The Case Against Grades (##)
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This is a slightly revised version of a talk given at theSIAM Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts, July 8, 2007.

A number of us are in the business of assessing the performance of students in school. Some of us are teachers; some of us are school administrators. And in my capacity as a psychologist, I spend a great deal of time on the subject of motivation.

I believe that the behavior of students in school is far too important to be left to chance.

The primary goal of education is to help students develop one of the most important skills they will ever learn: learning how to learn on their own. We do this by providing opportunities for students to learn from the inside, so that they will be able to continue learning outside school for the rest of their lives.

In this talk, I will talk about the current practices of teachers and the results of a number of recent studies. I will discuss the major problems with these practices and how to fix them. I will also talk about the importance of motivation.

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