



FALCON FRIDAY FOCUS

Friday, September 19, 2014

*Believe
In
Monroe*

Good Morning, MCS D Staff!

If you have never read my FFF before, I beg you to read it this time. I am focusing on grading practices. The research behind this subject is substantial—with numerous scholars backing the findings.

This subject is for ALL of us—elementary, middle, and high school. Although we all have different content, different accountability measures, etc. we ALL have something in common—KIDS! Even though our Elementary Schools are using standards based grading, there is still a need to ensure that we are using best practices and not falling victim to toxic grading practices within each grade as well.

If you want to make an immediate impact on student achievement, make prevailing changes to your grading practices. Practices vary greatly among teachers in the same school, and even worse....the practices best supported by research are rarely in evidence.

For example, the most effective grading practices provide accurate, specific, timely feedback designed to improve student performance (Marzano 2000, 2007; O'Connor, 2007). In the best classrooms, grades are only one of many types of feedback provided to students. The best teachers routinely provide abundant feedback to students and only occasionally associate a grade with the feedback. Others allow students to create a portfolio to show their best work, knowing that the mistakes made in the course of the semester were not failures, but lessons learned on the way to success. In each of these cases, "failures" along the way are not averaged into a calculation of the final grade.

The benefits of effective grading practices are not limited to a reduced failure rate—although that benefit alone is sufficient to justify change. When student failures decrease, student behavior improves, faculty morale is better, resources allocated to remedial courses and course repetitions are reduced, and resources invested in electives and advanced courses increase. When was the last time a single change in your school accomplished all that?

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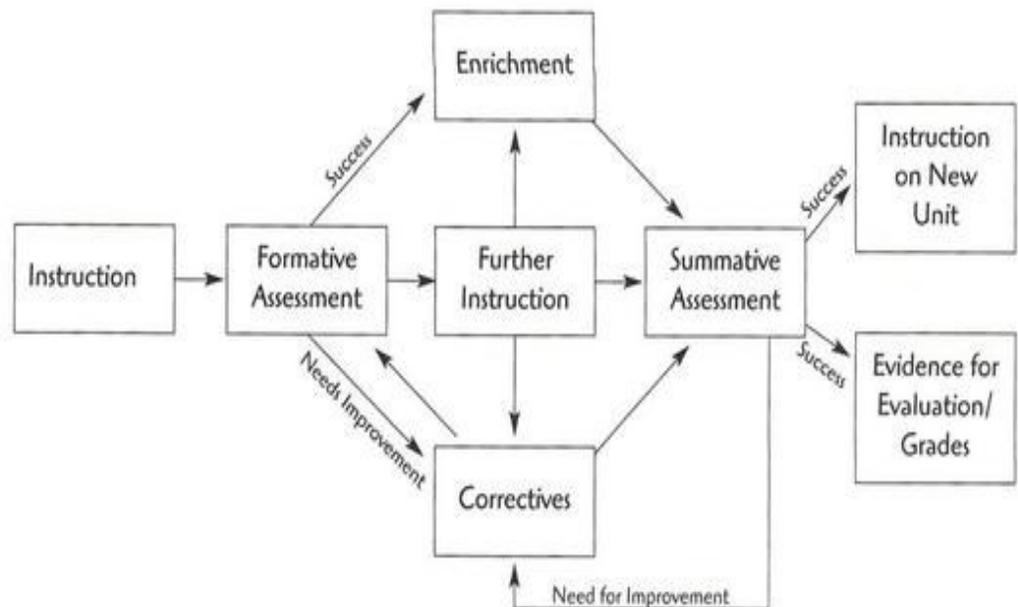
Three Toxic Grading Practices

1. The use of zeroes for missing work. Despite evidence that grading as punishment does not work (Guskey, 2000) and the mathematical flaw in the use of the zero on a 100-point scale (Reeves, 2004), many teachers routinely maintain this policy in the mistaken belief that it will lead to improved student performance.
2. The practice of using the average of all scores throughout the semester, a formula that presumes that the learning early in the semester is as important as learning at the end of the semester (Marzano, 2000; O'Connor, 2007). Interestingly, when teachers and administrators have been students in my graduate courses, they routinely insist that they should be evaluated on the basis of their understanding at the end of the semester rather than their work throughout the term.
3. The use of the "semester killer"—the single project, test, lab, paper, or other assignment that will make or break students. This practice puts 18 weeks of work at risk based on a project that might, at most, have consumed four weeks of the semester.

Marzano Scale (Kid Friendly)



The Role of Formative and Summative Assessment



“ . . . (grading) practices are not the result of careful thought or sound evidence, . . . rather, they are used because teachers experienced these practices as students and, having little training or experience with other options, continue their use.”

Guskey, T., Communicating Student Learning