EIGHT GUIDELINES FOR GRADING

by KEN O’CONNOR

1. Relate grading procedures to learning goals (i.e., standards)
   a. Use learning goals (standards or some clustering of standards [e.g., domains, strands]) as basis for grade determination and grade reporting.
   b. Use assessment methods as the subset, not the set (i.e., standards, learning results, expectations, outcomes).

2. Use clearly described criterion-referenced performance standards.
   a. The meaning of grades (letters or numbers) should come from clear descriptions of a limited number of levels.
   b. If they hit the goal, they get the grade (i.e., no bell curve!)

3. Limit the valued attributes included in grades to individual achievement.
   a. Grades should be based on achievement (i.e., demonstration of the knowledge and skill components of the standards). Effort, participation, attitude, and other behaviors should be reported separately.
   b. Grades should be based on individual achievement.

4. Sample student performance—do not include all scores in grades.
   a. Do not include formative assessment in grades—provide feedback on formative performance using words, rubrics, or checklists, not scores.
   b. Include information primarily from a variety of summative assessments in grades.

5. Grade in pencil—keep records so they can be updated easily.
   a. Use the most consistent level of achievement, with special consideration for the more recent evidence.
   b. Provide several assessment opportunities (varying in method and number).

6. Determine, don’t just calculate, grades.
   a. Crunch numbers carefully—if at all.
   b. Think “body of evidence” and professional judgment.

7. Use quality assessment(s), and properly record evidence of achievement.
   a. Meet standards for accurate assessment: clear targets, clear purpose, and sound design (which requires that assessments be well written, use appropriate target–method match, use appropriate sampling, and avoid bias and distortion).
   b. Record and maintain evidence of achievement (e.g., tracking sheets, spreadsheets, gradebooks—hard copy and/or electronic—portfolios—hard copy and electronic).

8. Discuss and involve students in assessment, including grading, throughout the teaching/learning process.
   a. Ensure (age appropriately) that students understand how their achievement will be assessed and how their grades will be determined.
   b. Involve students in the assessment process, in self-assessment, reflection and goal setting, and in communicating about their achievement and progress.