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

"Standards-based" grading has often been identified with a shift away from relying on "objective" criteria for assigning grades. Instead, it's based on what teachers and students think are important things to learn, and how well students are doing on those things. It's often praised for its potential to make grading more transparent and equitable, and for giving students a clearer sense of what they need to do to improve.

I've spoken at length about the overuse of grades in my role as an educational psychologist. I've argued that grades can create pressure on students to conform to the expectations of others, and that they can also lead to a lack of intrinsic motivation. I've also discussed the ways in which grades can be used to make judgments about students, and how this can lead to a sense of disengagement and disconnection from learning.

For all these reasons, I believe that grades should be used with caution. They should be used sparingly, and only when they are necessary to communicate important information to parents or other stakeholders. They should not be used as a way to control or punish students, or to make them feel good about themselves. And they should not be used as a way to make judgments about students' abilities or potential.

The answer to the question of whether or not to use grades is complex, and depends on many factors. But I hope that by emphasizing the importance of intrinsic motivation and the potential dangers of grades, we can help to shift the conversation away from the overuse of grades, and towards more effective and meaningful ways of assessing student learning.
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