



Activity 5.1

Grading Stories

Learning Target for the Activity

- Be able to recognize when the principles of sound grading practices are not followed.

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to practice applying the principles of sound grading practices by recognizing them in the breach. Everyone has at least one “grading story” in their background, either as a student or as an educator, when something went awry. These stories are often accompanied by painful memories or other negative emotions. In this activity we’ll use those stories for the good, helping to illustrate why the principles of sound grading practices are, in fact, sound. Such stories can make good cautionary tales that can be useful to school leaders as well.

Time

45 minutes

Materials Needed

- A copy of Figure 5.1 or this book opened to Figure 5.1
- Five pieces of chart paper. Prepare each paper by writing one of the five grading practices from Figure 5.1 at the top, then hang it up.
- Large-size sticky notes (approximately 4 in. × 6 in.)
- Instead of the chart paper and sticky notes, a bulletin board app like Padlet may be used.

Suggested Room Setup

This is a small-group activity. Arrange chairs for comfortable speaking, first in pairs and then all together.

Directions

Complete each step in the order below:

1. In pairs, share a story from your past experience with grading, either as a student yourself or as an educator, when something went wrong, felt unfair, or had unintended bad effects. Each pair should have at least two stories (one from each partner), but see if you can come up with four per pair. For each grading story discuss what was intended, what went wrong, and what the consequences were.
2. Summarize each story using bullet points on a sticky note. Use one note per story.
3. Place each story on the chart paper that identifies the grading principle that was violated in the story. If a story matches more than one principle, put it on the chart that names the principle whose violation was the most to blame for the incident. Alternatively, do this part of the exercise in the bulletin board app.

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4. Reconvene as a whole group. Look at the charts. Ask any clarifying questions that arise about the stories. What conclusions can you draw from the whole display? Are there any patterns in these stories? Do they cluster around one principle, or are they spread among several or all of them? Do these “sad stories” give you any insights into grading practices that you may want to be on the lookout for as a school leader? Do they give you any insights about grading beliefs or practices that may be resistant to reform?

Closure

The group reaches closure by facilitating a discussion based on these questions: What did I learn from this exercise that will be important for me to know in my role as a school leader? What questions do I have? What actions might I take?