**Richard DeMerchant writes:**

Good evening,

Over the last couple of months I have had several students who have handed in assignments and have not done spectacularly at them. In some cases they have rushed, not understood the requirements or some other reason. In the end I really care that they have meet the outcomes and can demonstrate understanding of their learning. In many cases the students haves asked to redo the assignment even before they have read my comments. Obviously if they are asking before they have left the classroom they have not had time to address any deficiencies in their learning and learn from their mistakes.

I was wondering if any one has any policies or guidelines for redo's on assignments or tests? I have just read the article in this month's ASCD, "Redo's and Retakes Done Right" by Rick Wormeli and I like the article. However, have people developed a template that students/parents/teachers have to fill in stating how they are going to address any gaps in learning? We are starting to look at how we handle redos and retakes as a middle school and I thought it may be a good idea to ask rather than reinvent the wheel if anyone has examples which have worked well for them.

Thanks,

RVD

- Mathematics Adds Up -

Richard V. DeMerchant B.Sc. B.Ed. M.Ed

Glad to see discussion about this on the listserv. I'll share my practice - in all of its strength and weakness.

My context:

I am grading by outcome this year (every outcome gets its own score). Current/reportable scores for each outcome are calculated using a power law formula, which puts weight on recent assessment and looks for trends to give a "current ability" picture of achievement. The formula is not perfect - but it is more consistent than me just looking at the records and making a "professional judgement", deals with the fact that I have about 3500 outcome scores to give when I report, and I can always override it for exceptional cases.

My practice:

**I allow my students to do a re-assessment on ANY outcome at ANY time** provided they make arrangements with me at least one day ahead. I only do one outcome per re-assessment, unless two are naturally combinable (eg. nets and surface area.)

When they come in to "retest"  I scratch out a "minimally adequate" set of questions on a piece of paper and hand it to them (I generally take issue with giving students the exact same problems/excercises for a retest). They complete it & give it back, and I determine where the work is on the performance scale (same one in performance standards: "fully meets" and so on), and record it. It gets calculated as the "most recent" data point and the score changes accordingly. The **reassessment score is used regardless of whether it is better or worse than prior scores**, so the students know to take their time to carefully prepare for the reassessment - it's not another chance to just "roll the dice."

Like many others have pointed out on this topic, far fewer students take advantage of this than expected - we can't make a student care about their grades. But for those that do, we should afford them the opportunity to ace our class, regardless of how long it takes them to do so. I expect way more students will start seeing me for reassessment around  the next exam time.

**Grades should not be final until they are final**.

J.D.

cc: My staff, who are in the midst of an epic and thoughtful battle/development/reckoning/challenge of assessment growth.

**Doug Smith writes:**

 I'm doing something that is extremely similar to your scheme.

I think my most notable difference is that I'm not using a power law formula.  For each objective, the latest result counts.  I was worried about this creating a scenario where the students would think that once they've nailed an objective with a couple of correct answers, that the assessment would show them as having mastered it. However, I've made it clear to the students that any question/objective is fair game to be quizzed at any point in the year.  This should keep them honest and ensure that mastery means just that.

I also have them complete a form each time they want to re-assess.  My form is found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1r7AMqtCO0rCuTnjiGI3ZZkvfDdxjkK94opRTVZGCRDM/edit?hl=en_US>

Anyone can feel free to use this document. I try to remember to put creative commons licenses on all of my documents so there is no need to ask for permission to use.

I am getting a bit of yo-yo action with the students as they flip flop between a 3 or 4 on a learning objective (I mark each objective out of 4).  Part of this is due to the need for First Term grades in grade 12 because of university applications.

For the most part the students seem to appreciate the system and there is very little, if any at all, abuse of the system.  They understand that learning is not a race (university applications notwithstanding), and that they can target their weaknesses.  I also like to do my assessments in small chunks of quiz time, as this gives the students fast and timely feedback on their progress, as opposed to waiting for a unit test.  It allows them to fix problems before the unit is finished, since quizzes always carry over older learning objectives.  I recently skipped this with projectiles in physics 11, and the students paid for it.  I should have had a projectile quiz first, to give both the student and me some formative feedback prior to the end of the unit.

My biggest problem with this system is rationalizing how these assessed learning objectives get turned into grades (once again, this being the most important for university applications).  Right now I simply have all of the learning objects totaled with the last mark used for grading.  For example, if the course has covered 5 learning objectives and Jim Bob's latest results show (3) 4s and (2) 3s, his grade would be 18/20.  I believe there are other (perhaps better) ways to convert the objectives to grades, but they can get pretty complicated and difficult for the students to follow.  Right now, each student can look in their portfolio, easily calculate their current grade is, and identify any objectives that they would like to re-assess. Grading rolls over, so that the grade for Term 2 will be retroactively recorded as the Term 1 grade.  The final term 3 grade will therefore be the same grade for term 1 and 2.  The learning never ends and if some student masters an objective in May, then their grade will (hopefully) accurately reflect their knowledge.

Doug Smith

On Sat, Nov 26, 2011 at 11:00 PM, JD wrote:

I like the idea of making students provide written evidence that they have thoughtfully reflected on their own learning and taken action. I don't have anything like this in place, but will be thinking it over. Thanks Doug.

Your system is similar to Dan Meyer's - but he only keeps the **best** score. <http://blog.mrmeyer.com/?p=5597> I don't think I agree with him on that - but I bet the topic would generate a lot of great dialogue here.

The all-encompassing grade certainly IS a challenge for standards-based grading - but mostly because the difficulties are in front of you and transparent and you are forced to struggle with them. The same problems exist in "points and percentages" systems - but they are embedded into the weighting of categories, relative weights of different assignments/tests, point weighting within an assignment/test and so on. I was rather proud of my version of such a system because I felt that it had a good degree of implicit fairness and authenticity. It was implicit justification though... far from rigorous. I was reminded of it's shortcomings every time I sat down in front of the gradebook software and did the "accounting."

The software I'm using allows multiple levels of standards - so I have my outcomes grouped by the curriculum organizers. The "math 8" grade is a weighted average of those curriculum organizer grades - with weights assigned according to the guidelines in the IRP (which implies time allocation as well) and minor adjustments according to my own/school priorities and initiatives. Those organizer grades are in turn weighted averages of the outcomes. That is the part I am most consciously unsure of. I weight the outcomes very coarsely according to time required, amount of "sub-skills,"  and perceived importance to a balanced math student. Within the "Number" organizer "ratio, rate, and proportionality" is weighted much more heavily than "approximate square roots," for example. I fully acknowledge that this is opaque (to the students) and very subjective.

My hope is that I can help shift my students' and their parents' focus away from an overall score and towards more meaningful feedback. Overall scores help make sorting/ranking efficient (that's reality), and do provide some information, but really only as much as a typical answer to "how are you?" ("fine thanks.") I think as long as I am providing overall scores, they will keep looking to them as the truly important thing. If I stopped giving those scores until "the end" though (subject to reporting guidelines, which are out of my control) I would be facing a hellstorm of pressure from everyone ever. I would agree with those hellstormers too about the issue of being clear to students on where they stand.

J.D. Caudle

I'm using Dan Meyer's system, and so far I like it - but you have to write your assessments with the system in mind.  Which mostly means, try to err on the side of making a question a bit too challenging rather than too easy.  
  
It's also important to note that his system isn't just keep-the-best, but also requires proving mastery more than once to get a full 100% on any given topic.  So it's a bit more forgiving for struggling students, but still demands excellence to earn a solid A.  
  
As for totaling up scores to make a final grade, I've done a bit of hand-wringing before but it generally seems to work out to about the grade I would've expected the students to get based on what I'd observed.  The best-of aspect is a bit forgiving for struggling students, but it kind of balances out seeing as I don't give final-grade credit for daily homework / practice work.  (Which I've caught kids doing straight-from-the-back copying on even though I've \*told\* them my homework checks aren't part of their grade. Sigh.)  
  
On the other hand, here's an interesting alternative:  
<https://fnoschese.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/sbg-scale.png>  
  
(from: <https://fnoschese.wordpress.com/2011/02/04/reassessment-experiment/> which strangely enough brings this right back to the original question)  
  
 - josh g.