

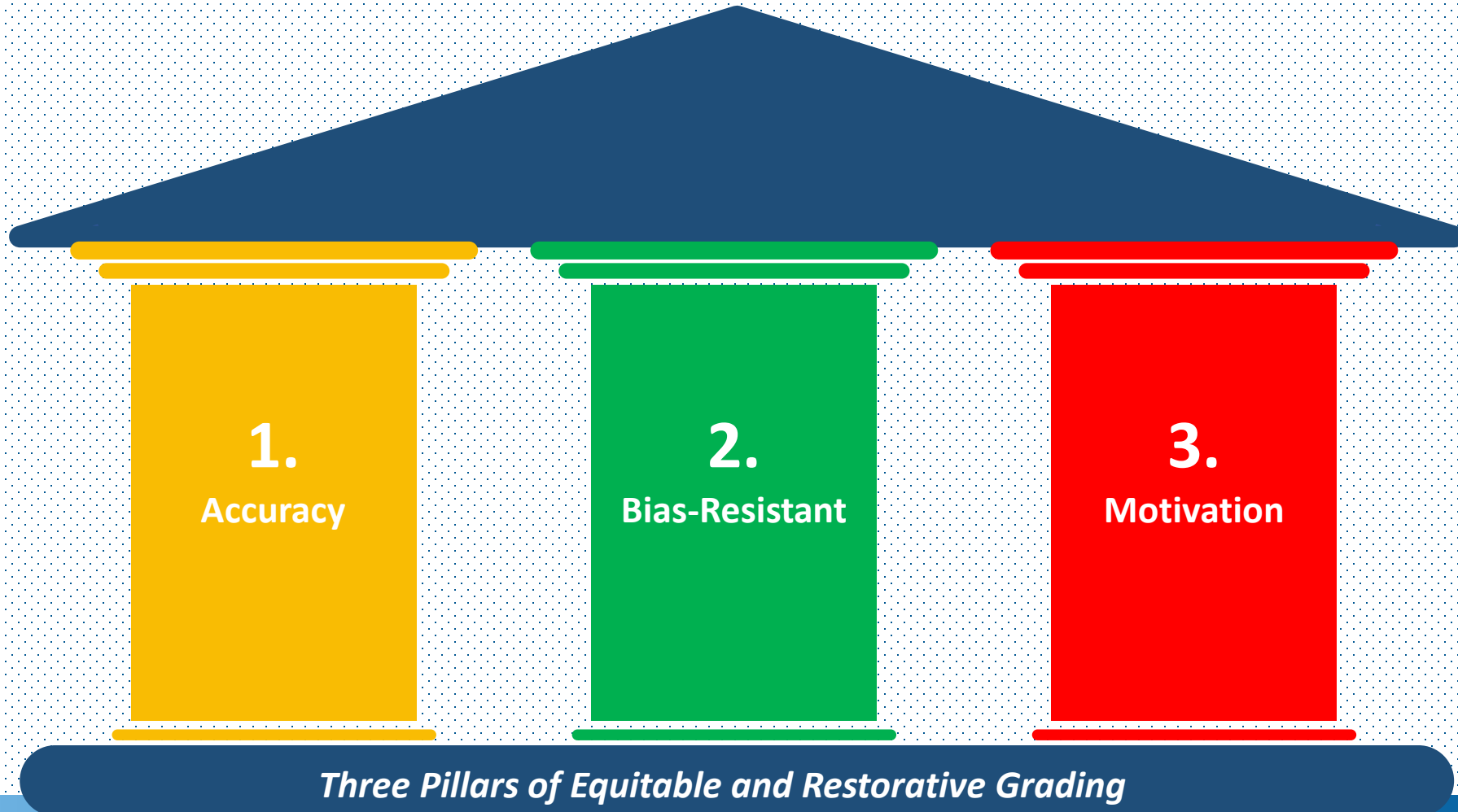


Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices

Why are we learning about Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices?

1. In order to create more equitable learning outcomes and allow student learning to take bigger leaps educators must take an aggressive and systematic approach to design and implement a system that produces learning leaps beyond acceleration. Learning leaps require the **removal of barriers** and **providing students with increased opportunities to learn** to create a responsive **System** to support school improvement and student success.
2. Traditional grading practices can produce negative learning identities through non-equitable practices that make students feel dismissed or marginalized.
3. If we want to interrupt and dismantle the education structures that have allowed and perpetuated the achievement and opportunity gaps, we have to find ways to reduce the influence of biases that operate without us even realizing it.

Three Pillars of Equitable and Restorative Grading



Three Pillars of Equitable and Restorative Grading



1.

Accuracy

Pillar 1: Accuracy

Our grading must use calculations that are mathematically sound, easy to understand, and correctly describe a student's level of academic performance.

Three Pillars of Equitable and Restorative Grading

A green pillar graphic with a white number '2.' and the text 'Bias-Resistant' inside. The pillar has a white outline and a white shadow effect.

2.

Bias-Resistant

Pillar 2: Bias-Resistant

Grades should be based on valid evidence of a student's content knowledge, and not based on evidence that is likely to be corrupted by a teacher's implicit bias or that reflects a student's environment.

Three Pillars of Equitable and Restorative Grading

A red pillar graphic with a white number '3.' and the word 'Motivation' inside. The pillar has a white outline and a white shadow effect.

3.

Motivation

Pillar 3: Motivation

The way we grade should motivate students to achieve academic success, support a growth mindset, and give students opportunities for redemption.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Mathematically Accurate

- **Pillar 1: Accuracy**
 - Our grading must use calculations that are mathematically sound, easy to understand, and correctly describe a student's level of academic performance.
- **Assigning a Zero** – Does assigning a zero, motivate students?
 - Thomas Guske (2009) found that no studies support the use of low grades as punishment. Instead of prompting greater effort, low grades more often cause students to withdraw from learning.
 - “But the student has answered none of the questions...”
- **Does the zero represent that the student has absolutely no knowledge of the content addressed by the assignment?**
 - The teacher does not have evidence of what the student knows. This is not the same as having evidence that the student knows nothing.
 - If a grade is supposed to accurately reflect what a student knows, assigning a zero when we haven't received any data creates inaccuracy. We have no evidence to accurately know whether the student understands the content.

Guskey, T.R. (2009). Bound by tradition: Teachers' views of crucial grading and reporting issues. Online Submission.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Mathematically Accurate

- **The Problems with Averaging**
- Why wouldn't we average scores?
- Averaging applies a mathematical calculation to a set of student scores without regard to when those scores happened. When we want to describe a student's overall performance over time, should it matter when the student earned each score?
- Consider this example:
 - Ellis, an incoming 9th grader in your class, has never been taught how to write a persuasive essay; he went to a middle school that didn't teach it. You give an assessment in September, and Ellis' performance reveals his inexperience – there's no thesis or clear organization of ideas, few details, if any, support his ideas, etc. The essay gets a D. But it's only September, and you, as his teacher, provide instruction and guided practice with feedback, and at the mid-term assessment in November, Ellis is writing at a C level. Your instruction continues with more practice and feedback, and when it's time for the last essay of the semester in January, Ellis has made steady improvement and his essay is quite strong: an A. You're proud of his progress. To simplify this hypothetical, let's assume these are the only grades and skills measured. What should be his grade?

Grading Averages

1.

Accuracy

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Mathematically Accurate

- **The Problems with Averaging**
- When we describe student achievement according to a student's most recent performance, we don't show that early performance is irrelevant. Instead, we teach students that early mistakes don't consign you to mediocrity or failure, that learning takes time and dedication, and that everyone can grow and succeed.
- Averaging a student's performance over time results in inaccurate descriptions of what a student ultimately learned and inequitably lowers grades for students who took a longer time to learn and demonstrate proficiency. Instead, a student's most recent performance can more accurately and equitably describe achievement.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Bias-Resistant

- **Pillar 2: Bias-Resistant**

- Grades should be based on valid evidence of a student's content knowledge, and not based on evidence that is likely to be corrupted by a teacher's implicit bias or that reflects a student's environment.
- If we can't stop our implicit racial biases, can teachers limit the opportunities to perpetuate inequities through our racial biases?
- If we want to interrupt and dismantle the education structures that have allowed and perpetuated the achievement and opportunity gaps, we have to find ways to reduce the influence of biases that operate without us even realizing it.
- Let's consider the following practices that promote and authorize our biases to operate:
 - Penalizing for lateness (tardiness or submitting work past the deadline)
 - Evaluating student behaviors
 - Including homework in the grade

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Bias-Resistant

- **Penalizing for lateness (tardiness or submitting work past the deadline)**
- **Pillar 2: Bias-Resistant**
 - Grades should be based on valid evidence of a student's content knowledge, and not based on evidence that is likely to be corrupted by a teacher's implicit bias or that reflects a student's environment.
- The common belief is that if a student couldn't meet the deadline there should be some "punishment", and if the student had extra time to complete the assignment, the student shouldn't be able to earn the same grade as a student who turned it in on time. Reducing grades for late work both creates inaccuracy and violates our bias-resistant principle.
- A student who has demonstrated A quality work but who submitted the work past the due date and has their grade lowered to a B, is an inaccurate description of the level of performance on the assignment.
- This practice collapses two distinct aspects of the student's performance (academic performance and the timing of that academic performance) resulting in a grade that is not a valid reflection of the student's content knowledge.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Bias-Resistant

- **Penalizing for lateness (tardiness or submitting work past the deadline)**
- Late work penalties can disproportionately hurt the most vulnerable students.
- When grades are lowered for work submitted late, many students will choose to stop working on the assignment after the deadline has passed and will stop learning. Other students may choose to copy the assignment to meet the deadline.
- ***What's the alternative?***
 - When teachers accept late work without a grade-based penalty, grades are more accurate reflections of student academic performance and learning becomes more important than deadlines.
 - When teachers stop reducing grades on assignments submitted late, students who need more time use that time, but also the quality of work increases.
 - Students have less incentive to copy and can take more pride in doing their best work.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Bias-Resistant

- **Evaluating student behaviors**
- **Pillar 2: Bias-Resistant**
 - Grades should be based on valid evidence of a student's content knowledge, and not based on evidence that is likely to be corrupted by a teacher's implicit bias or that reflects a student's environment.
- Weighted categories such as Participation and Effort reward and punish students based on subjective criteria and increase opportunities for our biases to impact student grades. We must limit the impact of our biases by limiting elements of a grade that are judgments of our students' behaviors. If we incorporate student behavior into a grade, we are helping the education system continue to hurt students who are not in the dominant cultures.
- Students who have been historically marginalized and haven't experienced academic success in school are less likely to engage and invest in that very institution than the students who have had a pattern of success.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Bias-Resistant

- **Including homework in the grade**
- **Pillar 2: Bias-Resistant**
 - Grades should be based on valid evidence of a student's content knowledge, and not based on evidence that is likely to be corrupted by a teacher's implicit bias or that reflects a student's environment.
- Homework is the space for students to make mistakes, and if mistakes are necessary for learning, then to grade homework based on whether the answers are correct sends contradictory messages.
- If we grade homework for completion this contradicts the importance of grades being based on valid evidence of a student's content knowledge. Students who demonstrate mastery of the content based on summative assessment scores but who haven't turned in homework earn final grades that are deflated and suggest that they know less content than they actually do.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Bias-Resistant

- **Including homework in the grade**
- **Pillar 2: Bias-Resistant**
 - Grades should be based on valid evidence of a student's content knowledge, and not based on evidence that is likely to be corrupted by a teacher's implicit bias or that reflects a student's environment.
- ***What's the impact of including homework in the grade?***
- Students depend on the homework points and will do whatever they can to earn those points, such as getting others to help them complete it. This system doesn't require the students to learn.
- Students are less likely to complete homework themselves if they have fewer resources, caregivers who have less formal education or who have limited English fluency, and if they have more environmental stress.
- Without us realizing it, including homework in a grade acts often to perpetuate inequities and the achievement gap.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Bias-Resistant

- **Including homework in the grade**
- ***Reframing Homework: What are the benefits?***
 - Students no longer have any incentive to copy. The benefit to the student shows up on the summative assessment.
 - Teachers can reallocate their time. When teachers award points for homework, they spend time in class and outside of class checking the assignments and entering scores into the gradebook.
 - Students learn to take responsibility for their learning. Awarding points for homework is teaching compliance, not responsibility. Student will begin to see the connection between homework completion and academic performance on assessments.
 - Students are no longer double punished. Students will not lose points on the homework assignments and later lose points for incorrect answers on the assessment.
 - We don't penalize students for environmental factors or circumstances that prevent them from completing homework.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that are Bias-Resistant

- ***Let's have a quick check-in. Please discuss any of the following questions.***
 - What did you hear that is very different from what you have ever considered?
 - How are these actions important as we are prioritizing working toward equity within our school community?

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that Motivate Students and Support a Growth Mindset

- **Pillar 3: Motivation**

- The way we grade should motivate students to achieve academic success, support a growth mindset, and give students opportunities for redemption.
- With equitable grading, mistakes and low scores can be corrected and grades can be updated as students gain competence. High grades are always within reach of every student, even if the student makes mistakes along the way.
 - *Retakes and Redos*
 - Students are allowed additional opportunities to demonstrate their understanding,
 - Retakes allow students who learn more slowly or need more support to continue learning.
 - Every student should have the chance to continue learning from their mistakes and to show improved understanding.
- Minimum grading (50%) offers students the opportunity at redemption.
 - Success is still possible even when there is early failure.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that Motivate Students and Support a Growth Mindset

- **Pillar 3: Motivation** - The way we grade should motivate students to achieve academic success, support a growth mindset, and give students opportunities for redemption.
- Do retakes (and equitable grading practices in general) prepare students for the “real world”?
- We must consider whose “real world” we are we are talking about?
 - The world is harsher and more unforgiving for some students than for others. Individuals who have been historically marginalized are often judged more harshly and given fewer chances.
 - African Americans and Latinos receive less benefit of the doubt for mistakes (or perceived transgressions) than white people (see Alexander, 2012; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley, 1990).
 - The weakness in this rational about the “real world” is that it presumes that unless we replicate aspects of the unfair world in our classrooms, our students will be unprepared for it.
- Alexander, M. (2012). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Greenhaus, J.H., Parasuraman, S., & Wormley, W.M. (1990). Effects of race on organizational experiences, job performance evaluations, and career outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(1), 64-86.

Equitable and Restorative Grading Practices that Motivate Students and Support a Growth Mindset

- **Pillar 3: Motivation** - The way we grade should motivate students to achieve academic success, support a growth mindset, and give students opportunities for redemption.
- **Questions to consider:**
 - When in your life have you been given a “redo”? Who offered it to you, and why do you think you got that second chance? What did it feel like to receive it? How did it benefit you?
 - How much of a motivator is hope?
 - How could offering redemption via retakes, weighing more recent performance, and minimum grading throughout the term affect motivation?