Abstract

This disquisition aims to identify and explore: (1) the unintended, negative consequences of traditional classroom grading practices, (2) an alternative grading practice—standards-based grading—with its positive outcomes, and (3) a process for implementing reform via standards-based grading at a small, rural high school. The authors begin by critically examining the literature surrounding four traditional, common grading practices and detailing two shared and concerning outcomes: traditional grading practices (1) do not allow for the equitable treatment of students, and (2) hinder learning. Following this examination, the authors detail an alternative grading practice—standards-based grading—including its associated, positive outcomes and literature support.

The authors detail their improvement initiative for transitioning one high school from a traditional to a standards-based-grading model. The implementation process included a full transition of two teachers’ courses from traditional to standards-based grading. Following their proposed improvement initiative, the authors evaluated the effectiveness of the intervention, including an analysis of stakeholder interviews and focus group results. Data obtained shed light on the advantages and disadvantages of the implementation process, as well as the positive and negative outcomes experienced by students, parents, teachers, and school leaders who participated in the transition from traditional to standards-based grading.