Abolishing Grading

I have had a number of people ask me to share a 'table-of-contents' for my blog posts on why and how we should abolish grading. Here is a list of blog posts that should help you gain insight into this whole abolishing grading topic. I will add more as I write them.

**Real Assessment for Learning** – Students should experience their successes and failures not as reward and punishment but as information.

**No test is worth learning for** – There's a big difference between learning something and then having a test, and learning something because you have a test.

**Opting out of grading** – Here's a letter I drafted to opt my children out of grading in school.

**What's the meaning of these marks?** – A work or learning environment that is built on a foundation of smugness, fear and anger is destined for failure.

**Reduced to Numbers** – It wasn't until the system tried to grade teachers that teachers could finally see why they should not be grading students.

**If we don't grade, how will we know if children are learning** – Real learning is found in children not data, and unfortunately, there is no appropriate shortcut to collecting or sharing this information.

**Test scores are low, make them go up** – Inferences made from tests and grades can be undermined leaving the successful and superficial students indistinguishable.

**Assessment: Timing is Everything** – How often are our assessments affected by nothing more or less than timing?

**Are badges an alternative for grading?** – Here’s a look at the idea of replacing grading with badges.

**Grades and the fear of failure** – Here is a study that shows how grading increases a learner's fear of failure and decreases their interest in learning.

**Grading and Commenting** – Here is a study that shows how the benefits of a comment are overshadowed by the harmful effects of grading.

**Chasing tests and grades and calling it learning** – By reducing something as magnificently messy as learning to a number or letter, grade books are a great way of ranking and sorting children in an effort to provide the system what it wants without ever providing anything the children need.

**Grading Dependence** – Whether grading is good for students or not is irrelevant when it comes to the unavoidable truth that many students, parents and educators have come to depend on the conveniences of grading.

**Grading Currency** – Watch this video and try not to cry.

**Supportive Assessment** – I used to differentiate assessment into two categories: formative and
summative. While I still recognize the two categories, I now label them supportive and unsupportive of learning.

Tests and grades are like an absentee landlord – they only show up when it's convenient for them.

The folly of implementation – Grades and tests bring with them a phenomenally eerie superstitious fear factor.

Grades never hurt me – here's my response to those who say grading never hurt them when they were a student.

Grades: the candle snuffer of the love of learning – Grades are the candy floss of education.

Grading: Where do I stand? – If we wanted to create a form of feedback that encouraged students to focus less about making sense of what they're doing and more on how successful they've been while comparing themselves to others, I could not think of a better system than grading.

My de-grading philosophy Q & A – here's a quick Q & A where I answer some of the most common questions about how I assess with no grades.

Opposing Pedagogies – here is a guest post by a teacher describing their journey away from grading.

Grading distorts and bastardizes our love for learning – Like a fish immersed in water, we are drowning in grading, and for the most part, we don't even know it.

The Student Body as Transportation Devices – A student's body is not simply a transportation device for their number two pencils.

Assessment in Medical School – Here is a guest blog post from my good friend Dr. Brad Bahler.

A's For Good Behavior: A massive exercise in missing the point – I came across an article in the New York Times called A's for Good Behavior and found myself quite bothered by the whole thing.

Chris Wejr on the Price of Grades – Chris Wejr wrote a fantastic post where he reflected on an article that explained how Aboriginal students were being offered cash incentives for their grades.

Our system test and grades young people turning them off of learning – School has been bastardized so badly that it is less about learning and more about gaming the system.

(very little) Room for Debate – here's a post by Susan Ohanian that the New York Times would not print.

Data is fabulous – this video makes want to wretch.

Tests get high marks for preparing kids to... take more tests – It's a miracle that curiosity survives formal education.

High Test Scores, Low Ability – here is an article by Yong Zhao about the paradoxes that make up Chinese education.
Framing the Reality of Grading – Many teachers are prisoners to external prescription and standardization.

Limits of Testing: Data Rich – Information Poor – here's a comment left by a reader of my blog.

Is Grading a 21st Century teacher skill – The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum

Report Cards Get a Failing Grade – Here's an article based on an interview with me in the Globe and Mail.

Tests and Grades: Missing the Point – Teachers could give politicians all the test scores they could possibly want while giving the kids nothing they really need.

Grading Inequalities – more on why grading has nothing to do with real learning.

The day I abolished grading – here's how it happened for me

Assessment Simplified – Just like learning, assessment should be about working with kids to construct and apply their understandings to create and perform for a purpose and in a context.

Learning oriented learners – research shows that kids who focus on learning outperform kids who focus on grading... surprise, surprise...

Rank and Sort – sorting children like they were cattle, or ranking them as if they were mere contestants in a race is not the same as working with them to become kind, caring, competent citizens.

Teaching Tony Danza – We should be truly outraged that most members of our species have come to believe that getting A's is the whole point of school.

Real learning is found in children not data – We have to abandon our mania for reducing everything to numbers.

Mount Olive School District abolishes the D – This is exactly why tougher standards, grading, test scores and competition don't make schools better – they simply make schools more like their mediocre neighbors.

So I wrote Alfie Kohn... by Pernille Ripp – guest blog post about abolish grading resources

What vs How – any assessment can be over done

My Abolishing and Replacing Grading Reform Symposium Presentation – here is the archived Eluminate talk I gave for a free, on line symposium.

Working with Parents to Abolish Grading – here's a list of questions I ask parents to make them my ally to abolish grading.

Grading without Grading – here's how to grade without grades even if you have to grade.

Slave to the Grades – too many teachers have deferred their professionalism to their grade books.
Rubrics – the predetermined space – too often rubrics are simply limiting.

Late marks are egg management fees – it's not nice to steal from children.

Grading Nursing – Here's my sister guest blogging about a real life horror story about grading and her Masters in Nursing.

Where are we? – When we are busy grading we are not busy teaching, and our students learning suffers.

Grading Amnesia – Here's how grading is infinitely arbitrary and what we can do about it.

Grading Goslings – Here's how grading distorts our perception of real learning and the purpose of school.

Bubble Sheet Season – At no time in the school year will so little learning occur than during final exams.

You can't construct meaning in a preconceived bubble – Here's more on why multiple choice tests can never measure real learning.

Learning as a chore – Reward systems that bribe kids to learn implant a dangerous anchor. What if kids come to see learning as a mere means to an end? What if they see learning as something to only engage in if the conditions are profitable?

Grading Amnesia – We've anchored ourselves in a false, grading reality. It's time we wake up.

Grading: Education’s Snake-Oil Currency – Grading has done us wrong for too long. Let's do something about it.

The shelf life of grading and the factory model – Grades are only necessary if we continue to subscribe to the factory model. That subscription has come due, and it's time to move to a more organic, personalized model.

The Culture of Public Education – The culture of public education has been poisoned by grading and testing.

No Good Reason to Grade – here's why there really is no good reason to grade

Museum of Education – here's why we need to abolish grading

Fraudulent Fabrications – reducing learning to a symbol conceals more than it reveals, and it is our responsibility to educate the public so they may properly insulate themselves from experiencing undue harm.

The Folly of Rubrics and Grades – here's why rubrics and grades are so subjective and ultimately don't measure up to the task.
What leads to success? – here's how grades are at best unhelpful and at worst harmful towards our ultimate goals for children.

Abolishing Grading Video – character education & collaboration – here is a 5 minute video on how grading sabotages the best kinds of character education and collaboration

Grading Effort: Unintended Consequences – here's why we shouldn't grade effort.

Grades are artifically sabotaging one kid at a time... – here's how grading sabotages learning.

Destructive Grading Schemes – here's more on how grading sabotages learning

Grades & Risk Aversion – here's even more on how grading sabotages learning

End Grading's Reign of Extrinsic Terror – here's how grading sabotages motivation

Grades are Distracting – here's an example of how grading can distract us from real learning.

Information vs Reward and Punishment – Jerome Bruner and John Wooden both agree, rewards and punishment must go. Because grades are a judgement, they serve no real purpose in learning.

Pink, Godin, Kohn and asymptotes – Grades get learning wrong because they are linear but learning is an asymptote.

Replacing Grading – here's how I replaced grading even though I still have to place a grade on the report card.

Assessment Malpractice – here's a brief summary of the two kinds of assessment: formative and summative.

Fears of Abolishing Grading – here's what scares us

Detoxing students from grade use – if you chose to abolish grades, here's how students may react. 6 steps based on my 5 year study.

No Grades and Group work – here's a true story how having no grades can make group a beautiful thing.