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Psy 324-02 Psychology of Exceptionality
2/20/12

Jung, Lee Ann and Thomas R. Guskey. "Grading Exceptional Learners." *Educational Leadership* Feb. (2010): 31-35. Print.

The purpose of the article is to provide a suggestion for how teachers should address the troublesome question of how to assign grades to students with disabilities; these students participate in learning differently than typical students. Teachers wish to give grades that fairly and accurately describe students' work in their classrooms. The five steps outlined in this article intend to achieve accuracy and fairness in grading exceptional students.

Grading students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL) is a challenge for many teachers. Some teachers attempt making their own grading adaptations, but these often end up being regarded as unfair by both teachers and students. In order to achieve high-quality grading, the school must establish a grading system with two characteristics: grades based on articulate standards to give parents and students more meaningful feedback as well as grades accounting for product criteria, process criteria, and progress criteria. Product criteria relate to what a student is able to do or achieve when assessed, process criteria relate to students' effort and participation in the learning process, and progress criteria relate to how much students have improved or advanced over time. With this grading model in place, a school can then create fair and accurate grading procedures following five steps. The first step is to determine if a student can achieve a standard without certain adaptations; if yes, then no change in the grading process is needed, but if so, then step two follows. The second step determines what kind of change is needed: accommodation or modification. Accommodation leaves the grading standard unchanged, but changes how demonstrating mastery is shown. Modification involves changing the standard because it is inappropriate to expect the student to achieve it; if a modification is needed, the procedure continues to step three. The third step determines what the appropriate standard is: what an instructional team believes the student could reasonably achieve that is developmentally appropriate. Step four says to base grading on this modified standard, not the grade-level standard. Last, step five instructs to communicate the meaning of the grade with additional information. Teachers do this by explaining what standard was actually measured.

The author concludes that this five-step procedure provides a fair, accurate, and legal method for adapting the grading procedure for students with disabilities and ELL. This system of grading is beneficial by providing more detailed feedback. Thus, parents and instructional teams have more information on which to base decisions for intervention and placement making those services more helpful for students.

I have several questions after reading this article. What are the implications of these grades based on modified standards for GPA, class rank, honor roll, etc.? How many people would know these grades were based on modified standards? Is it possible that an exceptional student would consequently be ranked higher than a student who worked just as hard but had to achieve a grade-level standard, and how would that typical student feel if he did not know about the modified standard? However, I think typical students would benefit from consideration of product, process, and progress criteria; taking all the pressure away from product criteria alone could relieve some of the stress students have about the end product and help them focus on the process of learning as well. I also think communicating specific grading standards would be helpful for all students' report cards. This process may not require the collection of additional information, but it still would make considerably more work for the teacher.