as a result. No one is going to pass because they can copy homework, but some students might pass because the idea of looking me in the eye tomorrow with their blank homework sheet was just enough incentive for them to get the practice they needed to succeed on their quiz (the second time around, albeit). I can imagine that if I stopped checking homework, students might learn to motivate themselves sooner than without my interference, but I teach eighth and ninth graders; they have plenty of time to learn that lesson, and besides, that's not my job. I'm held accountable for making sure my students learn math, not self-motivation.

**Gary Stager, PhD says:**

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 4:28 PM

Might I suggest doing away with homework altogether?

Alfie Kohn, Etta Kralovek and others provide numerous arguments against homework, a tradition without a shred of evidence that it has a positive impact on education or child development.

You might add these links to your “further reading”

<http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/rethinkinghomework.htm>

<http://www.alfiekohn.org/teaching/HWsurvey.html>

### Larry Carlson *says*:

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 4:01 PM

I have been fighting this all year. I stopped grading homework and started giving homework quizzes. Parents and students were upset because their grades were not as good as in the past. I shared my visions of how they should be graded and my concerns with homework that is graded. I feel that our math understanding and achievement is better this year, but it was a struggle. I am glad I did it though, because I feel better at the end of the day knowing I did my best in finding out what they do know in math, compared to what the student’s friends, parents and/or study hall monitor knows about math.

### Karl Fisch *says*:

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 3:56 PM

I agree with you 100%. Yet (at the moment, still debating) I’m still planning on including a category called “preparation” that’s 10% of their grade. This will include some out-of-class stuff that looks a little bit like homework (although not graded for correctness), but will also include some writing (reflection) and some-in class stuff.

My concern with completely eliminating this category is that I’m dealing with incoming 9th graders who, no matter how much I tell them they need to do some preparation, may choose not to (and have been “trained” that points are why they do homework). While the natural consequence of that will be to struggle mightily and that – in theory – will help them learn why to prepare, they will also dig themselves a big ‘ole hole in terms of understanding (during a tough transition to high school). And I’m not taking about a grade hole, but a I’ve-got-too-much-to-do-now-and-not-enough-time-to-do-it hole. I only see them about 60 times first semester, which may not be enough time to change their practices.

So my hope is that by giving at least some nominal weight to this category, it will keep them in the game until they get the process. Then, if I were to have them as older students (and perhaps even second semester, still pondering), I would eliminate the 10%.

Not expecting to change anyone’s mind here, but mostly thinking out loud. Thanks for continuing to push my thinking.

### Colin *says*:

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 2:35 PM

Lsquared, when you don’t assign homework do you assess some other way? The “Assessing for Learning” section of this post seems to hit this point, no?

### Russ Goerend *says*:

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 1:48 PM

Are you saying they would be passing because of the added points from homework or they would be passing because they did the homework?

If they're only passing because they're getting points for the homework, they shouldn't be passing. I was passed in a couple of college courses where I shouldn't have been, and it just made the realization that learning to learn > learning for points take longer to hit me.

You're not doing anyone a favor by giving them free points for doing practice work.

We don't consider Michael Jordan the greatest basketball player of all time because he practiced the hardest. We consider him the greatest because his practice showed up during games.

### LSquared *says:*

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 1:39 PM

PS—I'm cool with cheating: students are encouraged to work together on homework, and nearly all of the problems I assign have the answers in the back of the book, and worked out solutions sitting in the help-center one floor down, if anyone wished to take the time to look them up. I still don't get a lot of perfect scores.

### LSquared *says:*

APRIL 27, 2010 AT 1:35 PM

It sounds good, but I find that when I teach college freshmen, if I collect the homework (I don't grade all of it—I grade a couple of points, and add on a flat number of points just for doing it and handing it in) then I get about 20% more students passing the class than if I don't. In my world, if I don't collect it, they don't do it, and their scores tank on the tests. Every once in a while, I have a student who does more problems than I assign, and they are usually at the top of the class on the tests.

I wish I could get away with not grading homework (I've tried), but I feel bad knowing that there are a lot of students sitting in my class who would be passing instead of failing if I were collecting and grading homework.