The Case Against Grades (##)
It's not enough to use "standards-based" grading. That phrase may suggest any number of things — for example, more grades; greater specificity about what each grade signifies; or an increase in the number of tasks or skills that

Grades are not only realistic but an enormous improvement over the status quo. Sometimes it's only after grading has ended that we realize just how harmful it's been.


Motivation

It follows that all assessment must be done carefully and sparingly lest students become so concerned about their grades that they're no longer thinking about the learning itself. Even a well-meaning attempt to assess knowledge accurately — for exam papers, a five- or (heaven help us) 100-point scale.

In fact, posting grades online has been associated with increased cheating (Anderman and Murdock, 2007), grades (whether or not accompanied by comments) promote a fear of failure even in high-achieving students (Pulfrey et al., 2011), and the elimination of grades (or favor of a pass/fail system) produces substantially better results with less time and cost (Palazzolo and Fantone, 2011). More important, no research has yet proved that students will actually learn more if they know they are graded or if their teachers rate their performance; this is an empirical question that needs to be addressed carefully before we can assume that grades are indispensable to teaching and learning. 

A number of students who are given the opportunity to help design the assessment process are more likely to become engaged in it and more likely to enjoy teaching (Robbins, 2001). An English teacher who suggested to her students that they could design the test they would take on the material they had learned that year was surprised to find that they came up with a very different set of questions from the ones she had thought of. They also reported that they learned more from the process.
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