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A Phenomenology Study of First-~year Teachers Looking at the Shared Lived Experience of Learning to Grade

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A PHENOMENOLOGY STUDY OF FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS LOOKING AT THE
SHARED LIVED EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING TO GRADE

by

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Doctor of Philosophy – Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

A Phenomenology Study of First-year Teachers Looking at the Shared Lived Experience of Learning to Grade

by

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This study describes the phenomenon of how first-year teachers learn to evaluate students learning by (letter) grades. Grades seem simple enough; but in reality, each grade carries serious consequences with it – for either good or bad. For example, grades affect benefits/consequences at home; they affect placement in remedial or advanced courses; they affect grade level promotion; they affect participation in programs, i.e. extracurricular activities like sports; they affect high school graduation, college acceptance, and scholarship eligibility (Brookhart, 1991; Marzano, 2000).

Despite the extreme importance of grades and how they can influence a person's life over a period of time depending on the grades they receive, it is interesting to note that the teachers assigning these crucial grades have had no formal or explicit instruction on how to give the grades. Researchers in assessment literacy have called for greater instruction in this area, but the current landscape has revealed no significant change in grading practice instruction (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, & Chunhua, 2013; Brookhart, 2013).

The study reveals the phenomenon of how first-year teachers navigate the lived experience of learning to grade on their own. Five themes were generated to describe this phenomenon: (a) Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended), (b) How Valid are my

Hodgepodge Grading Practices? (c) Why Didn't I Learn This in College? (d) What I Want to Change for Next Year, and (e) If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say? The results of this study will benefit educational researchers, policy makers, and most importantly, teacher educators and in-service professional development instructors as they provide instruction on grading practices. In addition to considerations for future research, specific recommendations are made for changes to teacher education curriculum, and a call for change in policy re: both teacher licensing standards and standards-based grading. As teacher educators better understand how first-year teachers learn to assign their students' grades based on evaluations of their learning, teacher educators will be better prepared to help teachers make meaningful and applicable learning connections to their own ideas about grading and what they are learning in college classes about best practices for grading.

This study uses the constructivist theory and validity theory for its theoretical frameworks to anchor the phenomenon of how first-year teachers learn to grade. This study took place in the American Southwest using six first-year teachers as its participants. Each of these participants is a secondary teacher of either English Language Arts or mathematics. The five themes were generated from the participants interview responses, researcher memos, and the researcher's Epoche that allowed the researcher to verbalize the phenomenology, or lived experience, of first-year teachers as they learn to grade.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family – to my beautiful and loving wife, Collette, and to our five children, Dallin, Emmalee, Felicity, Gavin, and Hunter. Without your love, encouragement, team-effort attitude, and emotional support, this would not have been possible. I love each of you more than the words on this page can express.

Love,

Brandon/Dad

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Chapter 1

OVERVIEW

Introduction

“It was hard as heck. I was not planning to go. But, I actually was not invited to come back the next year. So I don’t know if that is considered running out of town by the administration, but that’s what happened.” This is how Ms. Wright explains what happened at the end of her first year of teaching.

Ms. Wright was hired in a small rural school district to teach middle school math classes – including 9th grade geometry. (All names of people and places in the study are pseudonyms for their real names). I was one of her 9th grade geometry students during her first year of teaching. I remember her class as one of the most powerful learning experiences of my schooling years because she assessed and graded our class in a way that we had never experienced before. Her methods for assessing caused me to learn Geometry concepts at a much deeper level than I had ever learned any other math concepts previously. Ms. Wright used portfolio assessments with rubrics as the main form of assessment for our class. This was different than the traditional paper/pencil math tests I had been accustomed to taking.

She also graded us differently. She maintained that a C was average. Receiving a C in her class meant that we had satisfactorily learned the material. However, if we wanted to earn a B we had to show that we were above average in our understanding of the material, and that to earn an A required exceptional work and mastery of the geometry content. In regards to her grading practices, she said “this rocked [the students and parents’] world.”

When asked about where she learned to grade like that, Ms. Wright candidly said she didn’t know how when she first started teaching. She said that was something she hadn’t been

taught in college and was something she experimented with during those first few weeks/months of teaching, admitting that, “I fumbled through it the first few months until I got my footing.”

One teacher in the school did offer valuable mentoring during her first year that helped her shape her own beliefs as a teacher. More specifically, he was very instrumental in helping her develop her assessment practices during her first year. He gave her the idea of portfolio assessments, which resonated deep within her to the point that she designed all of her classes to rely mostly on either portfolio assessments or other types of alternative assessments to demonstrate student proficiency.

As a student, I remember some of my classmates telling me that they did not think her approach to assessment and grading was fair and that they had told their parents who in turn called and complained/argued their points with her and the principal. By the end of the school year, Ms. Wright had found out her contract would not be renewed for the following year. Many students, myself included, attributed this to negative reviews of her performance as a teacher from complaining students and parents.

“At the time,” reflects Ms. Wright, “I thought I was such a bad teacher. I thought, ‘What have I done wrong?’ I thought it was because of the parents. In fact... I had too many parents put me through the ringer because I had their kids who had never gotten anything less than an A in their entire life get a C in my class. I thought [being let go] was because of that... It was hard on my self-esteem. It was hard on me and my confidence as a teacher.”

Mrs. Wright’s outcome to her story may seem extreme, yet it is far from being an isolated incident when considering how teachers learn to grade. Fuertes (1998) discusses in her article, “Facing the firing squad,” reasons that teachers are fired. Among the leading reasons are pedagogy incompetence and bad performance evaluations. And as the results of this study will

indicate, first-year teachers perceive a significant percentage of their performance evaluation is based upon the grades they give their students.

For nearly a century and a half, the term *grades* has been widely associated with education (O’Conner, 2010). Thus it is reasonable to assume that thousands upon thousands of grading situations like Ms. Wright’s exist, at least to the point where teachers have to learn how they will assign their grades during their first year of teaching because thousands upon thousands of new first-year teachers have entered the teaching profession unprepared and untrained to deal with the complexities of grading (DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, and Cao, 2013; Popham, 2009). However, while we know that teachers can and are fired for things such as pedagogy incompetence and bad performance evaluations which can include grading practices (Fuertes, 1998), the quantity of teachers being terminated from employment based on their grading practices is not known. Therefore, it is important to know that countless numbers of teachers have had to make important decisions of how they would award and distribute grades to their students based on little to no instruction of how to do so.

Problem Statement

The current landscape of education preparation programs throughout the United States perpetuates the scenarios like the one mentioned above to be continually replicated in unique and interesting ways. Teaching current and future teachers about grading practices ideally means that they will be taught about its larger concept of assessment literacy as well. Gotch and French (2014) discuss the current “need for studies to connect teacher assessment literacy to student outcomes. Not only is this work needed to build support for assessment literacy measures, but also to build support for assessment literacy as a necessary attribute of effective teachers” (p. 17). DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, and Cao (2013) explain that adding, “to this concern is a dearth of

research on preservice assessment education including both its curricular and pedagogical approaches” (p. 128).

Stiggins (1999) reports that as of January 1998, only 15 states had teacher certification standards that required competency in assessment and 10 other states explicitly required assessment course work during training. The remaining 25 states did not even mention competence of assessment as any requirement for teacher certification or licensure. DeLuca and Klinger (2010) emphatically state that there is a “need for greater attention on pre-service programming related to assessment” (p. 422). While Stiggins’ (1999) work is now 15 years old, it should be noted that to the author’s knowledge and ability to research, this study has not been replicated to bring current findings to the table. This is also concerning because “if education research is to be relied upon to develop sound policy and practice, then conducting replications on important findings is essential to moving toward a more reliable and trustworthy understanding of educational environments” (Makel & Plucker, 2014, p. 313).

The Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students have been in place for nearly a quarter century to guide teacher educators in helping pre-service and in-service teachers develop their assessment literacy skills. These seven standards were developed in 1990 through a joint effort between the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), and National Education Association (NEA). These standards have also been referred to and used as a guide for researchers in more current studies.

Among the seven standards is one focused solely on grading. Standard 5 states that “teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments” (AFT, et al., 1990). Since the development of these standards in 1990, multiple

studies have been done to measure the degree to which both pre-service and in-service teachers are competent in the standards for educational assessment of students (Campbell, et. al., 2002; Mertler, 2005; Plake, 1993). In each study, results indicated that both pre-service and in-service teachers scored low in competency for standard 5, which says “teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments” (AFT, et al., 1990).

Stiggins (2004) offers historical insight as to why teacher education programs aren’t sufficiently preparing pre-service teachers with the assessment literacy skills they need so as to be competent in creating, administering, and evaluating assessments. He explains,

Decades ago, we separated assessment from instruction, assigned the tasks to different people, and built a wall between them... As a result, of this apparent lack of understanding of the connection between assessment and instruction, teacher licensing laws have failed to require competence in assessment as a condition of licensure to teach. Thus teacher preparation programs have failed to weave assessment training into their curriculum. (p. 26)

Popham (2009) argues that this current situation is problematic because teachers have an insufficient knowledge of both classroom assessments and accountability assessments. He stresses that assessment literacy should and must be an important content area for teachers to study and become proficient in.

Given this brief overview of current research in regards to assessment instruction, and more particularly grading practice instruction, for both pre-service and in-service educators (Campbell, et. al., 2002; DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Mertler, 2005; Plake, 1993; Popham, 2009; Stiggins, 2004), it is easy to see why scenarios like the one described in the introduction exist and will continue to exist in large quantities unless changes are made to how teachers are trained.

Statement of Purpose

Dating back to my own assessment training in my pre-service program, I have always been fascinated with the topic of grading and the challenges it brings to educators. I have taught in the classroom for seven years and therefore have personally felt and experienced the lived experience that all teachers experience as they learn how to grade. The intent of this study is to provide teacher educators with knowledge about this phenomenon so that it can provide greater insight to how they can teach and instruct the pre-service teachers before they enter the reality of the teaching profession and have to learn for themselves how to negotiate their students' grades.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of how teachers learn to assess, and more specifically, how they learn to grade. It is my goal, as the researcher and author of this study, to inform teacher educators and in-service professional development instructors how and what teachers are currently learning to grade and how these practices relate to the recommendations by assessment and grading specialists. The intent of this study is not to propose a method of providing assessment instruction, but rather to inform programs of how new teachers are negotiating their task of learning to grade. However, this study can also serve as valuable and needed insight for policy makers to consider as they deliberate new laws and requirements regulating teacher training and teacher licensure.

The need for this study is great because there is not a clear purpose for assessment literacy instruction in neither pre-service programs nor in in-service professional development programs (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Mertler, 2005; Popham, 2009). If pre-service and in-service program coordinators know how first-year teachers are grading, they can develop curriculum for pre-service and in-service professional development programs to

help new teachers learn about effective and recommended grading practices in light of what is currently being done.

Operational Definitions

Grade

The term *grade* is used by the researcher to discuss the final grade a student receives for a class. This is the grade that will show up on the report card and transcript of the student. In the US, the process of assigning scores or marks on student work and classroom formative and summative assessments is also often referred to as grades. However, since there are two distinct things the term *grade* refers to, for purposes of this study and paper, the term *grade* will refer only to the final evaluative grade given on the report card.

Mark or Score

The term *mark* and *score* are used by the researcher to describe the practice of how teachers place evaluative judgment on student work, which could be simple informal assignments to mastery of tasks on an assignment and from informative assessments to end-of-year summative assessments. In essence, it is how a teacher takes the data points of a student's performance and translates it into a score/mark for the task, which contributes to the larger, overall grade for the class.

Assessment

Assessment is the term used by the researcher to describe any measure taken to assess a student's ability to perform on a task. Ideally, these tasks are always directly related to content-specific standards for which the assessment is taking place. Assessments can be informal or formal, informative or summative, and traditional or alternative.

Grading Period

A *grading period* is a set of time in which instructional units are taught and assessment of concepts learned during the instructional time are given. Usually, grading periods are broken down into two semesters, three trimesters, or four quarters comprising the school year. The results of these grades at the end of the grading period are what get put on a student's transcript.

Report Cards

Report cards are a system used in PK-12 schools to report student grades based on performance in their respective classes. Report cards usually contain final grades for a grading period and are usually seen as synonymous in meaning and purpose to that of transcripts.

Conceptual Framework

Lomax (1996) conducted a study to find out how pre-service teachers acquire assessment literacy skills. Findings reveal that the student teachers, while nearing graduation and obtaining their first teaching job, still had concerns in regards to their assessment literacy in the areas of “grading, particularly for report cards; dealing with difficult parents at conferences; dealing with pressures of mandated standardized testing; and working with cooperating teachers whose assessment philosophies and practices differ from those of the student teachers” (p. 292).

In similar studies based on the Standards For Teacher Competence in the Educational Assessment of Students (AFT et al., 1990), Plake (1993), Campbell, et. al. (2002), and Mertler (2005) have found that both pre-service and in-service teachers alike perform very low on the fifth of the seven standards. Standard 5, the standard that teachers perform low on, states that teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures that use pupil assessments. Additionally, Mertler (2005) also reports that in-service teachers “often believe

that they have not received sufficient training in their undergraduate preparation programs in order to feel comfortable with their skills in making assessment decisions” (p. 62).

Furthermore, in decentralized curriculum and assessment systems, such as the US, teachers have had great freedom in deciding what and how to assess their students (Cohen & Spillane, 1992). Connecting this thought to the idea that teachers have not received adequate training for learning to grade, it is reasonable to assume that teachers’ personal beliefs of assessments influence how they actually assess and grade their students. It is also reasonable to assume that these beliefs influence how and what their students learn in their classrooms, since relevant literature shows that teacher conceptions of teaching and learning greatly influence their teaching decisions and classroom behaviors (Kennedy, 1991; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996).

The conceptual framework for this study centers on the premise that teachers generally have not been explicitly taught how to grade. This is true of both teacher education and in-service professional development programs (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; DeLuca & McEwan, 2007; Stiggins, 1999; Stiggins 2004). Again, the purpose of this study is to find out how teachers are learning to grade. For a long time, it has been known that teachers’ beliefs of learning and teaching have been deeply rooted in their schooling and life experiences and once formulated, have become stable and difficult to change (Lortie, 1975; Richardson, 1996).

Theoretical Framework

Building upon the conceptual framework that teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding learning, teaching, and grading are largely influenced by their own experiences they’ve had, and the idea that teachers in general are not being taught about grading practices, the theoretical framework for this study is built upon two theories. The first is the constructivist theory and the second is validity theory.

Constructivist Theory

One aspect of the constructivist theory (Cobb, 1994; Von Glaserfeld, 1995; Pakcer & Goicoechea, 2000) indicates that teachers' beliefs and perceptions are grounded in experiences from their early lives (Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). These beliefs create meanings in the minds of the teachers and are difficult to change through either teacher education or professional development interventions (Richardson, 1996). Thus, these initial beliefs that are created by teachers will encounter the culture and practice of assessing and grading in their own schools. Another aspect of the constructivist theory seems to not corroborate the former ideas just spoken of. Colburn (2000) suggests that one does not need to adopt a particular belief from their past to guide their future actions; rather, they need to inform their prior knowledge with the new knowledge of their current surroundings, such as the cultures and times in which we live.

This study looks at how first-year teachers learn to grade, i.e. how they learned about grading (e.g. receiving grades themselves), how they decided what to grade, and how they learned to grade. Using the constructivist theory as a lens for this study is useful because first-year teachers have already established their own ideas about grading that are deeply rooted in their own experiences and this theoretical framework can guide how first-year teachers build upon these experiences with the current times and cultures they encounter. The other theory that serves as a lens for this study is validity theory. Therefore, the constructivist theory serves as a lens for how first-year teachers learn to grade, and validity theory provides a lens for how valid the first-year teachers' grading practices are.

Validity Theory

In looking at grading through the lens of validity theory, Brookhart and Nitko (2014) explain

assessments that you use in grading and in the formative assessments that precede grading should reflect the learning objectives that the school district and state identify as important... Because grades are based on your assessments, your assessments should reflect these learning outcomes. (p. 41)

They also define validity as being “the soundness of your interpretations and uses of students’ assessment results” (p. 38). Even after the death of Samuel Messick (1931-1998), an American psychologist professor, he continues to be considered by many in the field as a leading scholar of validity theory. Messick (1991) offers his definition for validity, stating, “validity is an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the *adequacy* and *appropriateness of interpretations* and *actions* based on test scores or other modes of assessment (p. 1).

Brookhart (1991) discusses the problem of validity with teacher’ grading practices. “Educating teachers in the principles of student assessment will not take care of the discrepancy between recommended and actual grading practices. I suggest that this discrepancy and the discomfort teachers experience over it are symptoms of a validity problem” (p. 35). She later describes this discrepancy:

The adjustments teachers make to compensate for grade use and misuses, however, are not uniform and are not necessarily valid, either. A hodgepodge grade of attitude, effort, and achievement, created in an attempt to provide positive feedback to the student about

himself or herself, is not the answer. Such a hodgepodge grade also falls down under a validity check; it does not possess the characteristic of interpretability. (p. 36)

Thus, according to Brookhart, the use of hodgepodge grading practices, meaning that teachers use a variety of complex methods, is one of the big symptoms at the heart of a validity problem.

Another way to view validity is given by Kane (1992) who explains that validity is based on the *interpretation* of assessment results, not the actual assessment results themselves. In review, this study will look at how first-year teachers learn to grade through the constructivist theory lens, but it will also look at it through the lens of validity. That is to say, are the grades that new teachers assign to their students meaningful and useful to their students, parents, and other educators? Or to use Kane's (1992) explanation, are the grades valid because students, parents, administrators, and other stakeholders *interpret* them accurately?

Brief Review of Phenomenology Methodology

Phenomenology is the chosen method for this study because it allows for participants to share their own in-depth understanding about their knowledge with a common lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). Teachers, particularly first-year teachers, share this common lived experience of learning to grade. The methodology for this study is patterned after the phenomenology methodology used by Bambara, Harbour, Davies, and Athey (2009).

Participants in this study are all first-year teachers. Each participant was interviewed three times during the course of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The first interview focused on participants' past experience with grading, e.g. being graded. The second was on their current interactions with the lived experience of learning to grade. The final interview required participants to make connections between their prior experience with grading and their current learning to grade practices.

Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then converted into Atlas Ti. where it was analyzed to generate themes of how and what first-year teachers learn to grade. The resulting phenomenon described in this study is articulated so as to benefit educators, policy makers, and program developers to use it as a resource for designing future policies involving assessment and grading practice instruction.

Scope and Significance

Significance

Grades have a huge impact on so many things; some impacts are bigger or more long lasting than others. However, the fact remains that grades influence so many other things. Following are several examples of what grades can or do have an impact on. They have an impact at home. Some parents pay money for good grades; other parents ground their children for poor grades. Participation in athletics and other types of extra-curricular activities is determined by grade eligibility criteria. Grades determine student placement in classes, i.e. do they need remedial work or extension activities. Grades help determine if schools are high or low performing. Grades are responsible for whether or not students are promoted to the next grade and ultimately if they'll graduate from high school. Likewise, they determine who will be commencement speakers at graduation. Grades also play a significant role in college admission acceptance. Grades determine eligibility for scholarships. Finally, grades have a large effect on student self-esteem and motivation (Brookhart, 1991).

Given this wide range of how impactful grades are, it is curious to wonder why teacher education and in-service programs do not have more comprehensive components on grading practices in their curriculum design. It is even more curious to wonder why there have not been

state-mandated policies requiring programs to include grading practice instruction – given the far-reaching effects that grading has.

It is significant then, that this study prepares the way for teacher educators, district and state education officials, and policy makers to understand the current phenomenon of how and what first-year teachers are learning to grade. This knowledge is especially influential as it is viewed through the lens of the constructivist theory of learning and the lens of validity theory because it will help guide future instructional design centered around assessment practices, and more specifically, grading practices.

Assumptions

This study made several assumptions. First, the study assumed that the participants had attended school systems that award grades for courses complete. Second, it was assumed that each time a participant had received a grade in a course throughout their educational careers, there had been invariable differences in regards to how their own teachers awarded these grades. Third, it was assumed that these experiences have become deeply rooted experiences in the lives of the participants and would be difficult to change (Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Fourth, it was assumed that these grading inconsistencies in their own experience, coupled with their lack of training, have provided frustration for the first-year teacher in determining what and how to grade, and if those grades are even reliable (Brookhart, 1991).

Limitations

One possible limitation for this study is that it is only looking at the grading practices of first-year secondary teachers and not elementary teachers. Considering the point that most elementary schools in the US already use some kind of standards-based report card as opposed to secondary schools that still use traditional report cards, it would be interesting to learn how

elementary teachers learn to grade. It is possible that the lived experience of learning to grade for elementary school teachers is different than for that of secondary teachers.

Another limitation is the role that the researcher plays in the study as he developed relationships with the participants, especially since the researcher is so passionate about this topic. However, having used the theoretical framework to guide the study should alleviate any bias that might have come across on the part of the researcher.

Summary

This chapter began with a real-life vignette of my 9th grade geometry teacher, Ms. Wright, and her experience as a first-year teacher in regards to her frustration with lack of administrative and parental support for her grading practices that focused on mastery learning. It then went on to connect her story to the current landscape of grading practice instruction, or lack thereof in teacher education and in-service programs. The chapter then discussed the purpose of the study, which is to understand the lived experience, or phenomenon, that first-year teachers experience as they learn to grade. It next provided the theoretical frameworks from which lenses this study is viewed through which are the constructivist and validity theories. Afterwards, it discussed the phenomenology methodology that this study uses. Finally, it discussed the scope and significance of the study, along with its assumptions and limitations.

Chapter two of the dissertation discusses the literature surrounding grading practices and provides a mental framework for why this study needed to be done. Chapter three addresses the methodology of the dissertation study, including a timeline of when the study took place, the participants that were invited to participate and those who actually participated, and where and how it all took place.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter one introduced this study of learning how first-year teachers learn to grade by establishing the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that serve as lenses to analyze the study through. Chapter two first discusses what grades are and why they are such an important topic to address and study in the field of education today. This chapter then takes a more-in-depth look at the literature around grading practices, beginning first with a review of assessment literacy instruction. The literature review then continues by looking at the historical roots of grading through its evolution to present grading practices.

In order to understand this evolution of grading practices from its origins to today's practices, it is important to look at the educational landscape in the United States on a broader scale so that the context of grading practices will be better understood. Therefore, this chapter provides a historical overview of education in the United States dating back to the colonial era prior to the United States gaining its freedom from England in the 18th century. The chapter then interweaves the beginnings of grading practices as they were developed and how they began to evolve overtime while still connecting to the broader educational landscape to keep the evolution of grading practices in perspective.

Finally, chapter two concludes with a review of current empirical grading practice literature, including traditional grading, standards-based grading, and the extent to how grading is taught in pre-service teacher education programs.

Importance of Grades

As noted in chapter one, grades have a huge impact on so many things. A brief review is included in the bulleted list below:

- home life (\$\$ for good grades/grounding for bad grades)
- determining needs for either remedial help or extension activities
- placement for honor's classes or intervention classes
- school grades compared to other schools
- grade level promotion
- eligibility for extra-curricular activities, e.g. sports
- graduation from high school
- commencement speakers
- college acceptance
- scholarship eligibility
- self-esteem (Brookhart, 1991)

This list shows just how far-reaching grades can be. Marzano (2000) explains that many measurement experts attribute five main reasons that educators use grades for. First is for administrative purposes; second is to give students feedback about their progress and achievement; third is to provide guidance to students about future course work; fourth is to provide guidance to teachers for instructional planning, and fifth is to motivate students. It is obvious from looking at these two sets of lists that grades play a very significant role in our society – much larger than what may appear on the surface to be just a student earning a grade in a class. Each of those grades culminates into so much more as is noted above. Therefore, if grades are that critical in so many ways today, it is important that we learn about where grades originated from and how they have led to become what they are today. To do so, it is essential to look at the bigger context of grades. That is, it is important to look first at the history of education so as to establish a context for later looking at the history of grades.

History of Education

Education in colonial America rested primarily upon the parents. Children learned the alphabet, to read and write, and basic arithmetic from their parents (Vinovskis, 1987). The reason for this stems from England. That is how they did it. In England, the familial relationship was very influential on the life of a child. Immediate and extended family members took responsibility to help educate the children.

However, the manner for educating children began to change in the colonies within a few short decades as the family unit-types brought from England began to be broken up, or rather focused on only immediate families because of the difficulty in traveling in the colonies and staying in regular association with extended kin. Therefore, the extended family unit that oversaw the learning of children in the family began to decay.

As a result, the authority of parents became weakened which led to civil authorities that “intervened to try to prop up the weakened and endangered family and required communities in Massachusetts to maintain local schools to educate children who were no longer being properly trained within the family” (Vinovskis, 1987, p. 21). In certain New England towns, it was written into the law that if a town had 100 families in it, they were required to start and maintain a grammar school. This idea was not popular with the towns, but nevertheless, they obliged by the law (Small, 1902). Bailyn (1960) conjectures that it is the downfall of the stable, extended English family in the New World that led to grammar schools, which eventually became known as elementary schools.

During this period of time of the colonial era and the establishment of elementary schools, the overall cultural expectation of teaching children to read and write shifted from parents and families to the newly established schools (Vinovskis, 1987).

One Room School Houses

From the establishment of grammar schools in the colonial era through the middle of the 19th century, these grammar schools primarily functioned as one-room schoolhouses in towns and communities. They housed students of all ages mixed together to learn the most basic of concepts in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Most children never advanced their education beyond the most basic elementary education they received in the one-room schoolhouse (Hargis, 1990).

States Control Power of Education

The oversight for the many one-room schoolhouses across the country rested in the hands of the states in which they resided. After the war for independence, the writers of the Constitution of the United States of America did not mention anything about education. By not mentioning education in this national document, the control of education became individual states' responsibility. Dennis (2000) explains,

the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution states: 'The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.' Since education is not mentioned in the Constitution, it is one of those powers reserved to the states. (p. 1)

Secondary Schools Become More Popular

In a period of 20 years dating from 1850-1870, the collective number of students attending school in state government sponsored schools nearly doubled, increasing from 13 percent to 20 percent (Hargis, 1990). With the increased amounts of students in the one-room schoolhouses, schools began to be "organized according to age and the schools gradually became graded" (p. 12).

One possible reason for the increased amount of students is that the Civil War ended and slavery was abolished. The 14th amendment to the Constitution of the United States was passed in essence to protect the rights of African Americans who in many instances had been denied the rights to education (Chemical Heritage Foundation, 2005). It is reasonable to conclude therefore, that part of the surge of students during this period of time directly coincides with the passage of the 14th amendment as African American children also began to attend school to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Another cause for the surge of students was the states passing compulsory school attendance laws. At first, these laws passed in the mid-1800s were largely ineffective because they were not easily enforceable. However, as the states sought answers in dealing with child labor, they enacted regulations that “often established school attendance as a prerequisite for younger children’s employment and made employment for other categories of youth impossible during the period of their schooling” (Katz, 1976, p. 21). By 1918, all states in the union had passed their own compulsory attendance laws in an effort to curb exploitation of child labor.

As a result of the increased attendance in elementary schools, “the number of students attending secondary schools also increased. From 1870 to 1910 the number of public high schools increased from 500 to 10,000” (Hargis, 1990, p. 12).

Standards Movement

Despite all states having control of education dating back to the pre-revolutionary time period when the states were still colonies, it took “until the second quarter of the nineteenth century [for] public support and public control of common schools [to become] a dominant institutional pattern” (Katz, 1976, p. 14). This public control began with the states enacting and enforcing compulsory attendance laws.

Each state controls the curriculum/content of what is to be taught in the school systems. States are subdivided into school districts, and school districts under the direction of the states are able to determine what the curriculum should be for the schools in their jurisdiction. Through the 19th and much of the 20th centuries, local school districts decided what content would be taught, or in other words, educational “input”. The 1990s began to bring change to the educational landscape of the day. Across states and the nation, there were calls to develop content standards. Hamilton, Stecher, and Yuan (2008) point out in their research that a central catalyst in this movement was to shift the focus of education from educational “input” and what was being taught to educational “outcomes” and what students were expected to demonstrate as an outcome of their learning.

In a response to this call, state education agencies and content specific discipline organizations began to develop standards that specify what students are expected to know and learn to be competent in various subjects. One of the first of any organizations or states to produce such standards was the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics when they published in 1989 their *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* (Hamilton, Stecher, & Yuan, 2008). Other content specific organizations, as well as individual states, joined in and began developing their own standards for what students in their content or state would be expected to know and learn, respectively. And, in recent years, many states have accepted and adopted the Common Core State Standards Initiative that seeks to establish a more uniform minimal level of educational attainment for students through “a set of clear college- and career-ready standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts/literacy and mathematics” (Common Core, Frequently Asked Questions section, para. 2).

History of Grading

Understanding where we are today with our curriculum and school system in general by looking at the past and where we came from will be helpful as the history of grading is now discussed and interwoven into this previously discussed historical framework.

One Room School Houses

Ken O' Connor (2010) and Susan Brookhart (2013) are two of the leading experts on grading practices. Drawing on their works, we learn that leading up to 1880, grading was done in mostly narrative formats where the teachers often just made a list of concepts and skills that their pupils had mastered. This fits with the idea of the one-room schoolhouses that were the norm during that era of education.

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, grading systems simply didn't exist in any publicly recognizable format. Preceding this era, it was the common practice of the time that when "learning a skilled trade, and apprentice was judged competent by his master and was then permitted to join the guild and become a journeyman. A student wishing to enter a university would be examined, but again there were not grades given; either the prospective student passed or he didn't" (Hargis, 1990, p. 11).

During the one-room schoolhouse era, the initial forms of grading started to emerge. Students generally demonstrated their knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic through recitation. "Progress was indicated descriptively; the teacher would simply write down the skills a student had or had not acquired. This was done primarily to indicate when a student was ready to move on to the next level or subject area" (Hargis, 1990, p. 11).

Changes Brought on by Growth

By the end of the 19th century and leading into the early 1900s, schools began to modify how they assigned grades, i.e. using number scales (0-100). The reason for this was increased student enrollment, brought upon by the 14th amendment and state compulsory attendance laws, as described earlier.

Hargis (1990) describes the change of grading this way:

One of the reasons for developing this grading system was to help teachers differentiate among students of various academic abilities. It helped in fitting students into the grades and tracks that were increasingly used as schools became larger and more grade levels and subject areas were included in the curriculum. One form of grading, the age- and ability-level grades, fostered and encouraged the development of the other form of grading. A student now could be compared to others in his class or age group. They then could be further segregated in more homogeneous ability groups with the intent of making mass education more efficient. (p. 12)

Percentages and Letter Grades

Brookhart reports that Starch and Elliot's studies (1912, 1913a, 1913b, as cited in Brookhart, 2013) became a famous set of studies that built upon each other and helped some schools change their grading systems from the scale (0-100) to what is referred now as traditional grading systems (ABCDF). As a result, some grading systems grew to incorporate the use of percentages as part of the calculation, some went back to just narratives, and some used combinations of letters, narratives, and or percentages.

Overtime, point scales and letter grades became increasingly popular. However, the problem of discriminating grades against each other, or rather, the question of how to distribute

the grades arose. This dilemma led to the system of grading that we refer to as bell-curve grading. This method originated in 1908 at the University of Missouri (Hargis, 1990). This system developed as a result of one professor who graded so hard that not a single student passed his class. The professor was overruled by the university's board, which changed all the students' grades to passing grades. "This incident prompted Meyer's classic paper of 1908 in which the system of grading on the curve as we now know it was outlined" (Hargis, 1990, p. 14). From the time of this paper until 1914, several different models of the bell curve were suggested. It wasn't until Florian Cajori advocated the 7-24-38-24-7 distribution of grades that the bell curve grading really took off. Of course, under this model, although the system requires most students to "do average or better, it made it desirable, even obligatory, that a portion of every group of students should be doing poor and failing work" (Hargis, 1990, p. 15).

For the better first half of the 20th century, grading was done mainly by ranking and normal-curve based grading. Despite the popularity of the normal curve, few teachers actually embrace it; instead, they rely on the more widely used point scales and percentage grading systems, albeit it has been demonstrated to have a "lack of precision in the hands of unreliable measurers" (Hargis, 1990, p. 15).

It wasn't until the middle of the 19th century that elementary schools predominately began using criterion-referenced grading – a type of grading that grades students against a set of pre-established criteria or standards that they are to learn – although high schools still used curving methods or ranking systems for college admissions. Thus, the way grading has evolved in US schools has become very complex and diverse (Brookhart, 2013; O' Conner, 2010).

Standards-based Movement

As states have been adopting standards, including the Common Core State Standards Initiative, for proficiency in the various content areas, they realized they now needed a new way to assess students. The old tests did not measure whether or not students had mastered the content standards. Therefore, for the last several years, states have been developing standards-based assessments to accurately assess students' knowledge of the standards they are assessing.

With this movement of standards-based reform sweeping the entire country by storm, educators, assessment specialists, and researchers have been grappling with how to document what students know, (i.e. grading students), based on the expectations set forth in the standards. What follows is a current look at the current grading trends in US public secondary schools, including how secondary school teachers determine students' final grades for reporting periods.

Current Grading Trends

In a recent review of grading practices across the country, Brookhart (2013) indicates that current types of grading practices can be categorized into three areas: Conventional grading practices, also known as traditional grading practices, grading in special education, and standards-based grading. Given the complexity of grading in the US at the turn of the century, as noted earlier in the historical review of grading practices, and the added complexities added by the advent of standards and standards-based assessments, a plethora of conceptual articles have been published in the last 10 years explaining the do's and don'ts of grading, what grades should mean, and how to grade (Brookhart, 2011; Christopher, 2007; Clymer & William, 2006; Cox, 2011; Deddeh, Main, & Fulkerson, 2010; Guskey, 2011a; Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Guskey & Jung, 2009; Jung & Guskey, 2007; Marzano & Heflebower, 2011; O'Conner, 2010; O'Connor & Wormell, 2011; Scriffiny, 2008). A comprehensive review of these works is not provided in this

paper; however, to provide an idea of what these best practices are, a look at one reference by O'Connor (2011) will be summarized. O'Connor's (2011) work is very representative of the recommendations on best grading practices.

O'Connor's (2011), *A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades*, offers 15 fixes for grades. These fixes fall under four categories: Fixes for practices that distort achievement, fixes for low-quality or poorly organized evidence, fixes for inappropriate grade calculation, and fixes to support learning. The 15 fixes are listed below under their respective categories noted above:

Fixes for Practices That Distort Achievement

- Fix 1: Don't include student behaviors (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc.) in grades; include only achievement.
- Fix 2: Don't reduce marks on "work" submitted late; provide support for the learner.
- Fix 3: Don't give points for extra credit or use bonus points; seek only evidence that more work has resulted in a higher level of achievement.
- Fix 4: Don't punish academic dishonesty with reduced grades; apply other consequences and reassess to determine actual level of achievement.
- Fix 5: Don't consider attendance in grade determination; report absences separately.
- Fix 6: Don't include group scores in grades; use only individual achievement evidence.

Fixes for Low-Quality or Poorly Organized Evidence

- Fix 7: Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods or simply summarize into a single grade; organize and report evidence by standards/learning goals.
- Fix 8: Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations.
- Fix 9: Don't assign grades based on a student's achievement compared to other students; compare each student's performance to preset standards.
- Fix 10: Don't rely on evidence gathered using assessments that fail to meet standards of quality; rely only on quality assessments.

Fixes for Inappropriate Grade Calculation

- Fix 11: Don't rely only on the mean; consider other measures of central tendency and use professional judgment.
- Fix 12: Don't include zeros in grade determination when evidence is missing or as punishment; use alternatives, such as reassessing to determine real achievement, or use "I" for Incomplete or Insufficient Evidence.

Fixes to Support Learning

- Fix 13: Don't use information from formative assessments and practices to determine grades; use only summative evidence.

Fix 14: Don't summarize evidence accumulated over time when learning is developmental and will grow with time and repeated opportunities; in those instances, emphasize more recent achievement.

Fix 15: Don't leave students out of the grading process. Involve students; they can—and should—play key roles in assessment and grading that promote achievement (O'Connor, 2011).

Despite the widespread literature about what effective grades should and should not consist of, many teachers (both pre-service and in-service) still feel uncomfortable with how to give meaningful and reliable grades to their students (Blackbourn et. al, 2011; Deluca & Bellara, 2013; Mertler, 2005). This can largely be attributed to not being prepared sufficiently in teacher education programs in the area of grading and assessment literacy (Deluca & Bellara, 2013; Yost & Wang, 2013). Regardless of whether or not teachers feel confident in their grading practices, they must still give grades each grading period as part of their expected job requirements. The need for grading practice instruction has been established. This training will most likely occur in teacher education and in-service programs in conjunction with other activities to help teachers become assessment literate. The following overview discusses assessment literacy as it is happening today.

Assessment Literacy Overview

It is estimated that teachers spend between 30% - 50% of their professional time on assessment activities (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Mertler, 2005). Given this reality, it would seem logical that teacher education programs should spend approximately a third to half of their overall focus in preparing future teachers on assessment practices, i.e. planning and giving assessments, evaluating and reflecting on the assessments, and using them to plan for future instruction and assessments. However, this is far from what is actually happening. Research reveals that many teacher certification programs and state agencies do not have any classroom

assessment coursework requirements for teacher licensure (Campbell, Murphy, & Holt, 2002 (as cited in Mertler, 2005)). It shouldn't be surprising then that Volante & Fazio (2007) found in their study on teacher candidates' assessment literacy that pre-service students at stages across all four years of the program – including student teachers ready to graduate – had a low self-efficacy for assessments, their purposes, and how to utilize different assessment methods.

Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students

This insufficient self-efficacy goes against the Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students. These standards were written jointly by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), and National Education Association (NEA) in 1990. These standards that have been around for a quarter of a century need to be – but are not – a part of all teacher education programs. The seven Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students are:

1. Teachers should be skilled in choosing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.
2. Teachers should be skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.
3. Teachers should be skilled in administering, scoring and interpreting the results of both externally-produced and teacher-produced assessment methods.
4. Teachers should be skilled in using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement.
5. Teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments.
6. Teachers should be skilled in communicating assessment results to students, parents, other lay audiences, and other educators.
7. Teachers should be skilled in recognizing unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information. (AFT, et al., 1990)

After reading through the standards, one can sense some of the intents for the standards, i.e. that they are to be used as “a guide for teacher educators as they design and approve programs for teacher preparation” and as “an impetus for educational measurement specialists and teacher trainers to conceptualize student assessment and teacher training in student

assessment more broadly than has been the case in the past” (AFT, et al., 1990). Furthermore, this document describes categorical activities that the standards apply to and that should be considered:

- Activities occurring prior to instruction
- Activities occurring during instruction
- Activities occurring after the appropriate instructional segment (e.g. lesson, class, semester, grade)
- Activities associated with a teacher’s involvement in school building and school district decision-making
- Activities associated with a teacher’s involvement in a wider community of educators (AFT, et al., 1990)

Even with these standards in place since 1990, and guidance in how to apply the standards, teacher education programs have been reluctant to embrace assessment instruction as part of their curriculum (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; DeLuca & McEwen, 2007; Stiggins, 1999; Stiggins, 2004). Popham (2009) wonders if the topic of assessment literacy is a fleeting topic for professional developers – meaning that the reason teacher education programs have been reluctant to embrace assessment instruction as part of their curriculum is because they think that “this too shall pass” as other things have done in education, thus continuing the trajectory of the metaphorical educational pendulum that swings back and forth. Popham (2009) titled his article, “Assessment Literacy for Teachers: Faddish or Fundamental?” as he considered the argument of whether assessment literacy instruction was a fleeting topic, or if it should be regarded as a substantial topic in professional development for years to come. In the article, he divides concerns into classroom assessments and accountability assessments and then argues that educators have an insufficient knowledge in either of the two areas. He concludes by emphasizing the need that teachers must receive assessment literacy instruction and that it must be an important content area that teachers need to become proficient in while in teacher education programs.

Assessment literacy is not the only avenue influencing how teachers are trained to work in their professional roles. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have also had a strong influence on how teachers function in their professional roles. “Teachers who have been implementing the ELA Standards find that their thought processes about curriculum, instruction, and assessment are being continually challenged” (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012, p. 157). School districts, schools, and teachers now have a responsibility to “design and implement instruction and formative assessments that will help all students achieve” (p. 164). Additionally, as the TPACK (Technology, Pedagogy, and Content Knowledge) framework begins to be introduced into colleges and teacher education programs across the country, it is important to consider how assessment literacy will fit into the TPACK framework. Thomas, Herring, Redmond, and Smaldino (2013) emphasize that for teacher candidates to be TPACK ready, the challenge will be for faculty to model “these ideas within a teacher education curriculum in concert with ongoing change processes” (p. 56). Pianta (2012) gives encouragement by pointing out that “many states and teacher-preparation programs are working on protocols for assessing their graduates, and it is vitally important that such assessment work continue” (p. 35).

Teachers’ Assessment Literacy

Literature is scarce when it comes to exactly how teachers become assessment literate. However, there are some researchers addressing this. A look at some of their studies are described below.

Lomax (1996) addresses this issue of how pre-service teachers acquire assessment literacy by following a group of pre-service teachers. He began the study prior to the pre-service students’ assessment course. The study continued on through the end of their student teaching. Findings reveal that the student teachers had concerns in regards to their assessment literacy in

the areas of “grading, particularly for report cards; dealing with difficult parents at conferences; dealing with the pressures of mandated standardized testing; and working with cooperating teachers whose assessment philosophies and practices differ from those of the student teachers” (p. 292).

In an interesting study that compared the assessment literacy of pre-service teachers and in-service teachers, Mertler (2005) found that in most areas, in-service teachers were better able to assess students than teachers at the end of pre-service training. The method that Mertler (2005) used for his study replicated studies done by Plake in 1993 (as cited in Mertler, 2005) and Campbell, Murphey, and Holt in 2002 (as cited in Mertler, 2005). In Plake’s (1993) study, the then newly established Standards For Teacher Competence in the Educational Assessment of Students described in detail earlier in this paper (AFT et al., 1990) were used to design a survey instrument to measure in-service teachers’ assessment literacy skills. The survey contained 5 questions for each of the 7 standards, comprising 35 questions total. The testing sample contained 555 teachers who responded to the survey, averaging 23 out of 35 items correct. On five particular items, “less than 30% answered correctly. Two of the five came from Standard 5 – Developing Valid Grading Procedures. Only 13% answered correctly an item that focused on steps to reliability of a test score. The two remaining items with low performance addressed Standard 7 – Recognizing Unethical or Illegal Practices” (Mertler, 2005, p. 53).

In the other study, Campbell, et al. (2002) used the same survey instrument, but instead tested 220 undergraduate students following their college course on tests and measurement. The results showed that “the inservice teachers in the Plake et al. (1993) study scored higher than the preservice teachers on all but Standard 1 (Choosing Appropriate Assessment Methods)” (Mertler, 2005, p. 54). Given the spread of years between these two studies, Mertler’s (2005) purpose was

to replicate this study to see and compare what the assessment literacy levels were for both pre-service and in-service teachers at the secondary level. He slightly modified the survey instrument used from the earlier studies, but still included 35 total items, comprising 5 items from each of the 7 standards. The results of this follow up study mirror pretty well the results of the earlier studies, with the in-service teachers scoring slightly higher than the pre-service teachers overall in relation to assessment literacy. However, both groups still performed very low on Standard 5 – Teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures that use pupil assessments. Mertler also reports that in-service teachers “often believe that they have not received sufficient training in their undergraduate preparation programs in order to feel comfortable with their skills in making assessment decisions” (p. 62).

Shedding further light on why teachers feel unprepared in regards to their assessment literacy skills, DeLuca and Klinger (2010) explain that “few studies have examined the effects of different pre-service assessment education models on candidates’ readiness to assess students” (p. 420). Perhaps the reason for this is assessment courses are still not the norm in teacher education programs, and perhaps those programs that do offer assessment courses aren’t quite addressing all the needs of pre-service teachers in building their assessment literacy skills.

Contrastingly, Ell et al. (2012) report findings from their study on pre-service teachers’ prior knowledge that pre-service teachers new to the teacher education program could already recognize the same things in student work that in-service teachers would identify when evaluating assessments. Based on the results of their study that pre-service teachers could identify the same things as in-service teachers, they recommend that pre-service teachers be given the opportunity to use formative assessment practices from the beginning of their teacher

education programs so they become more fluent in their assessment and evaluation practices prior to their even entering the classroom as a teacher.

Brookhart (2001) reviewed research on teachers' knowledge and use of assessment. She reviewed studies that used three different methods for their studies: surveys, tests of assessment knowledge, and examination of teachers' actual assessments. She found in her literature review that teachers appear to be better at applying assessments in classroom settings than they are at interpreting results from standardized tests and stated that teachers are in need of more assessment instruction.

Siegel and Wissehr (2011) report in their case study of 11 preservice teachers' assessment literacy that although they were taught and understood multiple ways to use assessment for learning, they failed to apply a variety of assessments to their practice. The writings in their journals and teaching philosophies indicated that they understood the need to align their assessments with learning goals. However, when given the chance to produce their actual assessments, they "reverted to traditional forms of assessment" (p. 371). It is possible that the reason for the pre-service teachers' lack of application from knowledge to practice in this study is because they were not given opportunities to practice what they saw. Shepherd and Mullane (2008) point out that "teachers are more willing than they are able to accurately" (p. 27) assess their students. In their paper, they provide rubrics and guidelines to help teachers learn to use authentic assessment. It is interesting that in their study, there is no actual example of teachers using authentic assessment. The researchers are merely explaining to the pre-service teachers what authentic assessment is and then are expecting them to go and do that. Perhaps the same kind of thing is the cause of the problem in Siegel and Wissehr's (2011) study. They were taught about authentic assessment, through direct instruction. Then, when they were expected to

produce evidence of authentic assessments of their students, they reverted to traditional methods. They concluded that “teacher education programs need to place more emphasis on developing preservice teachers’ assessment literacy so that they are better able to select and implement a variety of appropriate assessments to foster student learning” (Siegel & Wissehr, 2011, p. 27).

These studies have looked at different types of assessment literacy instruction happening in teacher education programs currently. The following section shows empirical findings that paint a picture of how middle school and high school teachers in the United States are awarding grades at present.

Empirical Research

Traditional Grading

Zoeckler (2007) did a case study with thirteen high school English teachers in upstate New York. The study looked at these teachers’ approach to grading, “both in terms of the practical issues of weighting and balance among assignments and in terms of fairness and perceptions of fairness” (p. 89). Zoeckler (2007) found that every teacher used a traditional grading system of points and weights. The teachers also indicated that their grades revealed expectations for their students, the effort of their students, and their students’ attitude. Finally, to some degree, the teachers revealed that they use their grades to help build character among their students.

Bonner and Chen (2009) developed a survey instrument to measure how much teacher candidates endorsed grading practices that deviate from the recommended grading practices referenced above (O’connor, 2011). They found that these teacher candidates’ beliefs of grading practices differed greatly from the recommended literature in the field. For example, they found that most all of them (n. 222 surveyed) endorsed academic enabling grading practices. One third

of candidates felt that grades should only be based on alternative forms of assessment while another third supported grading behavior and reducing grades for things like late work.

Guskey (2011b) performed a very large study looking at the first achievement score on a test in an academic year and the students' final grade for that class. He studied 8,000 high school students' records for an entire academic year. His data came from students enrolled in five southeastern high schools. He found that by and large, the initial test grades that students received for the academic year was a good predictor for their final course grade in the class. One difference he did notice was between boys and girls; while girls' overall first test scores and final course grades remained substantially higher than the boys, the boys final course grades tended to drop below what their first test scores were.

Yost and Wang (2013) conducted a case study involving four secondary student teachers from a university in the southwest and interviewed them prior to the start of their student teaching internships. Specifically, they wanted to find out what preconceptions they had about grading and how their grading habits and philosophies developed over the course of their student teaching internships. Yost and Wang (2013) interviewed the student teachers' cooperating teachers regarding their grading practices and philosophies. They collected graded documents done from both the student teachers and their cooperating teachers. They also had follow up interviews with the student teachers at the end of their internships. Yost and Wang (2013) discovered that they were right in their hypotheses that student teachers' grading practices would reflect very closely the grading practices of their cooperating teachers. Despite each receiving the same assessment literacy and grading practice training in their education courses, each student-teacher differed in their approach to grading during their internships as they instead adopted the grading practices of their cooperating teachers.

Cross and Frary (1999) conducted a study involving 307 middle and high school teachers and 8,664 students – all of which came from the same school system. Their results substantiated what was already known about teachers and their “hodgepodge” grading practices (as introduced by Brookhart (1991) and discussed earlier in Chapter One in relation to the lens of validity theory) to determine grades ranging from effort and behavior to improvement and achievement and everything in between. Of significance is the students’ acceptance of such grading practices: “More important, the students largely confirmed and supported the hodgepodge grading practices reported by their teachers” (Cross & Frary, 1999, p. 53).

It is concerning that current “hodgepodge” grading practices by and large still do not reflect the “widely recommended [grading practices] in measurement texts” (Cross & Frary, 1999, p. 53). In this context, it is important to consider that the educational outlook is continually changing. One district working hard to move away from “hodgepodge” grading practices implemented their own district grading policy that followed many of the agreed upon best grading practices spoken of. Cox (2011) conducted a study in this school district that had recently adopted a grading practice reform. These new practices were: “50% minimal score for a failing grade, retesting without penalty, acceptance of late work, and course-alike, standards-based grading agreements” (p. 67). For the study, Cox (2011) found a team of seven Algebra I teachers who were all implementing the new grading policy. This group was brought together in a group interview and asked questions like, “What are the current grading practices of high implementers as identified by the district, and how do they perceive and explain their decisions regarding student grades?” (p. 71). Another group of 8 teachers was also randomly selected from a group of “course leads” in the district. Course leads are considered to be exemplary teachers in the district who train new teachers on effective instructional practices. Two course

lead teachers from each of the high schools participated in the study to make the group of 8 teachers.

As Cox (2011) predicted, the group of Algebra I teachers did a fantastic job of implementing the district's new grading policy. Working together, they had developed their own policy for their department grading system: "70% tests and 30% teacher discretion. Tests include common assessments and the final exam. An A on the final exam = an A for the course. 'Advanced' or 'Proficient on the California Algebra 1 Standards' test results in raising student grades to a B or an A. Students may retake any test, with the highest score being recorded. The lowest score that a student will get on any test is 50%. Late work is accepted without penalty" (p. 74). The other group could not find any common ground as a group, let alone about how to implement the district grading policy on their own in their classrooms. Only 1 of the 8 teachers in this other group was actually implementing all the components of the new district grading policy.

In addition to school districts like the one spoken of in Cox's (2011) study, the educational grading landscape is also changing in other ways. Standards-based reform has penetrated every corner of this country; following close behind has been the development of standards-based assessments to measure the learning that has taken place in the teaching of these standards. However, the reporting of these standard-based assessments on a curriculum that is now standards-based has proven tricky and difficult using traditional grading practices. In fact, "the focus on standards poses unique challenges in grading and reporting. What are those challenges, and how can educators develop standards-based grading and reports that are accurate, honest, and fair?" (Guskey, 2001b, p. 20).

Regarding grading practice studies in US secondary public schools, Cox (2011) reports “few studies of secondary grading practices have been reported in the last decade as the focus turned toward standards and formative assessment measures. Nevertheless, final course grades continue to play a significant role in high schools and have long-lasting consequences for high school students” (p. 85).

Standards-based Grading

These final empirical studies are related to grading practice reform, i.e. moving in the direction of standards-based grading practices, and include a discussion about how the emphasis on student grading related to CCSS may be encroaching on the more traditional grading practice that involves letter grades.

To better understand these empirical studies, the term *standards-based grading* needs to be defined. Standards-based grading is also known as standardized grading, criterion-referenced grading, and mastery grading. This type of grading focuses on a set of given standards, goals, or criteria that students are expected to master. Standards-based grading is grading that communicates how well a student mastered the standards set forth to master in the given course.

Following are empirical studies on standards-based grading. Rudquist (2012) is a high school teacher who conducted a pedagogical experiment with standards-based grading. At the beginning of his course with his students, he showed them the content standards that they were supposed to learn for that semester. He then dialogued with them about how to grade them on each standard, using a 4 point scale: “1. Doesn’t meet expectations 2. Approaches expectations 3. Meets expectations 4. Exceeds expectations. If a student essentially ‘answers the question,’ he would receive a three.” (p. 70). Collaboratively working with his students, they decided how to be graded on each standard. A few standards they lumped together to receive one grade; other

standards were sub-divided into smaller parts and thus would receive multiple grades – one for each sub-division of the standard. Throughout the course, he employed an innovative pedagogical approach that he called “standards-based grading with voice.” This approach required the students to regularly justify their learning by submitting with every assignment some sort of individual voice aspect that allows them to describe how they’re meeting the standards. They could do screencasts, pencasts, and in-person oral assessments in class to demonstrate their voice with the standards-based grading system. There is not much “empirical” data to show if this was effective or not. However, he does provide anecdotal insight to his approach. He explained that standards-based grading was a new concept for his students in general and required a lot of discussion, but he found it valuable to discuss on the first day of class what they should learn and explaining to them the many opportunities they’d have during the semester to demonstrate that learning.

In another standards-based grading study, Deddeh, Main, and Fulkerson (2010) explain how they taught a group of teachers the differences between standards-based grading and traditional grading. They then gave them step-by-step instructions on how to transition from traditional grading practices to standards-based grading practices. Finally, they report on the findings in how the final grades differed in comparison to standardized-unit test scores.

The eight steps that Deddeh, Main, and Fulkerson (2010) give as necessary to consider when adopting standards-based grading practices are: 1- Educate yourself. Learn more about standards-based grading practices. 2- Don’t journey into unfamiliar water alone. 3- Chart a course. 4- Organize instruction. 5- Practice comes first. Differentiate between practice (formative assessments) and producing the skill after practice sessions (summative assessments). 6-Evaluate the performance. 7- Give second chances. 8-Keep records. Old grade books won’t

work as a spot for the grades because there is not enough room in each column to list the data needs for standards-based grading too.

The results of the middle school teachers' implementation of standards-based grading practices are telling. The teachers reported how much more time-consuming it was. They had not realized the complexities that actually went into one grade and what a grade should actually convey. Although the authors of this study do not cite any empirical evidence for their findings, they do quote the teachers when they report these statistics: "We learned that, when traditional grading was used, students earning a C in class had standardized unit test scores ranging from 47% to 94%. After switching to standards-based grading, students earning a C in class have standardized unit test scores ranging only from 63% to 78%" (Deddah, Main, & Fullerton, 2010, p. 9).

These empirical studies on standards-based grading practices are few in number; yet it is important to note that all of these studies on standards-based grading practices have been published within the last three and a half years. This is an emerging topic that has great importance in the field of education today – especially in light of the standards-based reform movement of the past quarter century and the powerful influence of the new Common Core State Standards. One final study that shows just how important standards-based grading is becoming is the "Kentucky Initiative". Kentucky was the first to adopt the Common Core State Standards (Ripley, 2013), and they are now the first to lead the way with a state-wide initiative to implement standards-based grading practices in both elementary and secondary schools. Guskey, Jung, and Swan (2011) explain that the initiative is a study that looks at the results of a pilot study on the use of a new report card – a standards-based report card being implemented in

several districts and schools throughout the state of Kentucky. This new report card differs in that it does not include traditional letter grades (ABCDF) on the report card.

Surveys were sent to both teachers and parents after the implementation of the standards-based reporting system and these are the findings: “Teachers were nearly unanimous in agreeing that the standards-based reports provided better and clearer information, and that families found them easy to understand” (Guskey, Jung, & Swan, 2011, p. 56). Teachers also indicated that while completing these new standards-based report cards took a lot more time, they are of the opinion that the quality of information they provide is worthwhile. Parents’ opinions mirrored the teachers and “by a wide margin, families favored the standards-based form over the traditional form” (p. 56). A limitation to this study is that although the schools implemented these standards-based report cards, the parents and students still demanded that the regular letter grades also be assigned for now due to the need for GPAs that would determine college applications and scholarships. So, in addition to these standards-based report cards, traditional grades (ABCDF) were also reported. The limitation is in not knowing the answer to this question: What would have been the results of the study had the parents not also had the letter grade to indicate how their student was performing? Would they have been as satisfied?

Summary

This chapter has looked at what grades are and the history of education in the United States as it pertains to how grading practices have evolved. With compulsory attendance laws being in effect in every state for the last century, it is reasonable to assume that every person in the country has experience of being graded in school. It is also reasonable to assume that these experiences differ greatly from one person to the next because every teacher use their own “hodgepodge” methods for determining grades based on what they feel the grade should include,

instead of following widely recommended best practices for grading. Referencing back to chapter one, a key piece for these varied grading practices stems from the fact that assessment instruction, and more specifically grading practice instruction, is a missing component in teacher education programs, as well as in in-service professional development courses.

As the standards-based movement continues to evolve, including in the direction of standards-based grading practices like in the state of Kentucky, teacher education programs need to make a greater concentrated effort in addressing assessment practices in education, and more specifically, grading practices in education. To help teacher educators begin or better teach their students about assessment, specifically in reference to grading, it is important to first understand what their students have already learned about grading. In order to be prepared to meet these needs, teacher educators need to know how beginning teachers in their first year of teaching are learning to assign grades; i.e. how they are learning grading practices for themselves that haven't been taught in pre-service courses. Knowing about this grading-practice phenomenon will help teacher educators to better meet the needs of their students as they try to prepare them for the world of teaching in this modern era of standards-based reform.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The first two chapters of this dissertation have provided a foundation for understanding the complexities involved with grading. They have provided a conceptual and theoretical framework that guided this research study, and they have reviewed the empirical data relating to grading practices.

Chapter three begins with a general discussion of the phenomenological methodology used in this dissertation study. It then reviews the purpose for the study and states the research questions for the study. Finally, it discusses the role of the researcher and the participants, as well as the data collection and analyses processes as viewed through phenomenology methodology.

During the first two chapters of this dissertation, I have written in third person. However, as I present the methodology I used and the results I received throughout the study, I will use first person in a more narrative style of writing. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explain a shift that has occurred over the last quarter century when writing qualitative research reports, which is to use first person rather than third person. One reason for this is, “that the use of ‘I’ is more honest and direct” (pp. 190-191). They also state:

Using “the researcher” is thought in many circles to be pretentious and is a device, which has since backfired, to gain authority. Another is that the use of “the researcher” connotes an objectivity that does not really exist. Since individual people with particular points of view designed and carried out the research, that should be reflected in the writing. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 191).

I feel that it is important to follow these recommendations, so as to allow for a “fuller” truth to emerge in the presentation of the data. Therefore, for chapters three and four, I will write from the first person perspective. I will return to the third person style of writing when I present the discussion in Chapter 5.

Methodological Approach

This qualitative study uses a methodology known as phenomenology. The central focus of a phenomenological study is a common shared and lived experience, also known as a phenomenon (Creswell, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The purpose of this study is to look at how first-year teachers have learned to grade and therefore a phenomenological study is appropriate since these teachers share this same lived experience. Using a phenomenological analysis, this study first discovers the experiences of these student teachers and then analyzes them through eight different levels of analysis to find a deeper, more common understanding of the experience of learning to grade, also known as a statement of essences (Moustakas, 1994).

Qualitative Analysis in General

Johnson and Christiansen (2008) explain that the goal of qualitative research is to examine, in full detail, behavior as it happens in its natural setting using a deep- and wide-angle lens, “examining the breadth and depth of phenomena to learn more about them” (p. 34). The experience of first-year teachers learning to grade is a phenomenon. This is not a new experience, nor is it an experience that will be soon fading away into the past. Therefore, by using a qualitative approach to this study, it has given first-year teachers a chance to share their voices. This qualitative study on first-year teachers’ experiences of learning to grade provides in-depth, rich descriptions of the evolution from novice teachers learning to grade to more experienced teachers becoming comfortable with the task of assigning grades.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the qualitative method of research that studies the experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2008; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The participants in this study are all first-year teachers who are experiencing the phenomenon of learning to grade. Within this phenomenon of learning to grade are: 1) the experiences that these teachers brought with them from their own experiences of being graded as a student, 2) the degree of instruction they received on grading, if at all, that most likely would have been embedded in either a methods or an assessment course, and 3) the involvement of their school, department, and/or colleagues in guiding them on their grading practices. Because phenomenology is used to analyze and describe experiences (Creswell, 2008; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011), it is the appropriate and preferred methodology for looking at the experiences of first-year teachers as they learn to grade.

This study sought “to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of the lived experience [of how first-year teachers learn to grade]: ‘how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others’” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 19). Phenomenology studies often involve several lengthy, in-depth interviews with participants who have direct experience with the phenomenon of interest (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Johnson and Christensen (2008) explain that it is important for qualitative researchers to “get close” to their participants so they can experience for themselves the subjective nature of the phenomena they are studying. They also point out that “the researcher is said to be the ‘instrument of data collection.’ Rather than using a standardized instrument or measuring device, the qualitative researcher asks the questions, collects the data, makes the interpretations, and records what is observed” (p. 36). Moustakas (1994) carefully points out the need for me, as the

researcher, to clear all value judgments and thoughts about the phenomenon out of the mind. This is important so that I am not influenced by my prior knowledge or experience with the phenomenon at hand. This process is known as Epoche. “Thus the Epoche gives us an original vantage point, a clearing of mind, space, and time” (p. 86).

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of how teachers learn to assess, and more specifically, how they learn to grade. It is my goal, as the researcher and author of this study, to inform teacher educators and in-service professional development instructors how and what teachers are currently learning to grade and how these practices relate to the recommendations by assessment and grading specialists. The intent of this study is not to propose a method of providing assessment instruction, but rather to inform programs of how new teachers are negotiating their task of learning to grade. However, this study can also serve as valuable and needed insight for policy makers to consider as they deliberate new laws and requirements regulating teacher training and teacher licensure.

The need for this study is great because there is not a clear purpose for assessment literacy instruction in neither pre-service programs nor in in-service professional development programs (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Mertler, 2005; Popham, 2009). If pre-service and in-service programs know how and what first-year teachers are grading, they can develop curriculum for pre-service programs and in-service professional development programs to help new teachers learn about effective and recommended grading practices in light of what is currently being done.

Research Questions

This research study will have one question that serves as the premise for the study. Other ancillary questions will serve to guide the researcher in the data collection process with the participants to better answer the main question. The use of these other questions will provide the participants the opportunity of giving their most full and complete answers as possible that will serve to address the main question.

Main Question:

How do new first-year teachers decide how to assign grades?

Ancillary Questions:

- What experiences have teachers had that helped them to learn about grading?
- How do teachers' grading practices relate to explicit instruction they received on grading practices?
- In what ways have teachers learned about grading during their first-year as a teacher?
- How are they applying this new knowledge to their teaching/grading practice?
- And, in what ways have they learned about grading practices from their peers/colleagues?

Through the answers to these questions, it is anticipated that teacher educators, policy makers, school leaders, and teachers in general will have empirical data to guide instructional development of grading practice instruction to incorporate in teacher education programs and in-service teacher professional development courses. By understanding the phenomenon of how

new teachers learn to grade, those called upon to work with them to provide guidance on how to grade will know where to base their instruction.

Approach to Study

This study is a phenomenology study, which looks at a shared experience or phenomenon common to a group of people (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) explain that, “researchers in the phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations” (p. 23). The phenomenon in this study involves first-year teachers learning how to grade students. Providing background knowledge for this phenomenon, DeLuca and Bellara (2013) advise that the assessment literacy of teacher candidates coming out of college is inadequate.

Looking back only a few years, Stiggins (1999) reports there were only 25 states that even mentioned any kind of competence of assessment as a requirement for teacher certification or licensure. Despite this lack of requirements, it can be assumed that teacher education programs for certification or licensure in states not yet requiring this were still providing some form of assessment literacy instruction. The problem though lies in the fact that each state and each program within each state provides differing depth levels of coverage on this topic. On this wise, Mertler (2005) reports that in-service teachers feel uncomfortable with their skills for making assessment decisions coming out of their undergraduate preparation programs. Thus, first-year teachers experience the dilemma of learning to determine how to award student grades because of their lack of preparation during college. This common experience or phenomenon is something that teachers must learn to navigate.

While first-year teachers can rely on past experience from being graded, or from assigning grades for assignments of students during student teaching, first-year teachers also

encounter at least two unique situations that they are not exposed to as student teachers. The first situation is being accountable for grades as their name is the teacher of record name for report cards and transcripts. The second is that their grading practices often are the intersection for what shows up at home between home and school. For example, grading programs that are accessible to parents often become a primary means of communication for parents to learn about their child's progress in school. Because navigating these situations is a phenomenon that all first-year teachers' experience, a phenomenological study is the best method to study and research the questions outlined for this study.

Data Collection Procedures

Setting

This study took place in the Jenrok School District (JSD) located in the southwestern part of the United States. (All names of people and places in the study are pseudonyms). This school district currently has 7 high schools, 5 middle schools (grades 8 & 9), 5 intermediate schools (grades 6 & 7), and 22 elementary schools. I have worked in JSD since 2007 and have established positive relations with several key personnel in the school district that aided me in recruiting participants for the study.

Participants and Rationale for Participant Sample

Participants for this study came from new hires that are first-year teachers teaching at the secondary level in the JSD. The rationale for working only with secondary teachers is because the reporting systems of grades (i.e. report cards) differ between the elementary and secondary levels. In an effort to help teacher educators learn about how teachers learn to grade, it will serve the study well to focus on a group that shares this common experience of grading in a secondary

setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Additionally, since the researcher works in an elementary school in JSD and not a secondary school, there was no conflict of interest.

Purposeful sampling was done for this study. Purposeful sampling is a research term associated with qualitative methods (Creswell, 2008). In purposeful sampling, the investigators select certain individuals and/or sites *on purpose* to understand and learn more about the central phenomenon. Since the central phenomenon in this study is how first-year teachers learn to assign and give grades, the participants were recruited from the pool of first-year secondary teachers in the JSD.

Efforts were made to seek teachers of these two mathematics and English Language Arts only so that there would be a greater chance for themes to develop. Furthermore, Creswell (2008) explains that it is typically better to keep fewer individuals in a qualitative study so as to provide a more in-depth picture of the study, so for this study, I sought to recruit three or four participants for each of the two subjects, bringing the total number of participants to six to eight. I also sought, if possible, to have at least one male and one female chosen for each subject. In addition, older participants (those who did not complete college right out of high school) were also sought after to provide a clearer picture of first-year teachers' experiences of learning to grade.

To recruit potential candidates to participate in the study, I held an informal open house for the list of possible participants at the public library where refreshments were provided. Additionally, emails were sent and phone calls were made to each potential candidate. As candidates agreed to participate in the study, I received positive commitments from 3 English Language Arts first-year teachers in JSD, but only 2 mathematics first-year teachers in the school district. This was very discouraging for me because I had exhausted every means at trying to

commit other potential candidates that taught mathematics to participate in the study. I considered two alternatives: reaching out to other first-year secondary teachers of other subjects, such as science or history, or to broaden the recruitment pool to include second year teachers of mathematics.

Fortunately, as I had begun the interviews with other participants, some of them inquired if there were enough participants for the study. When I indicated I was still searching for one more secondary first-year math teacher, they explained that they had a friend that had just completed his 1st year of teaching in a school district located in the Midwest part of the United States. He had gone through the same teacher education program as some of them, but had moved out-of-state to take a first-year teaching job. However, he had just been hired in JSD for his 2nd year of teaching and had recently moved back to the area. His contact information was provided and he was also contacted and he agreed to participate in the study.

Having reached the desired range for participants, I concluded my recruitment efforts. This brought the total number of participants to six – three in each subject area of English Language Arts and mathematics. Also, there were two female first-year teachers and one male first-year teacher in each group. Finally, one of the six participants was older and was currently going through an ARL program for teacher licensure. Thus, each goal of the purposeful sampling criteria was satisfied.

Data Sources, Collection, and Timeline

Phenomenology is a method that utilizes in-depth interviewing. The purpose behind these interviews is to reveal a common shared experience or phenomenon of a group of people (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Interviews.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) explain that three interviews comprise phenomenological inquiry. The first interview looks at past experience in regards to the phenomenon at hand. The second interview looks at the present experience, and the third interview combines the other two narratives to “describe the individual’s essential experience with the phenomenon” (p. 148).

For each of the participants in the study, three in-depth interviews were conducted, as described above. The first focused on the first-year teachers’ experiences with grading prior to their current teaching assignment. That is, they were asked to describe their associations with grading during their student-teaching experiences, their time as a student receiving grades themselves, their perceptions of grades and their purposes, and any instruction they may have received at college regarding grading practices.

The second interview discussed their current situation as a first-year teacher and how they are learning to give grades as part of their job assignment. How and what they are grading are also discussed in depth in this interview.

The third and final interview made connections to the teachers’ prior experience with grading practices and their current involvement, as they become the person to assign the grades and assume the accountability that accompanies this responsibility.

For the most part, interviews were scheduled about one week apart with each participant; however, due to logistical reasons, some candidates needed to do two or more interviews on the same day to accommodate their schedules. All interviews were conducted toward the end of the participant’s first year of teaching so as to maximize the richness of the data collection – since the goal of this study was to describe the phenomenon of first-year teachers learning to grade. The goal was not to describe their process of learning to grade in only the first half of the year.

So while this was a monumental task to undertake all 18 interviews during a single month, I felt that this would allow the data to be more complete than it otherwise would have been. Table 1 shows the pseudonym for each participant, the subject and grade level they taught, and the dates for each of their three interviews.

Table 1: First-year Teachers/Participants' Pseudonyms

Participant	Subject/Grades Taught	Date of 1 st Interview	Date of 2 nd Interview	Date of 3 rd Interview
Amber	Math (10 th -12 th)	May 5, 2015	May 11, 2015	May 13, 2015
Catherine	ELA (8 th -9 th)	May 7, 2015	May 21, 2015	May 22, 2015
Jason	ELA (10 th -12 th)	May 20, 2015	May 20, 2015	May 20, 2015
Jovina	ELA (10 th -12 th)	May 7, 2015	May 13, 2015	May 18, 2015
Katie	Math (10 th -12 th)	May 9, 2015	May 16, 2015	May 23, 2015
Trevor	Math (6 th -7 th)	May 19, 2015	May 19, 2015	May 20, 2015

Data Collection.

Data collection was done digitally as each interview was recorded using the digital recording program, Audacity. Audacity is an audio only recording program. It was on two separate laptop devices running simultaneously to ensure a back-up version would be available, if needed. All interviews were saved and will be kept secure from others on my personal computers. Interviews recorded in Audacity were transcribed using Transcribe, an online Internet application that facilitates a person to transcribe everything using the same web browser and web page. Finally, this data was converted into input for Atlas.ti., a research analysis software program that was used to help me generate codes and themes that describe the data.

Timeline.

Table 2 illustrates the timeline I used in moving the study forward and completing the research, data analysis, and ensuing write up of this study.

Table 2: Research Timeline

Time	Action
November 12, 2014	Defend Proposal for Dissertation
January 2015 and February 2015	Complete IRB process for approval
March 2015	Receive IRB approval
April 2015	Begin Recruitment Methods
May 2015	Begin and Finish Interviews, rounds 1-3. Usually one interview per day. Also, begin transcribing interviews.
June 2015	Finish transcribing interviews. Begin analysis and coding process.
July 2015	Complete analysis of all interviews and generate themes and statement of essence. Complete study and dissertation write up.
August 14, 2015	Defend Dissertation

Phenomenological Interviews

Phenomenological interviews are in-depth interviews and serve as a central focus and primary source for data collection in a Phenomenology study (Creswell, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). For this study, 18 separate phenomenological interviews were conducted. Moustakas (1994) explains, “The phenomenological interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions” (p. 114).

All interviews were conducted in an informal setting at the local public library in a private study room. Interviews varied in length from 30 minutes to 1 hour each. All interviews were conducted during May 2015, which was at the end of the school year for these first-year teachers. This was an optimal time to interview them because they truly had just lived this experience of learning to grade. Each participant had completed several grading periods and was in the midst of completing their final grading period of the year.

I followed a specific line of questioning for each round of interviews. These three interview protocols can be found in Appendix A, Appendix B, and Appendix C. However, Moustakas (1994) wisely notes that, “although the primary researcher may in advance develop a series of questions aimed at evoking a comprehensive account of the person’s experience of the phenomenon, these are varied, altered, or not used at all” (p. 114). Such was the case in this study when I asked either follow up questions or completely new ones as a result of the participants’ previous answers.

It should be noted that while I occasionally varied from the interview protocol to ask other questions, each question – both those on the interview protocol, and those I asked in the moment – were questions that were designed to draw out answers to the research study questions, as well as questions that built upon the theoretical frameworks of the constructivist theory and validity theory. Often times, follow up questions were also asked to elicit clarification for me as I looked to identify any patterns that were beginning to manifest themselves across the spectrum of all the first-year teachers participating in the study.

As each round of interviews progressed with the six participants, I found I was asking certain questions in a slightly different way so as to draw out a more detailed response from the participant. Additionally, I discovered other untapped areas to discuss that the interview protocol did not directly specify, so I made a note to not only ask the particular participant in the moment, but to write down the question and ask it of the other participants as well. Therefore, the interview protocols served as a general guide rather than a strict set of questions to stick to. Thus, these interviews became a safe haven for participants to share their thoughts on grading, which ultimately became the source for very rich, meaningful, and descriptive data to be used in this study.

Data Analysis

As I mentioned earlier, data analyses were facilitated with the program Atlas.ti. Atlas.ti was chosen as the data analysis software choice because I spent time reading reviews of different types of qualitative data software programs and felt that Atlas.ti would best meet my needs. Once Atlas.ti was chosen, I then began watching YouTube videos featuring the different functions of Atlas.ti so that I could begin using the new software effectively.

Once I learned how to navigate Atlas.ti, I began to analyze my data by utilizing Moustakas' (1994) principles of phenomenological research, which are: 1) Epoche; 2) Phenomenological Reduction; 3) Imaginative Variation; and 4) Synthesis of Meanings and Essences. Figure 1 illustrates the systematic order in which the data analysis follows.

Figure 1: Major Processes of Phenomenological Research Data Analysis



The first step is the Epoche. This is my opportunity to describe my experience with the phenomenon, and then try to set my experiences and biases aside and allow the data to present itself. The next step is Phenomenological Reduction. In this process, which is a multi-layer analysis, I look at the written data and describe it layer by layer. This process allows me to develop descriptions that present varying aspects of the unfolding phenomenon. Moustakas' (1994) third principle is Imaginative Variation. In this stage of the data analysis process, I am able to creatively apply my interpretations with the data to generate themes. "In this there is a

free play of fancy; any perspective is a possibility and is permitted to enter into consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). The last remaining major process, or step, of phenomenological research data analysis is Synthesis of Meanings and Essences. It is in this stage that the emerging data is synthesized into a statement of essences. This statement of essences is generalizable in such a way that it describes the phenomenon, or the shared lived experience, of all the participants in the study.

It is important to remember that typically, a phenomenological study does not tell just any specific one person’s story (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, pp. 19-20). Rather, it collectively uses the individual stories of all participants to generate themes and ideas that are common to all who share the experience of the phenomenon. Therefore, the results of this dissertation study should resonate with many other teachers who have also lived the shared experience, or phenomenon, of learning to grade. Sartre’s 1965 work (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) says it this way, “The essence finally is radically severed from the individual appearance which manifests it, since on principle it is that which must be able to be manifested by an infinite series of individual manifestations” (p. 100).

Role of the Researcher

As the author of this study, I follow the general model of qualitative researchers (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In addition to being the author, I also am the sole researcher on this study. I developed all data collection methods and materials, including recruitment methods, consent forms, and interview protocols. I also collected all the data on my own, including doing all of the interviews, research memos, etc. Likewise, I am the sole person that conducted the analysis of the data, beginning first with the transcribing of the interviews, then converting the transcriptions into Atlas.ti to analyze the interviews and code it in a way that allowed themes to

be generated about the emerging data. Finally, as the researcher, I had the ultimate responsibility of interpreting the data into a meaningful, valid, and reliable synopsis of the lived experience of learning to grade as I described this phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) sensibly points out that the “synthesis represents the essences at a particular time and place from the vantage point of an individual researcher following an exhaustive imaginative and reflective study of the phenomenon [meaning that] the essences of any experience are never totally exhausted” (p. 100). Therefore, my interpretation of the data and presentation of the statement of essences may be valid and representative of the participants’ experiences, but because I am an individual researcher, there may be other interpretations that would be equally valid and representative (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2008; Moustakas, 1994).

Epoche

As the sole researcher in this study, I knew that I would become very involved in the study. Additionally, I have already developed a strong opinion on the topic of grading as I have studied this subject in depth for several years. Therefore, it is necessary to try and remove myself and my personal biases on the subject from the study as much as possible. Moustakas (1994) asserts that “although the Epoche is rarely perfectly achieved, the energy, attention, and work involved in reflection and self-dialogue, the intention that underlies the process, and the attitude and frame of reference, significantly reduce the influence of preconceived thoughts, judgments, and biases” (p. 90).

It was therefore necessary that I write my own Epoche, a piece of writing that allows me to describe and then attempt to put aside my own experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2008; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) states that, “the challenge of the Epoche is to be transparent to ourselves, to allow whatever is before us in consciousness to disclose itself so that

we may see with new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner” (p. 86). In preparing my own Epoche, I describe my chronological experiences of learning to grade – dating from my childhood to the present, covering a wide range of experiences, e.g. as a student, teacher, and emerging researcher. The following is my Epoche:

My first recollection of receiving grades is from 2nd or 3rd grade when my Dad encouraged me to earn all As on my report card because if I did, he would pay me \$1 for each A earned. As I grew older, I remember in the 6th and 7th grades eagerly anticipating the results of our averaged grades on report cards to be published in the local newspaper for the Honor Roll. For example, our GPAs (Grade Point Averages) were not published, but rather our actual percentage grade averages (e.g. if I had a 100% in math, a 99% in English, a 98% in Science, a 99% in History, and a 100% in P.E., my cumulative average for the report card period would be 99.2). Each time report cards were sent home, any students averaging 90.0 or above would be published in the newspaper for all to see their achievements. I prided myself on being the top boy in my grade on several occasions, although I was always outdone by at least 3 or 4 girls who scored higher overall averages. My only other lasting memory of being graded from my K-12 experience was in the 9th grade with Ms. Wright, which I wrote about in the first pages of this dissertation proposal.

Although I don’t have any more specific memories of being graded, I do know how I felt on a broader scale about my grades that I received. As a senior in high school, I recall great pleasure in earning Academic All-State honors in baseball for maintaining a high GPA. Additionally, I know that I received certain scholarships in high school as a direct result of my GPA.

However, it was not until I began my pre-service education coursework that I started to actively think about my own philosophies for how grading should be done. The major catalyst for me in developing my own grading philosophy is a direct result of the assessment course that I had to take. My professor was from New Zealand where they utilize a standards-based grading system for the entire country K-13. This professor not only taught us about standards-based grading and its benefits, but he also graded us on standards established for the course. There were multiple students in my section who had failed the course twice already because they couldn't demonstrate mastery on one of the standards for the course. This act alone created a paradigm shift in my way of thinking – since I was accustomed to averages of assignments comprising a final grade, in which case these students would have passed the course the first time they took it. Instead, they were required to re-enroll multiple times until they could demonstrate mastery of all standards required in the course.

Another powerful learning experience at this time came when I was talking to a good friend who happened to also be a professor in a different department at the university. He told me of a recent conference he had attended out of state. During his trip he had planned to grade one class' five-page research papers. However, he was tired of grading for that semester, so he decided to conveniently leave them on the airplane when he got off – thus not having to grade them at all. I realized then and there that “hodgepodge” grading practices exist and that I didn't want to be associated with that kind of grading practice during my career. Therefore, during my student teaching, I sought permission from my cooperating teacher to allow me to develop my units to be

graded using standards-based grading methods. This was a great chance for me to practice what I had learned.

Unfortunately, when I began my first-year of teaching, I was in a new state and learning the new curriculum. Additionally, there was no direct support for me to implement my standards-based grading strategies that I had employed during student teaching. And, since I was now the teacher of record, it was expected of me to grade in the traditional ABCDF methods that was/still is so common today.

Therefore, I started grading against how I wanted to grade because the school climate and culture were not ready for a change like this to happen. As a result of this, I had to learn how and what to grade in the traditional sense. I remember giving out worksheets on concepts I had taught. If the worksheet had 20 problems, the assignment was worth 20 points. If it had more questions, it was worth more points, etc. I didn't weight any of my grades, so sometimes I had a summative assessment worth 100 points that was only worth a few more points than an assignment with lots of questions. As I got into grading each worksheet, I realized I spent hours and hours and hours grading worksheets and tests during my first few months of teaching. I quickly realized that I needed to do something different. I stopped grading worksheets problem-by-problem, question-by-question. Thus, I changed mid-year how I was grading assignments. I had become one of those teachers that used "hodgepodge" grading practices to meet my needs.

I have personally fought this idea that I have to convert my grades to ABCDF at the end of grading periods when I'd much rather assign grades of meets the standard, exceeds the standard, approaching the standard, or does not meet it at all. But in reality, I

have for the most part kept my grading in line with what has been traditionally done with grading. I feel like a hypocrite at times because I profess my philosophy to be with standards-based grading, yet I don't practice what I so strongly believe.

When I began working on my doctorate degree four years ago, I quickly came to know the topic that would consume my research and studying for my career as a doctoral student. This topic was on grading. I knew and still know that how teachers grade has a huge effect on students' self-esteem, perceived self-worth, and motivation to keep trying to learn. Therefore, I wanted to learn all I could about grading so that one day I might position myself in a way to contribute more meaningfully to this topic to help future teachers, educators, and students learn how to grade and what grading can be done.

During my studies at UNLV, I have taken advantage of opportunities to extend myself as a graduate student. Twice I have written proposals for the AERA (American Education Research Association) annual conference. Both times I have had my proposals accepted. My first study I conducted and subsequently presented at AERA was about pre-service teachers and their perceptions of daily assessment and grading practices in student teaching. During this study, I recruited four student teachers and interviewed them prior to the start of their student teaching semester about their beliefs and perceptions of daily assessments and grading practices. As the student teaching semester progressed, I collected artifacts to support or negate the things that the student teachers had shared during their first interview. I also met with their cooperating teachers who had also given consent to participate in the study, and asked them about their ideas on daily assessments and grading practices. Then, upon the completion of the student teaching internships, I interviewed the student teachers again following the same

interview protocol as in their first interviews. What I discovered was that for the most part, the practices of the student teachers had evolved from their initial ideas discussed in the first interviews to practices that mirrored the daily assessment and grading practice habits and philosophies of their cooperating teachers. These results supported other findings in regards to how student teachers learn to teach, which is that they commonly adopt the practices modeled for them by their cooperating teachers (Yost & Wang, 2013).

Having had such a positive experience presenting on this research after only a year and half of my doctoral studies, I was encouraged to submit another proposal to AERA for the following year. Fortunately, as I had wrapped up the research for my first study, I received commitments from each of the four student teachers to continue our study if they each procured first-year teaching jobs the following year. Each participant did gain employment as a first-year teacher across three cities in two different states. I made road trips to their new schools to conduct a follow up study and presented at AERA again the following year, this time highlighting a longitudinal study looking at these same four teachers, now as first-year teachers, and what their perceptions of daily assessment and grading practices were. I used the same data collection tools, looking at artifacts that supported their grading practice habits, as well as the same interview protocol that I had used during their student teaching. My findings during this second study were that they graded nearly identical to how they had graded during student teaching.

Both of these studies are completely separate from this study in that there is no data used or anything else from the first two studies that connect to this dissertation study. However, it is important to consider how the information learned in these two studies has continued to influence my own ideas about grading practices. Thus, I felt the need to

include a brief description of these studies in my Epoche because they have contributed to my own feelings and biases on the subject.

It is important to note that although I have gone through this Epoche process prior to beginning the data collection, I need to be ready to revisit my Epoche and add to it and/or modify it as necessary. The reason for this is because as I, the researcher, get so involved in the research and stories of the participants, I will undoubtedly make new connections to my own feelings, thoughts, and biases. Moustakas (1994) explains that “every time a distorted thought or feeling enters, the abstention must once again be achieved until there is an open consciousness” (p. 89). Therefore, as I present the results of the research in Ch. 4 and Ch. 5, I will return to my Epoche. Here I will refer to parts of my Epoche, adding to it and/or modifying it as needed so as to return to a state of open consciousness as much as possible in evaluating the experiences of the participants.

Analytic Memos

Analytic Memos are memos that I wrote during the course of the data collection and analysis process. These memos also served as future data to be considered and analyzed and provided key insights into the phenomenon of first-year teachers learning to grade. “Writing notes, reflective memos, thoughts, and insights is invaluable for generating the unusual insights that move the analysis from the mundane and obvious to the creative” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 213). One example of a research memo that I wrote after one round of analysis illustrates my feelings of connectivity to what the first-year teacher was sharing. I titled my memo, “I graded like that too.” As I wrote the memo, I was reflective of the process too because originally I disagreed with the teacher’s grading practice; then as I realized I graded like that too,

I began to consider the root of the reason for why I graded like that. Here is the memo that shows my reflective thought processes:

So, this has to do with Jovina's 2nd interview. She was talking, in quote 11.5, about how she weights her gradebook with assessments and assignments, etc. She then said this:

...But then the certain, like nice-to-knows, if a student wasn't there that day... maybe, I won't include it in their final grade. If it was just a reflection, or something, then I'll just mark it as a student exempt. Then it doesn't go for or against them. (Quote 11.5)

So, she exempted students on nice-to-know assignments if they were absent instead of having them make up the work. That quote spoke loudly to me because It goes against my philosophy of, Why are we teaching it if they don't need to know it? Or, why are we assessing it if they don't need to know it? But yet, I remember exempting students' grades too for the very same reason.

So if that goes against my philosophy, why did I assign certain assignments and/or assessments to be graded, and then casually just exempt students from needing to complete them if they weren't there? Perhaps the real reason is that it doesn't go against my true philosophy at all. Since my true philosophy is rooted in the idea of standards-based grading, then not penalizing a kid for being absent and missing an assignment during class falls right in line with my philosophy. In a true standards-based grading system, it is not about the number (or percentage) of assignments or assessments a student completes. Rather, it is about whether or not the student can demonstrate mastery of the core standards for the course. If a student is absent and misses the assignment or

assessment, but is able to still demonstrate mastery through other assignments and assessments of the same standards, then there is no point in making the student suffer on their grade for missing work.

So, did Jovina really go against my philosophy? Maybe. Maybe not. Did I go against my own philosophy too? Now that I have cause to reflect on the situation, I don't think I actually did. What did happen is reflecting on Jovina's experience strengthened my already firm belief that educational measurement reporting, aka giving final grades, needs to shift from traditional letter grades to standards-based grading.

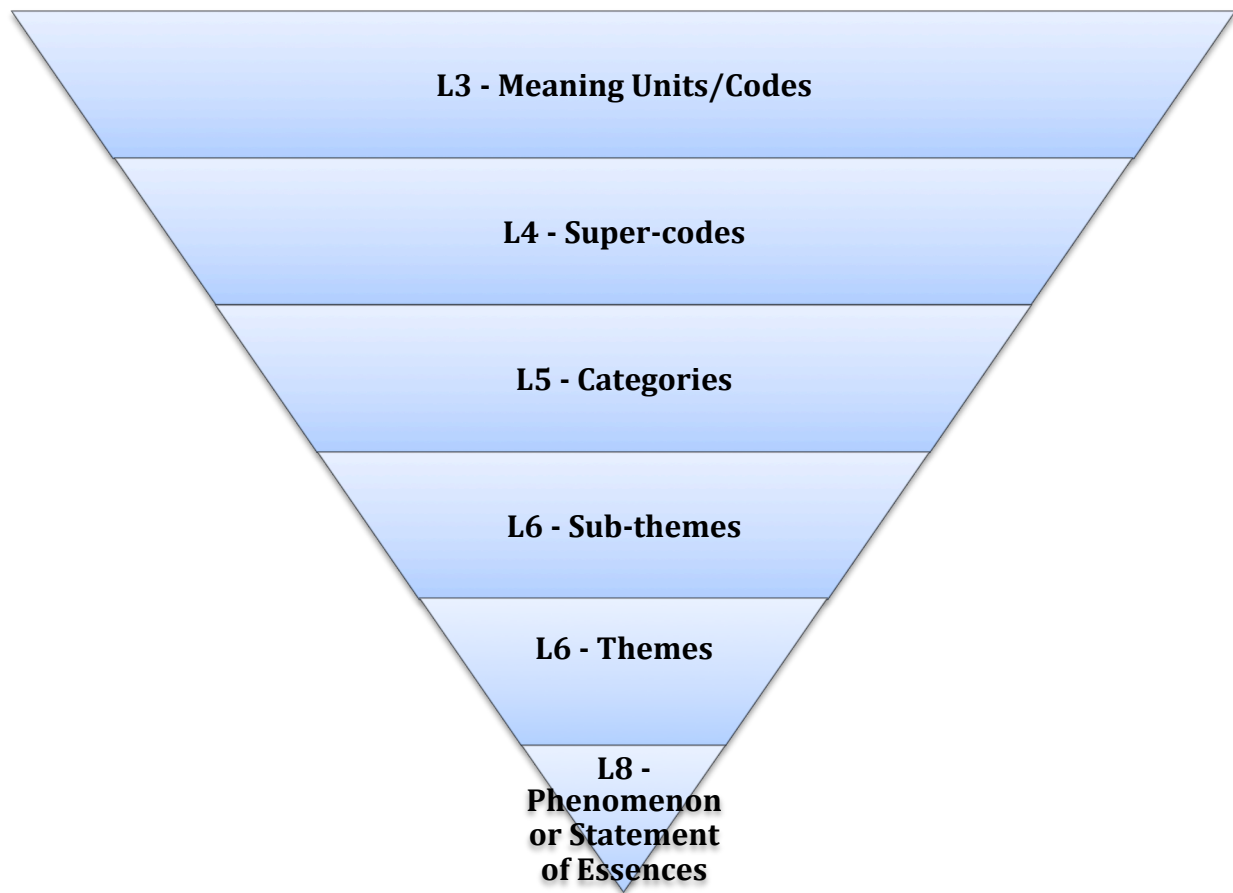
Through the use of this analytic memo, I was able to infer, based on my own experience, that at the very core, this is an issue rooted in standards-based grading. Thus, while not explicitly labeled as such, I was able to add this to the other data points that also were given the code of Standards-Based Grading.

Phenomenological Reduction

As I completed the data collection process that comprised 18, 30-60 minute interviews, and then subsequently transcribed them as a starting point to analyze the data, it became evident very quickly for the need to complete a data reduction process. Each transcribed interview comprised roughly 14-20 single-spaced pages of raw data. Multiply that by 18 interviews and that becomes hundreds of pages of raw interview data. In order to create meaningful information from this abundance of data, and thus describe the phenomenon of learning to grade, I undertook the process of phenomenological reduction. Figure 2 shows how I made use of two of Moustakas' (1994) principles of phenomenology research that I introduced earlier in this chapter: Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variance. I will refer to Figure 2 often throughout

both Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 as I continue to explain in detail the methods employed for my data analysis.

Figure 2: Process of Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variance with Outcomes of Data and Associated Levels



Moustakas (1994) explains the process of phenomenological reduction “involves a prereflective description of things just as they appear and a reduction to what is horizontal and thematic” (p. 91). A pre-reflective description implies that the data needs to be coded in a way

so as to look at it just the way it appears. Doing this allowed me to begin to reduce the data, as well as to see new perspectives. Moustakas (1994) remarks:

When the looking and noticing and looking again is complete a more definitely *reflective* process occurs, aimed at grasping the full nature of a phenomenon. To some extent each reflection modifies conscious experience and offers a different perspective of the object.
(p. 93)

In order for this to occur, two important actions work together to bring about this process of phenomenological reduction: bracketing and horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994).

Bracketing.

Bracketing means that as I look and notice and look again, I am only looking at the bracketed item. This brings the research question(s) and topic into focus and everything else that the data could show or reveal is set aside. Moustakas (1994) explains bracketing, “in which the focus of the research is placed in brackets, everything else is set aside so that the entire research process is rooted solely on the topic and question” (p. 97). An example of what it means to bracket is illustrated through a response to one of the interview questions with Amber. Again, to bracket means to bring the research question and topic into focus, and leave everything else to be set aside. In Amber’s response, she goes off on a insignificant tangent about enhancement courses for students:

We had a Guaranteed Viable Curriculum meeting for first-year teachers... and we got on the topic of, We have Enhancement students, so they're in an enhancement course for math. So they take math twice. Um, no, so you yeah, honestly, you wanna expect a lot out of them, and so we hope that at some point, they go to Math 3, but most of these kids, you're just trying to get them through Math 2 because they have to take Math 2 and they

just would flunk out of Math 3, even if they work really hard, it's just hard for them. So, when we were there, we had a conversation of, Well, can we make the test different for the enhancement kids vs. the um, regular Math 2 kids, I guess you would say, just your normal class.

Through bracketing, I was able to set aside the insignificant information that did not relate to how first-year teachers learn to grade, such as requirements to pass Math 2, or the possibility of registering for Math 3. With this focus, I was able to give codes to meaning units, such as the code, “F Grade” to the phrase, “flunk out of Math 3,” and the codes of, “Effort” and “Hardworking,” to the phrase, “even if they work really hard, it’s just hard for them.” Meaning units are pieces of text (e.g. analytic memos or transcriptions of interviews) that provide some sort of meaning related to the bracketed item. Meaning units can consist of a single word or phrase to a combination of sentences or paragraphs; meaning units will be discussed with more detail in Chapter 4.

Horizontalization.

Horizontalization means that each time the data is looked at and noticed, a new dimension or horizon appears to add distinctive insight into the phenomenon. “Each angle of perception adds something to one’s knowing of the horizons of a phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 91). I was able to practice horizontalization with each new level of analysis. The number of horizons one can discover are infinite, and “though we may reach a stopping point and discontinue our perception of something, the possibility for discovery is unlimited” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). I honestly felt the truth of that during the days, weeks, and months I spent going through my multiple levels of analysis. I felt that if I had the time and the resources, I could have spent

several more months conducting several more layers of analysis, all the while discovering new horizons each time.

To illustrate the process of horizontalization, I will discuss one context in which different horizons developed as I continued to go back and look and describe. During the transcribing process, I realized that each participant referred to several emotions that they associated with grades. During another level of analysis, I realized that the code Emotions had received the most associated meaning units. Intrigued by this emergence, I used bracketing to help me see what types of emotions were the ones first-year teachers most often associated with the experience of learning to grade. The results of these analyses can be found in Tables 4 and 5 in Chapter 4. As each horizon came into my conscious experience, it added to “the grounding or condition of the phenomenon that gives it a distinctive character... that enable us to understand an experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). Another level of understanding caused me to question the immense amount of data related to emotions when I realized that one of the questions in the first interview protocol specifically asked the first-year teachers to address if they were satisfied or frustrated with their own teachers’ grading practices. While this question obviously elicited several answers related to emotions, I wonder if emotions would have become one of my themes had I not asked this question. And so, there is yet another horizon altogether to consider.

Imaginative Variation

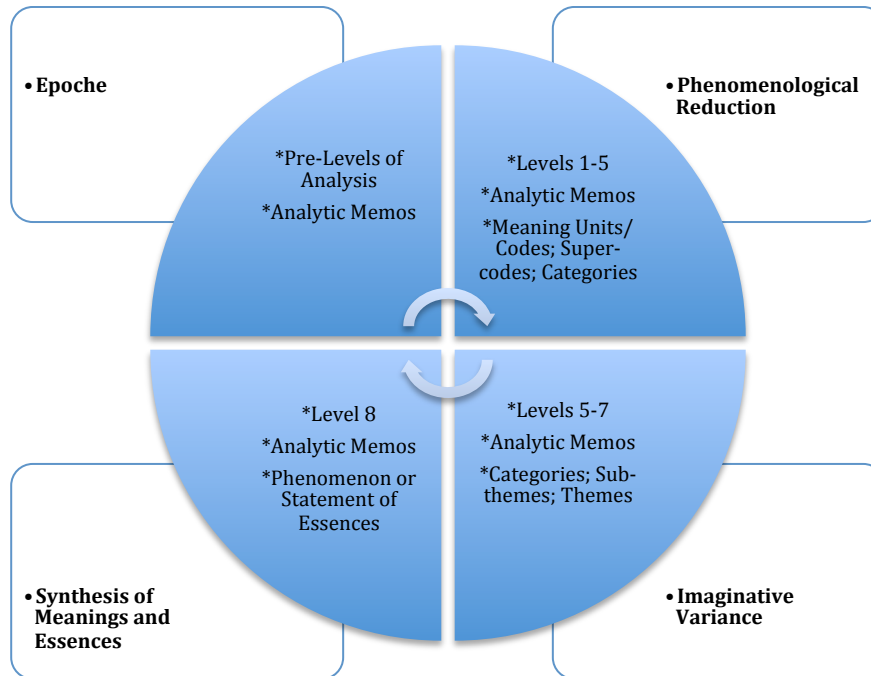
Once the process of phenomenological reduction was completed, I was then ready to undertake the process of Imaginative Variation. Imaginative Variation is to seek multiple meanings from varying angles and reference points, “approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-98). As I grappled with the different angles and reference points within the data, I was able to creatively

generate the themes of this study, which when woven together created a tapestry that is a clear representation of the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) gives a clear illustration that describes this process:

In considering the red of individual objects we know that there is a generic *redness* as such. No matter how many variations we perceive in the color red, all have the redness of red running through them. We can arrive at this intuition only through an imaginative integration of what is common in all the shadings of red. (p. 98)

Therefore, “through Imaginative Variation the researcher understands that there is not a single inroad to truth, but that countless possibilities emerge that are intimately connected with the essences and meanings of an experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). I was able to look at the several codes, or horizons, and derive super-codes that later led to the development of several categories. These categories helped allowed me to generate sub-themes, which ultimately led me to develop five over-arching themes that allowed me to describe the phenomenon of learning to grade. Please see Figure 2 to see exactly how going through the processes of Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variance helped me to narrow my focus in such a way as to be able to describe the phenomenon. The next sub-section will describe the different levels of analysis that I undertook. Figure 3 integrates the process illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 with the eight levels of analysis I undertook.

Figure 3: *Eight Levels of Analysis and Process of Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variance Integrated with Major Processes of Phenomenological Research Data Analysis*



Eight Levels of Analysis

Through the process of Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation, I was able to confidently describe the phenomenon of learning to grade by creating a statement of essences. Though it is not really possible to identify exactly how many “umpteenth” times I combed through the data through these two processes of Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation, it is reasonable to suggest that at least eight different and distinct levels of analysis transpired that led to the development of the statement of essences. Figure 3 shows these various levels, and what corresponding phase of analysis I was in for each level.

It is through these eight levels of analysis that I discovered saturation of the data had been reached. The first level of analysis involved me personally transcribing each of the 18 interviews.

This gave me insights into the bracketed focus, which is about the phenomenon of how first-year teachers learn to grade. During this time of transcribing and experiencing the interview again in “slow motion,” I was led to discover new insights. These new insights were recorded in analytic memos that were taken through the entire process of Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation. The process of horizontalization continued during the second level of analysis, which consisted of me reading through the newly transcribed interviews as a written document. Further connections were made and noted in analytic memos.

During the third level of analysis, which was the level of identifying meaning units and doing the initial coding, I discovered that there was an overwhelming amount of data focused on answering the main research question, and its ancillary questions. The fourth level of analysis consisted of me going back and relooking again, and noticing anew yet again. This time, I refined my codes and generated new ones, which were more specific. I called these more generalizable codes super-codes. A fifth level of analysis involved me looking at all of the different horizons, or codes and super-codes, that had been generated and grouping them into like groups, thus creating categories. (See Figure 2). It was around this point that I felt that saturation in the data had been reached. This fifth level of data analysis also served as a transition for me as I moved through Moustakas’ (1994) phases of phenomenological inquiry, moving from Phenomenological Reduction to Imaginative Variation. (See Figure 3).

The sixth level of analysis was when I was able to build upon the phase of Imaginative Variation to generate sub-themes from the previously created categories in Level Five. From the sub-themes I came up with, I was able to create overarching themes that describe the phenomenon of first-year teachers learning to grade. The seventh level of analysis involved me looking at the coded meaning units in relation to the themes. This allowed me to identify

meaning units that indicated, revealed, or showed evidence of the theme. This level of analysis also generated evidence that supported the sub-themes, which served to further support and offer meaning and insight to the over arching themes.

The eighth and final of level of analysis I employed in this study moves the data analysis into the last stage of the phenomenological research process – the Synthesis of Meanings and Essences stage.

Synthesis/Statement of Essences

In this eighth and final level of analysis, I was able to draw on the other seven levels of analysis and illustrate the phenomenon of learning to grade. I synthesized the gathered information from the other seven levels and wrote a statement of essences. This statement, as I described earlier, is a statement that should resonate with each participant, as well as many other teachers, because they have each experienced this shared experience, or phenomenon, of learning to grade as a first-year teacher.

Return to Epoche

Connecting back to my Epoche, which I will do throughout the presentation of the data to ensure that I am staying objective and removing myself, as much as possible, from the findings of this study, it is important to also consider my preconceived thoughts about possible themes that would emerge in this study.

Possible anticipated themes that could arise through these multi-layer analyses are, I thought, an affinity to grade/not grade based on how teachers were graded as students; a realization that they use “hodgepodge” grading practices; and a feeling of unpreparedness for the complexities of grading. These anticipated themes are based on my Epoche and my knowledge of the current literature surrounding current grading practices and grading

practice instruction (which usually falls under the larger umbrella of assessment literacy instruction).

Ethical Considerations

This study used human participants to collect and evaluate data. By so doing, I followed all policies regarding the use of human participants as stipulated in the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training. This study received approval through the University of Nevada, Las Vegas IRB and the Jenrok School District IRB. Prior to participating in the study, all participants first agreed to the terms stated in the informed consent forms approved by both Internal Review Boards. To protect participants' identities throughout the study, each participant received a pseudonym that they were referred to through the duration of the study. In addition, all schools, school districts, places, and other people mentioned were given a pseudonym for the study.

Due to the full-disclosure intent of this study regarding first-year teachers and their grading practices in their first teaching jobs at in a school, every effort has been made to keep all communications confidential. Data obtained electronically came from personal email addresses of the participants sent to a personal email of mine that I created specifically and only for this research study. I have only used this research study email account on my personal computer and my personal network or through another secure network (e.g. work network). All data for this study will be stored in a secure office space and destroyed after a period of five years from the completion of the study.

Reliability/Dependability

To promote the reliability/dependability of this study, several steps were taken. The reason for these steps stem from the counsel Johnson and Christensen (2008) provide, which is

“Educational research is about providing solid evidence for your conclusions... In fact, one cardinal rule in educational research is this: Provide multiple sources of evidence” (p. 201). That was the first step I took in my methodology design to ensure that there would be several participants who participated in the study, so as not to rely on just the account of only one or two first-year teachers. Another step is that the research questions and purpose for this study have been clearly defined. Yet another step was to clearly explain the study site, who the participants actually were, and how they were both identified and recruited to participate in the study. Finally, the data analysis processes have been clear and systematic. The clarity and transparency of this study have allowed this study to achieve the potential of being replicated by other researchers, thus increasing the study’s reliability and dependability.

Validity/Credibility

Marshall and Rossman (2011) explain the demand for validity/credibility in qualitative research. They state, “the goal is a more accurate, objective, and neutral representation of the topic under inquiry” (p. 42). One strong suggestion they give for achieving this goal is that the researcher engages in a process known as member checks. “Through member checks, the participants can correct the researcher’s (perhaps not quite accurate) representations of their worlds” (p. 42).

In this study, I have followed this procedure of member checking by submitting a document to each of the participants. This document was the statement of essences describing the phenomenon of learning to grade. Each participant was asked to read the statement of essences and verify its validity/credibility or to give suggestions for additions and/or omissions.

Finally, it is important that when considering the validity/credibility of this study, that we consider these final words from Marshall & Rossman (2011) on the subject:

In sum, recent discourse on validity in qualitative inquiry offers the proposal writer alternatives for developing arguments to convince the reader that her study is well conceptualized and will be conducted rigorously and ethically. These arguments, with appropriate and convincing rationales, should be grounded in the appropriate literature. (p. 44)

This study's validity and credibility are based on the extensive and thorough review of literature in Chapter 2, as well as the articulate, clear, and transparent methodology given for conducting this study thus outlined in this chapter, both of which support the results and ensuing discussion in chapters four and five, respectively.

Limitations and Impact

It should be noted that as the researcher, I have had strong personal beliefs about grading practices dating back to my own undergraduate teacher education courses. It was there that I was introduced to the official term of *standards-based grading*. It was then I became "converted" to the idea that all grading should reflect the ideas embodied in standards-based grading practices. Perhaps this conviction struck a chord in me because of my experience with Ms. Wright as noted in the introduction to this study, or perhaps not. Either way, my own interest in grading practices is strong and was a motivation for me to complete this study because I want to help push the field of education more in the direction of overall standards-based grading.

Another weakness that may be considered is the fact that I, as the researcher, am employed in the same JSD as the participants. This could potentially create a hesitancy to give full disclosure for fear of me seeking personal or professional gain based on their responses. However, this was counteracted by using data only for purposes of this study and by also establishing working relationships of trust with each of the participants in the study.

Compared to a quantitative study, the sampling size seems very small and insignificant. However, for a qualitative study using phenomenological methodology, the sample size is adequate for the purposes of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), where as the goal of this study is to provide teacher educators, professional development leaders, and policy makers with the knowledge of the phenomenon that exists among teachers everywhere as they learn to negotiate the task of grading.

Life can be very challenging for first-year teachers as they feel pressured by time constraints to create new lesson plans, meet with parents, assess and evaluate students, analyze and use data for instructional purposes, attend faculty meetings, fulfill extra-curricular assignments, and the list goes on and on. Simply stated, a teacher's life goes far beyond just teaching. Thus, recruiting participants for this study potentially posed an added stress that new first-year teachers didn't necessarily want to feel. However, the benefits that came to these teachers through their personal reflection and thought processes will be invaluable to their own professional growth as an educator as they considered their grading philosophies and practices at this early stage in their career, and have made deliberate plans for changes for the betterment of their grading, both philosophically and in practice.

Summary

This chapter began with an introduction that led into the main research question being asked, "How do new, first-year teachers learn to assign grades?" and its ancillary questions that were also studied. It then outlined how this study took place, explaining in detail the phenomenology method, including the reminder that unlike a case-study, a phenomenology study does not chronicle the events of a particular participant in detail. Rather, it shares the

phenomenon, or the shared lived experience, with the world so they can see what this phenomenon looks like.

It also explained my role as the researcher, the setting for the study, its participants, and how I collected and stored the data. Next, it described the process that was used to convert the data to text. Subsequently, it discussed the process of using eight distinct and different levels to analyze the data to generate themes that clarified what this phenomenon looks like, specifically discussing how I used the key elements of a phenomenology study, which are Epoche, Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis of Meanings and Essences (Moustakas, 1994). This chapter also discussed ethical considerations for the study, as well as topics of reliability and dependability, validity and credibility, and limitations and impact for this study.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The first three chapters of this dissertation have provided a foundation for understanding the complexities involved with grading, as well as describing the phenomenological methodology that was used to conduct the research in this study.

Chapter Four begins with an introduction that briefly reviews the purpose for this study and its associated research questions. It then presents the how the results were obtained through the systematic data analysis process that was introduced in Chapter Three, including the detailed results that transpired through the eight levels of analysis which resulted in the emergence of five themes: (a) Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended); (b) How Valid are my Hodgepodge Grading Practices? (c) Why Didn’t I Learn This in College? (d) What I Want to Change for Next Year, and (e) If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say? The final level of the eight levels of analysis is where the statement of essences emerged that was used to describe the phenomenon of first-year teachers learning to grade. The second half of this chapter concludes with a presentation of the five themes and their supporting sub-themes, supported with meaning units that showed, revealed, or indicated meaning relating to one or more themes used to describe the phenomenon.

Data Analysis Procedures

As discussed in Chapter Three, this study employed phenomenological analysis procedures prescribed by Moustakas (1994). “In deriving scientific evidence in phenomenological investigations, the researcher establishes and carries out a series of methods and procedures that satisfy the requirements of an organized, disciplined and systematic study”

(p. 103). However, given the uniqueness of this study, as with all human science research studies, it is important to remember:

Every method in human science research is open ended. There are no definitive or exclusive requirements. Each research project holds its own integrity and establishes its own methods and procedures to facilitate the flow of the investigation and the collection of data. (p. 104)

Thus, while this study follows the phenomenological data analysis principles of Epoche, Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis/Statement of Essences put forth by Moustakas (1994), I have also employed my own ideas into how these principles were to be accomplished.

Therefore, to identify the major themes that would materialize through the process of data analysis in this study, I engaged in eight laborious, methodical, and systematic levels of analysis. Each level of analysis incorporated at least one or more of Moustakas' (1994) principles of Epoche, Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis of Meanings and Essences. Through these eight levels of analysis, the following themes emerged to describe the shared lived experience of first-year teachers learning to grade: (a) Emotional "Tiers" of Grading (pun intended), (b) How Valid are my Hodgepodge Grading Practices? (c) Why Didn't I Learn This in College? (d) What I Want to Change for Next Year, and (e) If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say? These five themes worked together to help me write a statement of essences, which is a statement that describes the phenomenon of first-year teachers learning to grade.

Eight Levels of Analysis

Eight levels of analysis were undergone through the process of this study. Each level served a distinct purpose in helping the researcher to make sense of the data. Epoche,

Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis/Statement of Essences are principles espoused by Moustakas (1994) to be essential to analyzing data in a phenomenological study. Throughout each level of analysis, at least one of Moustakas' principles was utilized for purposes of facilitating an analysis of the data. In addition, I wrote analytic memos that included notes and insights about the emerging data, which also served new data in its own right.

Level One

Moustakas (1994) explains that in Phenomenological Reduction, "The task requires that I look and describe; look again and describe; look again and describe; always with reference to an experimental context" (pp. 90-91). The first of many levels of analysis in this study began this process of look and describe, and then look again and describe, etc., etc. Level one consisted of me transcribing each of the 18 interviews. I felt that it would be cost effective to complete the transcriptions myself. In addition, it ensured me that the transcriptions would be done of a high quality and to my satisfaction. Finally, it allowed me to use the transcribing process as the first level of analysis because as I transcribed, I was able to take analytic memos of thoughts and ideas I had as I looked at the interviews again.

Hearing the interviews again helped me to reflect on specific interactions I had experienced with the participants. For example, here is an excerpt from an analytic memo taken during the first level of analysis when I had been transcribing a section of an interview that dealt with validity of grading practices:

...I remember thinking in the heat of the moment during the interview that I wanted her—no, needed her—to be more open minded about her grading practices. It was at this point that I began to interject different scenarios for her to consider at various points in the interview... After each scenario was presented, I asked her to evaluate whether or not

she still considered her grading practices to be valid. Each time she answered in the affirmative... This is why I kept probing with further scenarios... However, [with each scenario presented], she still couldn't admit the possibility that any of her grading practices were invalid. Then finally we experienced the break through moment together: I presented one final scenario for her to consider... She said, "Oh my gosh... look at this... thank goodness I'm only a first-year teacher. Oh my gosh. Okay. You got me on that one [laughing]. You got me on that one. To be discussed. Thank you. Thank you." I wasn't trying to badger her... but open her mind to a broader spectrum of thinking, and I felt that I succeeded when she couldn't answer back in the affirmative that her grades are always valid.

When the 18 interviews had all been transcribed in their entirety, I described in another analytic memo my thoughts on the process of transcribing and what insights I had gained because of it. Here is an excerpt from that memo:

Wow! I had no idea transcribing that many interviews would take me so many hours and days to accomplish. At times, when I was like on interview number 6 or 7, I would think depressing thoughts like, "I'm not even half done" or "I just want to quit transcribing right now." Come to think of it, the transcribing process has been a lot like grading 4-5 entire classes' papers during the same week. I had similar thoughts then as well like, "I've only graded 2 out of my 5 classes' papers" or "I just want to be done grading already!"

Level Two

During the second level of analysis, I continued the process of Phenomenological Reduction (Moustakas, 1994). Once each interview had been fully transcribed and was in

written form, I began to read through each interview as one would read a novel. I composed further analytic memos that described what I noticed through this process, as new horizons began to manifest themselves. In Chapter Three, I discussed the concept of horizontalization. As a reminder, Moustakas (1994) says, “Each angle of perception adds something to one’s knowing of the horizons of a phenomenon” (p. 91). One thing I discovered through these reads of each interview was that the second set of interviews was on average, pages longer than either the first set or third set of interviews. I concluded in a short analytic memo that:

This could be because the second [set of] interviews focused on the present, or the here and now, and that the participants could articulate in greater detail what they are experiencing and going through now as opposed to what they experienced in the past when they were a student themselves.

Level Three

This level of analysis is when I began to use the qualitative data analysis software program, Atlas.ti. As I mentioned earlier, it took me a little bit of time to get familiar with the program and its capabilities. Once I felt like I understood how the program worked, I imported the transcribed documents into Atlas.ti and began to do an initial open-coding process on statements made within each transcript of interviews. I did the open-coding process by rounds of interviews, i.e. I coded each participant’s first interview first; the set of second interviews were done second; and the third set was done third.

Each code was associated with some sort of statement, or meaning unit. Each meaning unit was given at least one code, often times more. These codes provided me with an opportunity to gain valuable insight into the data.

Moustakas (1994) suggests statements that are repetitive, overlapping, or irrelevant to the research questions be thrown out. However, I found it useful only to discard irrelevant statements, as the rest of the statements, or meaning units, added further depth to understanding the first-year teachers' experiences. Throughout this process, I continued to employ the principle of Phenomenological Reduction (Moustakas, 1994), as I reflected on the coded meaning units from each interview. It is helpful to refer back to Figure 2 at this point. The level of analysis in which an outcome resulted is listed next to the outcome, e.g. Meaning Units and Codes were the outcomes of the third level of analysis; thus, the figure represents this as: L3 - Meaning Units/Codes.

Additionally, as I previously mentioned, I continued to write further analytic memos throughout each level of analysis. An excerpt from an analytic memo that was written upon completion of the open-coding process for the first set of interviews describes new horizons I discovered:

I have noticed that there is a lot of emotion that plays into memories of how 1st teachers were graded. I have also noted that none of them recall any explicit instruction on how to grade while in college. It seems that if they received any guidance, it was by chance or fate or the "luck of the draw."

In all, there were 314 codes that were generated through the initial process of open coding across all 18 interviews. Table 3 shows the top ten percent of codes given during this level of analysis. The table shows the codes, and the number of different meaning units associated with each code.

Table 3: Top 10 Percent of Codes after Level 3

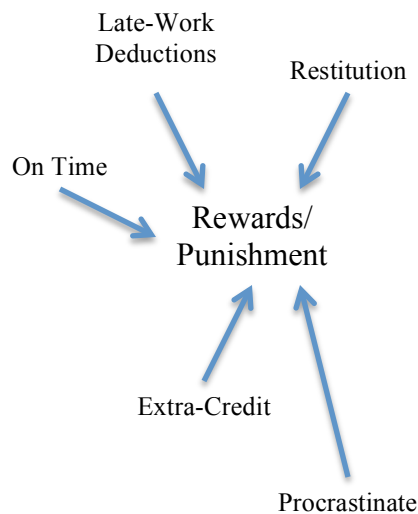
Codes	Number of Associated Meaning Units	Codes	Number of Associated Meaning Units
Emotions	195	Grades Aligned to Student Knowledge	55
Letter Grades	131	Grading Practice Instruction	54
Effort	105	Weighting Grades	54
Frustration	97	Curriculum Aligned Assessments	51
Learning to Grade	92	Students Understanding of Their Grades	50
Tests	90	Final Grades	49
Validity	90	Homework	49
Demonstrating Proficiency	80	Percentages	47
Points	77	Clarity/Clarification	46
Mastery of a Skill	75	Interpretation of Grades	45
Assessment	71	Common Core State Standards	44
Participation	71	Rubrics	44
Satisfaction	70	College Lessons About Grading	42
Motivation	65	PLC	42
Influences how I teach/grade today	58	Reliability	42
Grading Policies	57		

Level Four

During this level of analysis, I went back through each meaning unit and looked again at the codes that had been generated. During this process, codes were switched around, refined, removed, and further examined. Additionally, through this process, new codes were developed to describe new horizons that I was discovering. In short, new codes were created; other codes

deleted. Resulting from this process, I created Super-codes. Super-codes are a compilation of codes to make a new code. For example, the codes, On Time, Late-Work Deductions, Restitution, Procrastinate, and Extra-Credit combined to form the Super-code, Rewards/Punishment. This process is depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Relationship of Super-codes and Codes



Another significant result of this fourth level of analysis is that I looked further in depth at several codes that looked to carry deeper meaning than the code suggested. For example, the code, Grading Practice Instruction, was used to identify experiences of the first-year teachers when either they had *received* some form of grading practice instruction, or when they had *not received* any grading practice instruction for a particular situation they were facing. Thus, during this level of analysis, I looked at these codes with greater focus; I created a new code, Lack of Grading Practice Instruction, and then delineated whether or not these meaning units that had originally been assigned the code of Grading Practice Instruction fit better into the newly created code, or if it fit better with its original coding. This clean up process of looking at the codes yet again allowed me to describe even further what the data was beginning to manifest.

Another example of my ability to generate new meaning within this level of analysis is portrayed in Table 4: Codes Associated with the Code Emotions, and Table 5: Codes Associated with the Code Frustration. Table 4 shows the original code Emotions, which had received the largest number of meaning units associated with it, now broken down to further illustrate what types of emotions were actually being described or felt by the first-year teachers when I originally coded the meaning unit to be associated with emotions. Table 5 shows the original code Frustrations, which coincidentally was the highest experienced emotion of the first-year teachers across all three groups of interviews. Thus, Table 5 illustrates the various codes associated with meaning units that express with what things the first-year teachers experienced frustration.

Table 4: Codes Associated with the Code Emotions

1 st Set of Interviews (79 Meaning Units Total Associated with Emotions)		2 nd Set of Interviews (59 Meaning Units Total Associated with Emotions)		3 rd Set of Interviews (57 Meaning Units Total Associated with Emotions)	
Codes	Number of Meaning Units Associated w/ Emotions	Codes	Number of Meaning Units Associated w/ Emotions	Codes	Number of Meaning Units Associated w/ Emotions
Frustration	32	Frustration	25	Frustration	24
Satisfaction	28	Satisfaction	21	Satisfaction	19
Ambiguity	16	Dislike	15	Feel Good	14
Self-Esteem	16	Self-Reflection	12	Dislike	13
Confusing/ Shocked	12	Feel Good	9	Motivation	10
Expectations	11	Want to Change for Next Year	9	Attitude	7
Dislike	10	Challenging	6	Self-Reflection	7
Motivation	9	Validity	6	Ambiguity	6
Challenging	8	Unsure	5	Confusion/ Shocked	6
Angry	6	Bothers	4	Expectations	6
Stress	6	Fair	3	Self-Esteem	6
Unsure	6	Feel Bad	3	Want to Change for Next Year	5
Feel Bad	5	Motivation	3	Clarity/ Clarification	4
Self-Awareness in re: to teachers' perceptions about them	5	Stress	3	Surprises	4
Clarity/ Clarification	4	Comfortable	2	Unsure	4
Fun	4	Expectations	2	Desire	3
Logical	4	Find a Need for Balance	2	Self-Awareness in re: to others' grades	3
Not Fair	4	Grading is Hard	2	Self-Awareness in re: to teachers' perceptions about them	3
Feel Good	3	Guess Work	2	Stress	3
Anxiety	3	Self-Esteem	2	Bug Me	2
Disappointment	2	Trick	2	Don't Care	2
Fighting	2	Worry	2	Easy Grader	2
Guesswork	2	Amazed	1	Exaggeration	2
Happy	2	Appreciate	1	Hope	2
Intense	2	Bugged	1	Personal Judgment	2
Intimidating	2	Clarity/ Clarification	1	Validity	2
Scary	2	Confused/ Shocked	1	Appreciate	1
Self-Awareness in re: to others' grades	2	Disturb	1	Bother	1
Struggle	2	Encourage	1	Considers the "students' shoes"	1
Surprises	2	Guilty	1	Difficulty	1
Worry	2	Happy	1	Excited	1
Attitude	1	Nice	1	Fun	1
Bitter	1	No Desire	1	Grading is Tricky	1
Crying/Bawling	1	Personal Judgment	1	Harsh	1
Discouraged	1			Mercy	1
Distraught	1			No Surprises	1
Hate	1			Not Valid	1
Learning from Mistakes/ Correcting Mistakes	1			Worry	1
Love	1				
Mean	1				
Nervousness	1				
No Surprises	1				
Relaxed	1				
Uncomfortable	1				

Table 5: Codes Associated with the Code Frustration

1 st Set of Interviews (39 Meaning Units Total Associated with Frustration)		2 nd Set of Interviews (27 Meaning Units Total Associated with Frustration)		3 rd Set of Interviews (25 Meaning Units Total Associated with Frustration)	
Codes	Number of Meaning Units Associated w/ Frustration	Codes	Number of Meaning Units Associated w/ Frustration	Codes	Number of Meaning Units Associated w/ Frustration
Ambiguity	16	Learning to Grade	5	Dislike	6
Confusion/ Shocked	8	Self-Reflection	5	Ambiguity	4
Self-Esteem	8	Time Consuming	5	Attitude	4
Expectations	7	Time Management	5	Lazy	4
Not Fair	7	Validity	5	Self-Esteem	4
Dislike	6	Want to Change for Next Year	5	Bugged Me	3
Negative Feedback	5	Bother	4	Late Work Acceptance	3
Stress	5	Homework	4	Bump a Grade Up	2
Tough Grader	5	Feel Bad	3	Cheating	2
Motivation	4	Fix Grading Problem	3	Confusion/ Shocked	2
Angry	3	Grades DON'T Reflect Accurately	3	Copy	2
Feel Bad	3	Late Work Acceptance	3	Don't Care	2
Retakes	3	Life Skills	3	Misinterpretations	2
Struggle	3	Challenging	2	Negative Feedback	2
Attendance	2	Dislike	2	Parents	2
Disappointment	2	Grades Aligned to Students Knowledge	2	Procrastinate	2
Extra Credit	2	Grading in Detail	2	Second Chance	2
Guess Work	2	Grading is Hard	2	Self-Reflection	2
Tests not aligned to standards/curriculum	2	Quick Glance	2	Annoyed	1
Validity	2	Self-Esteem	2	Attendance	1
Weighted Grades	2	Theory	2	Behavior	1
Anxiety	1	Averages	1	Ethical	1
Bitter	1	Bugged Me	1	Grades DON'T Reflect Accurately	1
Challenging	1	Confusion/ Shocked	1	Grading in Detail	1
Crying/ Bawling	1	Disturb	1	Learning to Grade	1
Distraught	1	Equal	1	Mercy	1
Ethical	1	Grade Chasers/ Point Chasers	1	Motivation	1
Intimidating	1	Guess Work	1	Not Valid	1
Lack of Grading Practice Instruction	1	Guilty	1	Questioning Grading Practices	1
Lazy	1	Negative Feedback	1	Refusal to do work b/c of Retake Policy	1
Nervous	1	No Desire	1	Retakes	1
Questioning Grading Practices	1	Percentage Grade	1	Student ownership for grades	1
Reliability	1	Point in Time	1	Surprises	1
Self-Reflection	1	Question Grading Practices	1	Tests not aligned to standards/curriculum	1
Surprises	1	Refusal to do work b/c of Retake Policy	1	Validity	1
Worry	1	Reliability	1	Waiting for Admin. Directive to Grade	1
		Retakes	1	Want to Change for next year	1
		Stress	1	Zero	1
		Struggle	1		
		Weighting Grades	1		
		Worry	1		
		Zero	1		

This level of analysis was very time intensive as I continued to dig deeper to find new horizons. In regards to what the data uncovered about the codes of Emotions and Frustration, here is an excerpt from another analytic memo:

While I suspected that emotions would be part of my findings, I did not realize how extensive and multilayered emotions about grades actually were. As I looked at the code Emotions closer, I noticed that Frustration was the leading emotion across all three sets of interviews. What intrigued me about the code of Frustration is that the code Ambiguity was the biggest or second biggest cause of the frustration the first-year teachers experienced in the first and third set of the interviews. The first set of interviews focused on their own histories of being graded themselves, and thus their biggest frustrations from those experiences centered on their own teachers' lack of clarity with grading practices. The third set of interviews was designed to connect the teachers' thoughts about how they were graded as a student to how they are grading now. All but one of the ambiguity code references associated with the third set of interviews discussed their frustration again of how their teachers were ambiguous about their grading practices and how they didn't want to do that as a teacher.

The lone exception was Catherine who described her experiences of learning to grade at the beginning of the school year and explained she knew herself that her grading practices were ambiguous and that her students were most likely confused and shocked about the grades they received during the first half of the school year. It is interesting to note though that she did not bring these specific thoughts regarding ambiguity during the second interview. In fact, there was not a single teacher that made any reference to how they are grading now (the focus of the second set of interviews). I am still pondering on

why this could be. Was there a hole in my interview protocol that did not allow for this topic to come up, or do the first-year teachers, excepting Catherine of course, truly not have a concern with ambiguity regarding their own grading practices?

While a lengthy memo, it serves a point to illustrate the type of analysis that transpired throughout the fourth level of analysis. This new horizon I uncovered was only one of many as I continued to employ the phenomenological inquiry process to look and describe, and look and describe, and look and describe yet again and again (Moustakas, 1994).

Level Five

This level of analysis served as a bridge between Moustakas' (1994) concepts of Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation. During Phenomenological Reduction, I was able to discover new horizons that served to contribute to the whole of the phenomenon. It was also during this level of analysis that I felt that saturation in the data had been reached. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) describe data saturation as, "the point of data collection where the information you get becomes redundant" (p. 62). With this saturation point reached, I felt it was time to transition to Imaginative Variance, in which I began to add my own interpretations about what the emerging data meant.

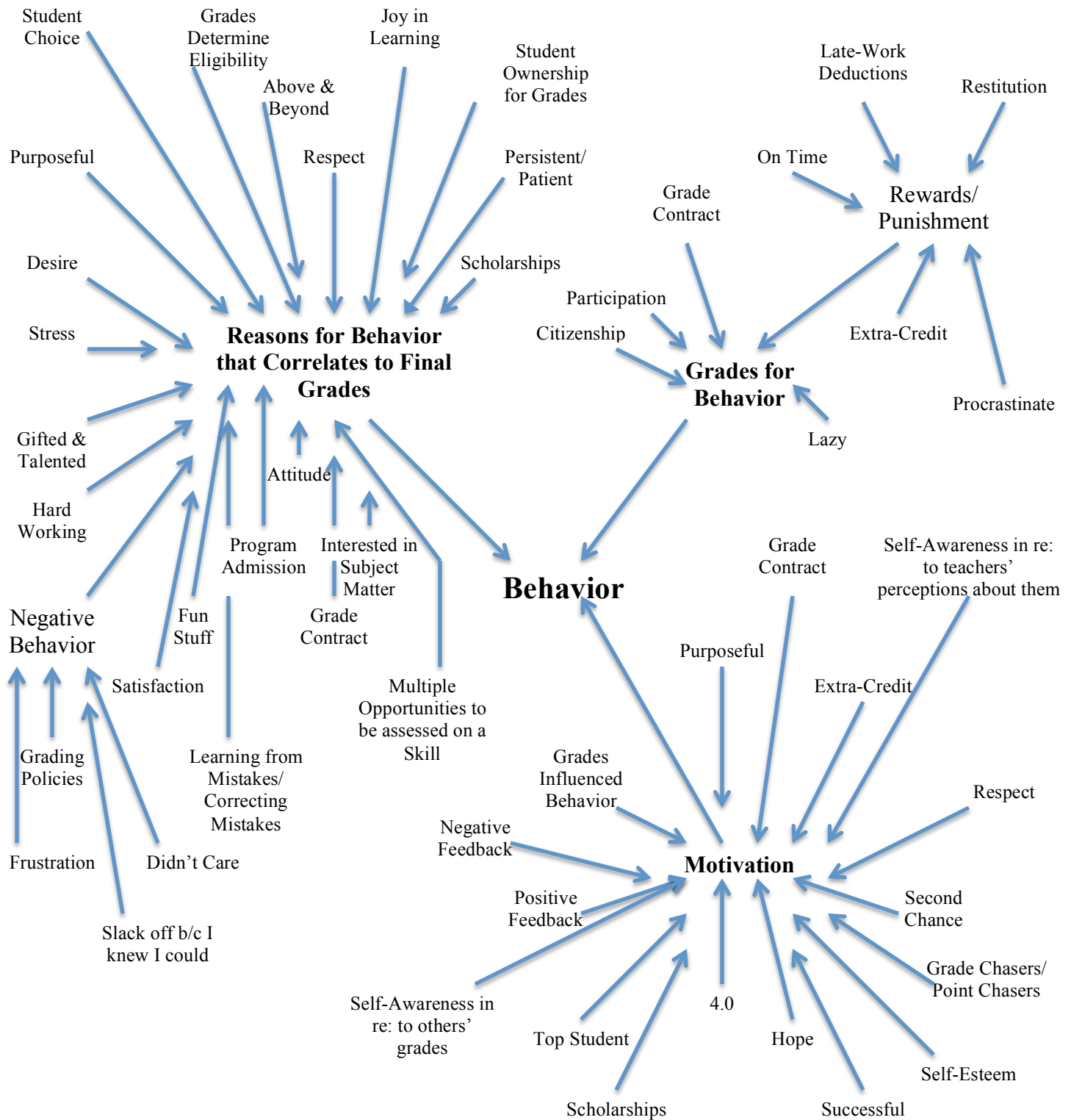
Thus, in this fifth level of analysis, I looked at the many different horizons and super-codes that had been discovered, and began to associate like super-codes together, creating categories. The categories served to provide a more in-depth understanding of the data; in addition, through this process, even more horizons were discovered. Therefore, in this level of analysis, I made use of both Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation. Again, the resulting product of this level of analysis was categories that were generated, which categories

ultimately became the stepping-stone that led to the development of the sub-themes and five themes that describe the phenomenon of first-year teachers learning to grade.

Figure 5: Concept Map for Category “Behavior” and Associated Super-codes illustrates how several different codes that represent meaning units were grouped together in super-codes: Reasons for Behavior that Correlates to Final Grades, Grades for Behavior, and Motivation. Within the super-code Grades for Behavior exists a smaller super-code grouping, Rewards/Punishments, and within the super-code Reasons for Behavior that Correlates to Final Grades exists another smaller super-code grouping, Negative Behavior. It needs to be noted that several meaning units and their associated codes required that they be grouped with multiple super-codes, multiple categories, and even multiple sub-themes and themes.

For example, looking further at Figure 5, one will notice that the code Grade Contract, which signifies a contract that a teacher creates with the student at the beginning of a grading period, is listed under all three super-codes. This is because a grade contract can serve as giving a score that affects a final grade, thus it is associated with Grades for Behavior; it also can serve as motivation for a student because in the grade contract they are explicitly informed about what they will be graded on, thus associating it with Motivation; and, a grade contract can influence behavior because the student knows it could affect their final grade, and thus Grade Contract is also associated with Reasons for Behavior that Correlates to Final Grades.

Figure 5: Concept Map for Category “Behavior” and Associated Super-codes



The process undertaken during the fifth level of analysis allowed for the principle of Imaginative Variation to begin taking place (Moustakas, 1994). I was free to create meaning by first grouping codes into super-codes labeled with either existing code names or new code names that described the super-codes. In continuing with the process of Imaginative Variation, I grouped super-codes into groups labeled with a category. Category names either were drawn from a code name or super-code name already within the group, or a new name was created to describe the category group. Table 6: List of Categories shows the categories that were created, thus also helping to continue to make sense of the data.

Table 6: List of Categories

Names of Categories
Accommodations
Behavior
Emotions
Grades Communicate...
Hodgepodge Practices of Teachers
Human Characteristics
Importance of Grades
Learning About Grading
Open to New Ideas of Better Grading
Self-Image
Student Perceptions
Teacher Perceptions
Teacher Wishes/Desires
Things Teachers Grade On
Time
Tools to Help Teachers Grade
Validity

Level Six

Building on the work during the fifth level of analysis, I continued the principle of Imaginative Variation by “recognizing the underlying themes or contexts that account for the emergence of the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). As I returned to the data yet again, I was able to extrapolate several big ideas that connected to the categories I created in Level 5. As I refined these big ideas, they developed into my themes and sub-themes of the study.

However, as I refined my big ideas, there were some that I chose not to develop into sub-themes. Had I done so, there would have been an over abundance of sub-themes in this dissertation; this would have been burdensome for the reader and unnecessary. Some big ideas had more substance, and were more compelling than others, which provided richer descriptions to portray the phenomenon, or the shared lived experience, of learning to grade, and thus were developed into sub-themes. Therefore, I identified the most significant, pertinent, and relevant sub-themes to present in portraying each theme.

Figure 6 demonstrates the relationship between the categories that were the outcome of Level 5, and the themes and sub-themes developed in this level of analysis. Figure 6 also visualizes my ever-present focus on the research questions as I worked to uncover the data that ultimately led to description of the phenomenon. Table 7: Themes and Associated Categories shows which categories were grouped together to support the five themes, which also intertwine with the sub-themes to “account for the emergence of the phenomenon” (p. 99).

Figure 6: Intertwined Relationship of Categories, Sub-themes, and Themes

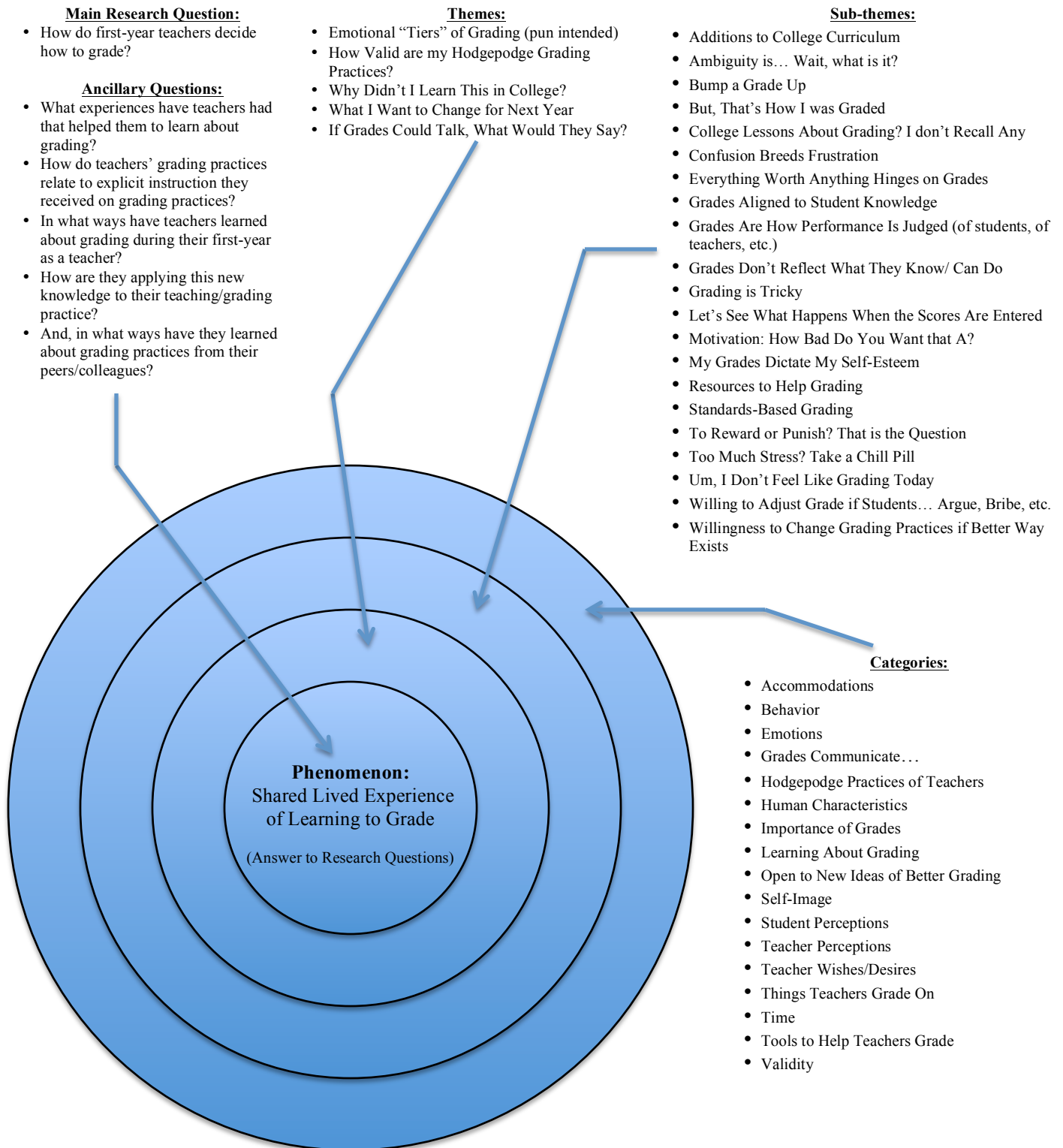


Table 7: Themes and Associated Categories

Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended)	How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	Why Didn’t I Learn This in College?	What I Want to Change for Next Year	If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?
Behavior	Accommodations	Learning About Grading	Open to New Ideas of Better Grading	Grades Communicate...
Emotions	Hodgepodge Practices of Teachers	Things Teachers Grade On	Teacher Wishes/ Desires	Importance of Grades
Human Characteristics	Validity	Tools to Help Teachers Grade	Time	Student Perceptions
Self-Image				Teacher Perceptions

Table 8: Themes and Sub-themes shows the five themes generated through this study to describe the phenomenon of first-year teachers learning to grade and the associated sub-themes that I have chosen as most significant, pertinent, and relevant to answering the research question. After having generated the sub-themes the themes, I grouped the sub-themes together in like groups and placed them under themes that represented each group of sub-themes, respectively.

Table 8: Themes and Sub-themes

Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended)	How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	Why Didn’t I Learn This in College?	What I Want to Change for Next Year	If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?
My Grades Dictate My Self-Esteem	Grades Don’t Reflect What They Know/ Can Do	College Lessons About Grading? I Don’t Recall Any	Grades Aligned to Student Knowledge	Ambiguity is... Wait, What is it?
Confusion Breeds Frustration	Let’s See What Happens When the Scores Are Entered	Resources to Help Grading	Willingness to Change Grading Practices if Better Way Exists	Grading is Tricky
Too Much Stress? Take a Chill Pill	Bump a Grade Up	But, That’s How I was Graded	Standards-Based Grading	Everything Worth Anything Hinges on Grades
Motivation: How Bad Do You Want that A?	Willing to Adjust Grade if Students... Argue, Bribe, etc.	Additions to College Curriculum		Grades Are How Performance Is Judged (of students, of teachers, etc.)
	Um, I Don’t Feel Like Grading Today			
	To Reward or Punish? That is the Question			

Level Seven

This level of analysis involved me going back and looking at meaning units in relation to the themes and sub-themes. Identified meaning units indicated, revealed, or showed evidence of a theme and/or sub-theme. All first-year teachers in the study had meaning units indicating, revealing, or showing each theme, although not every teacher had meaning units that were associated with each and every sub-theme presented. Despite this fact, there were still several sub-themes that each teacher had meaning units for. It should be noted that in line with the purpose of this study, the goal was not to identify how many first-year teachers had sub-themes or components of them, but rather to just show what emerged in relation to answering the main research question, which was: How do first-year teachers decide how to assign grades? Additionally, it should be noted that the meaning units presented for each sub-theme does not necessarily reflect every possible meaning unit that is associated with that sub-theme, nor does it

mean that the meaning units presented reflect every single teacher that is associated with the sub-themes being described. Rather, meaning units that are presented are the ones that the researcher felt best typified the experience of first-year teachers learning to grade.

As noted in Chapter Three, meaning units are defined as a section of text specially marked to code certain meaning(s) that served as the grass-roots level of data that led to the development of codes, super-codes, categories, sub-themes, and subsequently, themes. Each meaning unit could be anything from a single letter (e.g. “F” and “A” were meaning units associated with an F Grade or A Grade, respectively), single word, phrase, sentence, combination of sentences, paragraphs, and at times, multiple paragraphs. Moreover, most often times, meaning units conveyed only a partial excerpt from a teacher’s response to the interview question, or only a portion of a complete thought of something else they were discussing. Thus, not every meaning unit always reflects the context, complete response, or the remainder of the participant’s words that surround a meaning unit, as in the example noted above with the letter grades of “F” and “A”. In review, each meaning unit, regardless of its length as a meaning unit, truly indicated, revealed, or showed evidence of at least one theme and sub-theme.

The results of this level of analysis are presented at great length throughout most of the remaining sections of this chapter, as well as in Appendix D, Appendix E, Appendix F, and Appendix G. Each theme and associated sub-theme listed in Table 8 is discussed in further detail to reflect how it connects to the development of the phenomenon.

Level Eight

This final level of analysis is where I was able to synthesize all of the data, i.e. coded meaning units, super-codes, categories, sub-themes, and themes, as well as analytic memos, and describe it all in a statement of essences. Moustakas (1994) explains that, “the final step in the

phenomenological research process is the intuitive integration of the fundamental... descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (p. 100). Thus, I was able to synthesize meaning from the data that was derived from the processes of Phenomenological Reduction and Imaginative Variation.

As I mentioned in Chapter Three, this statement of essences was sent out to each of the six participants to see if I “got it right”. This is known as member checking (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). Member checking also served as another measure of validity/credibility for this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The remainder of this chapter presents the shared lived experience of first-year teachers as they learn to grade. First, I return to my Epoche. Next, the chapter further details the seventh level of analysis by listing each theme as an individual heading, and then presenting the experiences of the teachers as they relate to each sub-theme. Upon the completion of this thorough presentation, the statement of essences is then provided to allow the reader to see the culmination of all eight levels of analysis. The statement of essences, in effect, is a concise description of the phenomenon that all first-year teachers experience as they learn to grade. Finally, I return to my Epoche yet again to self-reflect on what has been presented.

Return to Epoche

The process of the Epoche serves to help me to remove myself, as much as possible, from the presentation of the data (Creswell, 2008; Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, upon completion of these levels of analyses, before I undertook to write the presentation of the teachers in regards to the themes and sub-themes, and before the statement of essences was written, I took the time to reflect on my own evolving thoughts and ideas. Here is a return to my Epoche:

As I have gone through the eight levels of analysis, I was very surprised to see how strong the code... super-code... category... and theme of emotions played out. I had predicted in my Epoche earlier that I anticipated strong feelings of teachers about learning to grade, but I was unprepared for the extremes of emotions that teachers felt, and to their varying degrees.

Upon further reflection, I searched my own thoughts and experiences to see if I had overlooked the theme of Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended) in my own experiences of learning to grade. This process led to the surface of this very strong memory that I had not remembered when originally writing my Epoche. This is the experience:

I was in 6th grade math. It was close to the end of the 1st quarter and my parents and I had met with the teacher to see if I could be promoted to the next math class, or if at the minimum I could be given extension activities because I was not learning anything new in class. We took tests about every two weeks in that class. Each test consisted of 50 problems. On each and every test, except one, I had scored 100% correct. The exception was one test where I had missed one problem and scored a 98%. After 6 or 7 of these tests, the quarter had ended and I had an A in the class. As I had explained to my parents how bored I was in class and how I wasn’t learning anything, a point was made to address this with the math teacher at the regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences. When my 6th grade math teacher listened to our request to have me promoted to the next grade-level math class, or to be given extension activities, the teacher looked at his grade book and noticed that I had only gotten a 98% on one of the tests during the quarter. His response to us was, “It looks like there’s room for improvement.” He left it at that and

did nothing further to accommodate our request. I begrudgingly suffered through the rest of his class that year, scoring 100% on all remaining tests. I remember being so frustrated by this experience as a young middle school student, like I had just wasted an entire year of schooling and learning nothing new in math. I also remember the frustration and anger of my parents regarding the situation. They complained frequently of the teacher and lack of administrative leadership in the school to do anything about the problem.

As this emotionally charged memory has surfaced for me over the course of completing these levels of analysis, I realize that subconsciously this experience has influenced how I grade my own students. I have never wanted to cheat any of my students out of extended learning when that is what they needed and/or desired. And presently, it has helped me to better understand what the emerging data has shown about emotions, which is that grading – giving grades and receiving grades can be very emotional, on different levels and on different ends of the emotion spectrum.

Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended)

The first theme discussed during this presentation of teachers’ experiences is the theme: Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended). The range of emotions that teachers expressed during their interviews in regards to grades varied greatly, from mild irritation or satisfaction to extreme frustration or pride. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter (and presented in Table 4), I was surprised to see the overwhelming amount of meaning units that discussed some type of emotion. And while I had considered in my Epoche that there might be a connection to emotion through first-year teachers learning to grade, I did not anticipate the data being so overly saturated with this theme.

My Grades Dictate My Self-Esteem

First-year teachers felt that their grades defined them as a student, or in other words, their grades influenced their self-esteem. If they had good grades, they viewed themselves as smart, but, if they received lesser grades, they viewed themselves as unsuccessful and perceived themselves to be less of a person in the eyes of others. In reflection, they had the idea that if they got a B, they *were a B* student, instead of thinking, “I just received a B.” It was, “I am a B.” These feelings started as early as elementary school. Jason says, “Throughout elementary school, my goal was to get top scores which ended up being a trend I didn't like and so I always had to be the best as far as I could get with my grades.” Catherine elaborates on the idea of attaching grades received to self-esteem:

I attached my grades to self worth a lot as a kid and I wanted to be a perfectionist and a people pleaser, and so if I got a good grade I was a good person and if I didn't I was disappointed in myself and felt like I wasn't good enough. Um, and so when I am grading my students, I tend to error on the side of mercy and perhaps bump their grades up a little bit if there is ever a question and simply because it did mean a lot to me to get a higher grade.

Perhaps it is the self-esteem of the first-year teachers as students that led them to believe their students experience similar feelings as they once did. Jovina describes this scenario this way:

I think some kids see it as, B+, that's pretty good. Maybe I wasn't all the way there, but I still did pretty good. Um, but then there is still those students that they will be at a B+ and they're like, "Do you think this presentation will bring me up another 4%?" I don't now. But, yeah. I feel like some kids would. Maybe not all. Maybe some kids would look at a B+ and think, "Dang, I'm bad."

Confusion Breeds Frustration

Frustration was the most common emotion described by the participants across all three sets of interviews. One similar cause for frustration among participants was confusion in not knowing what was expected as students themselves. In describing her frustration, Jovina explains, “With that [teacher], I just never knew what she was looking for.” Catherine describes her confusion and frustration with a science class where she felt very uncomfortable. She elaborates these feelings this way:

It was very frustrating, especially for someone who excelled in every area of academics to not know what was expected because I didn't know how to get to that A that I wanted. I never knew if I was doing the right kind of work, so it was very frustrating and very uncomfortable and so I never did take another science class because of it.

As the first-year teachers described their experiences of being frustrated, they often inadvertently shared their own grading philosophy at the same time. An example of this is when Jason describes an experience of frustration from when he was a junior in high school and he received his very first A-. In Jason’s words, here is how he describes what happened and what could have happened had the grading practices been done differently:

The one ... that gave me the A-, it frustrated me because there wasn't another opportunity and I believe that real learning occurs from making mistakes and then being able to correct those mistakes... that's when the true learning occurs. And so I felt short changed because I knew that I could get that material. I knew I just didn't have it on that day for the assessment but I knew about it, and knew that if I would have taken that same assessment the next day, I could have made sure that I did...

I still feel like that shouldn't be something that I do in the classroom because... I may be putting a block to something, to someone's motivation to want to take that to the next step.... Because if we cap them off sometimes, then they're like, there's no hope for getting anymore out of it. So, that's affected a lot of the way I've looked at it.

First-year teachers mentioned several times the idea of considering the “student’s shoes.” This idea means that they want to take into account how the student might feel or react to a certain grade. Thus, frustration experienced by students due to grades received also carries ramifications for future educational choices.

The first-year teachers also experienced frustration in many different areas throughout their first year of teaching. Two different accounts illustrate this point. Catherine describes her frustration during her first quarter grading period of assigning grades and their lack of connection to the core standards:

I think there was a disconnection between the standards, and my assessments, and my grades. Even though I wanted them to match, I knew in theory they should, I didn't have it done well. And so there was definitely a disconnect between assessments to the standards and then their grades weren't connected to the assessments or the standards.

Jovina shares her frustration of being required by school policy to accept late work at anytime during the grading period:

And the frustrating thing is, we'll set a deadline... we're allowed to assign a "Deadline" in the class and then the kids still don't turn the stuff in. And then they come to you on May 13th, 2 days before the grades are due, or the day after the deadline. "Can I turn this in?" And you have to let them.... Even when it's two months late.

Too Much Stress? Take a Chill Pill

Grades are a big cause of stress. Both for the student and the teacher. First-year teachers describe stress they brought upon themselves, like Amber in this example: “I have to get an A in the class; I knew I needed an A in the class because I originally was going to do hygiene, so... I had to get an A... I was like, I had to get an A on every single test.” And Catherine says, “I was always worried about my grade in that class,” as she describes her anxiety about her performance in a certain class. Jason talks about learning to cope with grades other than only As. He received his first A- during his junior year of high school and is still upset by it; however, he reflects:

So my senior year, I still did well because I knew I could do all of the material, but I had a little bit more relaxed outlook on grades where I would do well enough to make sure that I graduate with high honors, but it wasn't an A or nothing kind of attitude. So, it definitely changed my stress level because I wasn't near as stressed about the grades and it changed my outlook overall.

Stress was also expressed as an accountability concern of first-year teachers when they were asked to justify or defend a certain grade that they had given a student. In one experience, an administrator emailed and asked Trevor to explain why three of his students had received Bs in the class even though they received scores of C or lower on the district-wide assessment, “Which was scary. I never realized I might have to do something [like that].”

Motivation: How Bad Do You Want that A?

Motivation played a big part in the lives of the teachers as students; their own motivation to do well influenced their emotions in significant ways. Receiving negative feedback influenced Jovina’s motivation as a student. She says:

I remember that first paper that I got all the green on, I was just distraught. It definitely influenced me on wanting to be a good student. And, yeah, I guess it kind of defined me... my goal throughout high school was to graduate with a 4.0, which I did do that... Like I wanted to get an academic scholarship and... I was playing three sports and so I had to stay eligible. But I also had a goal to get academic all-state for my sports. Um, so, [my grades] influenced me to like, do well.

In discussing test scores and the opportunity to show improvement through retakes, Amber describes the motivation level of her own students, saying, “Most of them don't want to retake. So, if they get a C, they're happy with a C and they stick with a C. Then you get those few that, ‘I can't have a C,’ and they retake.” So, depending on the emotional state of the student, e.g. whether happy or dissatisfied, seems to play a big part in determining how much the emotion actually affects the motivation of the students.

One final example that illustrates this sub-theme, “Motivation: How Bad Do You Want that A?” is through an experiment Jason conducted with his own grading practices. This quote also is a nice transition into the next section, which is the theme, “How Valid are my Hodgepodge Grading Practices?” In this quote, Jason expresses his desire and need for his students to make up missing assignments, and how he eventually figured out to motivate them to learn. Unfortunately, he learned that the students were not motivated for the learning so much as they were motivated to get that A:

Well, I experimented with not putting in zeros for work that was missing and wasn't done. And I noticed that if I didn't put it in as zero, they didn't care. And so I started putting in zeros for missing work. Not that I wouldn't change it, but when they see zeros on there, and they see that F next to the assignment, for some reason it is miraculous how

motivated they get to turn that assignment in. So although I don't like that whole F thing where it's a zero percent and things like that, I learned that once they see it, they're more motivated to get it in so I started doing it immediately.

Thus, first-year teachers, while recognizing the emotions that played on them as students as a result of grades they received, also learned that emotions play a big part on the part of their students. Hence, teachers were willing to consider the “student’s shoes” when giving grades because they did not want to cause them too much stress or negatively affect their self-esteem. Also, they realized that using grades as a leverage point, they could manipulate students into being motivated to learn, or to at least wanting to strive for that A grade. Finally, all first-year teachers expressed their desires to be transparent with their students so that the students know what to expect in regards to their grade. This desire is directly correlated to their frustration as a student themselves and being confused about what was expected of them.

How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?

One of the interview protocol questions for the 2nd interview, which focused solely on first-year teachers’ current grading practices, asked, “Do your grades reflect progress, product, or process? Or do they reflect some combination of any two or all three?” Responses to these questions varied across all participants. Some claimed to only grade on product (even though they talked about portions of their grades also relying a bit on process too). Another reported they graded on both progress and product, while yet others reported they graded on process and product. One teacher even acknowledged she graded using all three, process, progress, and product.

As the first-year teachers each expounded on their answers regarding this question, it became evident that they all used different criteria to report student grades. What makes this

even more interesting is that two of first-year teacher participants taught the same subject at the same school – indeed they were on the same PLC department team. And, as they each described their grading practices, inconsistencies in their practices were exposed, which perpetuates the problem of reliability and consistency when supposedly comparing apples to apples, or rather grades of one student to grades of another student when the grades came from different teachers of the same subject at the same school.

Table 9: Hodgepodge Practices – Even on the Same PLC Team

	Jason	Jovina
How final grades are weighted	<p>1st quarter [and 2nd quarter] I was still percentage based where I would have a project be worth a considerable amount of more points than something smaller. So, they would see an assignment worth 80 points they knew it was going to be lot more on their grade than something else that was 10 points or 15 points. So, my assessments had several skills and they got one clump score.</p> <p>By the time I finished the year, 3rd quarter I started it, 4th quarter I continued it. So after Christmas, I actually separated those scores out. So instead of having an assessment that's worth 160 points, now every skill was worth 10 points. And everything that I put on my grades was 10 points. So instead of them seeing this assessment worth 150 points and this project worth 50 points – Nope, it was a specific skill theme states, Can you read a piece of literature or a short story or whatever it is? Can you underline the evidence to support a theme? Can you articulate that? That would be the theme. 10 points. And I structured my grading system so assessments were worth 80% of the grade and everything else was considered practice and that was worth 20%. So they knew right away that I was more concerned about their mastery and their competency of the skill and that we did the smaller things to help us get to that point.</p>	<p>So I have like minor assignments that I do throughout each quarter and I usually will base those off of how much time might need to be put into them. Or um, stuff like that as far as how much, um, they're worth. Like points wise.</p> <p>But I also try to relate them to the specific skill I'm looking for and the importance of that, whether its, this is on our GVC, or um, this is one of our common formative assessments, so they have to know this, so I weigh it. This is really, really important, so it's going to be worth more points on their grade. This is just kind of like one of those nice to know things so it's going to be less.</p> <p>Um, and then, I grade that accordingly, I guess. How well they met the standard, the skill. There are certain assignments that um, like those nice to knows, or like, that's just kind of a for fun thing. Since you did it, it's going to go on your grade. Which might not be very good. But, those are things that I just kind of look at and say, Okay, you did it all. You have the right stuff. I'll check it off.</p>
Department Wide Grading Policies	<p>Common Formative Assessments – We have a lot of these common assessment opportunities. But there is some variation as well. Two of us are experimenting with the 10-point things. The others are still doing their other formulas that are still valid and good, but two of us wanted to experiment and see how the 10-point thing went - and see if the conversation changes when a student comes up, what can I do to get my grade up, or I noticed I didn't do well in this particular area. How can I do better? And we have seen a change in the conversations. Hope to have more change and next year will get another batch to see how that works from the get go, but I think it has been a good change.</p> <p>Late Work – Our department wanted to be in sync with the late work policy; we wanted to be on the same page, so it was there. [At the beginning of the year], I also did 20% for late work so they could still show above proficiency...</p> <p>[As the year went on], I got less strict with late work because I found that if I want my grades to be true and valid and more precise, if they got a 10 out of 10, and I dock two points, that tells me that really they're only an 8 instead of a 10. So, maybe that high 3 low 4 instead of a high 4 like they should be. So on the assessments, I started not docking if it was late. So that grade would be true to what they can do rather than when they were able to do it. As long as it's within that quarter. My practice? That one I felt more comfortable docking the late because, let's be honest, they need to know that there are deadlines in life and that there are consequences for those deadlines. So, they did lose some in the practice category. But as far as tests and assessments go, they didn't.</p>	<p>Common Formative Assessments – We have Common Formative Assessments. And different things that we do for our GVCs. But each of us kind of weighs those differently in our grade. We all [give the same common formative assessment], but each of [us]... kind of weigh [them] differently, and what goes into their final grade.</p> <p>Late Work – (<i>Researcher Question: Do you have any department wide grading policies?</i>) Department wide, well, we sort of do. We have one as far as late work. Where if it's late, then we mark it down 20% and then we go from that 20%. That's what their score is.</p>

Table 9 illustrates just two of these inconsistent grading practices. Jason and Jovina both teach ELA at the same high school in JSD. In addition to both being first-year teachers, they also received the same teacher education preparation as they were classmates in college. This table shows direct quotations of Jason and Jovina regarding how they weight their final grades, as well as how their department works in regards to common grading policies. As the table points out through these transcriptions, there is not a lot of similarities between how Jason and Jovina grade. Jason illustrates a reliability issue within his own grading practices as they transformed over the course of the school year, while at least Jovina's remained constant throughout the entire year.

Grades Don't Reflect What They Know/Can Do

All participants were very clear about what their students needed to learn. Each referred to their content's standardized curriculum, which for both the math and English teachers was the Common Core State Standards. Each teacher described in detail the learning objectives they had for their students as derived from the Common Core State Standards. However, when the topic of assigning a final grade (for report cards and transcripts) that indicated how well a student did in regards to mastering their stated learning objectives, each teacher offered different versions of how they achieved (or didn't achieve) this. Two contradictory quotes from Amber help to illustrate this. The first quote is Amber reflecting on the need for her students to understand that they need to demonstrate proficiency, or mastery of a skill, in order to receive the grade they want. She explains that her students struggle with understanding this concept:

They think and I think a part of it is, "If I just turn in my homework, shouldn't I get an A?" And it's like, that's effort, which is part of it. But actually knowing it, is a bigger part of it, where our grade scale is skewed more to help tests, so we're grading what they

actually know vs. effort. Um, which is a big change for some of these students. It's been a hard thing for some of them to adjust to. But, I don't think they know what it means.

Amber's contradictory quote comes in describing the importance of homework in the final grade. Here she is answering a question in regards to whether or not her grades match her assessments given. Leading her into the question, I presented a scenario for her to consider. In essence, I said, Let's say hypothetically, in a given grading period, your students take 3 or 4 assessments. Does their final grade on their report card match their results from these assessments given?

This is her response:

Oh yeah, it'd go straight off of their assessments. It would average between their tests in the quarter. And, if they turned in all of their homework, it might bump it up like half, or 2/3 of a letter grade, or maybe a third. So, it's possible if they, let's say you have those test scores, and they averaged a, you know a B-, or something, if they turned in all of their homework, they may have gotten an A. If they didn't turn any of it in, they might get something closer to a C+ or something. So, it's pretty reflective of those assessments, their grade on their report card.

Regardless of a student's ability to demonstrate proficiency with the given core curriculum, this statement shows that based on whether or not they turn in their homework, their grade could range anywhere from a C- to an A. That is a huge difference, and speaks against Amber's earlier quote where she said, "our grade scale is skewed more to help tests, so we're grading what they actually know vs. effort."

Let's See What Happens When the Scores Are Entered

This sub-theme was interesting to me because teachers seemed to feign ignorance in regards to their students' queries about low grades or missing assignments. They put on a front,

telling their students that they'll have to wait to see what happens to their grade after their scores are entered. Jovina explains to her students her uncertainty of what the grade book will do when scores are entered. She illustrates this with a type of question she is routinely asked, "Do you think this presentation will bring me up another 4%?" to which she deftly responds, "I don't know." Amber is not so vague in responding to her students' queries. She expresses, "They'll be like, 'If you put this bell work in, will it give me an A?' 'Uh, no. But, I'll do it to make you feel good. Let's try this. Let's see.'" Jason learned this technique from his mentor teacher, saying she told him that if a student is making an effort to improve their grade, "Have them do something. Show the skill. Don't just say, 'Fill out this worksheet,' but rather, 'Show me this particular skill and we'll put it in the computer and see what happens.'"

Bump a Grade Up

This sub-theme screams, "Validity!" Yet, all but one of the first-year teachers described several different occasions in which they've bumped a grade up for one reason or another. For Amber, turning in homework was a reason to bump up a grade, "like half, or two-thirds of a letter grade, or maybe a third." Catherine points out self-esteem as her reason for bumping up a grade, explaining, "I tend to error on the side of mercy and perhaps bump their grades up a little bit if there is ever a question and simply because it did mean a lot to me to get a higher grade." Jovina indicates her reason to bump up a grade is because, "they really work hard. And so, if I know they've worked really, really hard. And it might be a B- paper. But I feel okay giving them maybe a B on it because they came in met with me a week before it was due. And then they did another draft. And they did another draft."

Finally, Trevor explains his reason for bumping up a grade, describing a situation where some of his students, "had had just a few bad weeks and just, you know, weren't doing as well at

the time. But at the end, they had figured it out and were doing well.” And so to help these students out with their final grade, he says, “I made a deal with them, [saying], ‘I’ll go back and fix other things that you have done, give you a little bit of a bump on those, because I can’t give you extra credit on the district assessment.’” His students did perform well on the district assignment, “So, to me that was enough of a reason for me to give them that extra 1% in the gradebook to give them an A... So, we bumped them up a little on that.”

Willing to Adjust Grade if Students... Argue, Bribe, etc.

Many first-year teachers shared accounts about when they were willing to adjust a student’s grade if the student argued or complained about something to do with their grading practices. Questioning the validity of her own grading practices in regards to homework, she says if a student confronted her, “I wouldn’t stand there and never make a change for the way I’ve graded.” Drawing on my own experiences that I recorded in an analytic memo, I remember working with a teacher my first-year that accepted bribes of candy-bars to add extra-credit points to student’s grades. The more candy bars one gave to this teacher, the more extra-credit points a student received. Jovina explains her reason for being willing to adjust a grade, explaining, “If they come and they’re like, ‘Hey, can I, Can we talk about this?’ Or, ‘Can I rewrite this paper and get a better score?’... I am more willing to work with them because they have a better attitude.”

However, Jason remains firm in his grading practices and tells why he is unwilling to adjust grades when students complain. He discusses feedback that came from a group of his students that he calls his “A Chasers.” The A Chasers are students who are accustomed to earning As in all that they do. Jason shares his feedback he received from these students of his:

I actually got some good feedback from those A Chasers. You know the ones that are just used to being able to go get that A and they've told me flat out - you are actually a hard grader. And I'm like, well, you know, it is what it is, but, you still can get that A. It's just requiring you to do more than what you maybe did in the past... which I'm okay with that, you know.

Um, I Don't Feel Like Grading Today

Providing feedback on student work is usually associated as a positive byproduct of grading. However, occasionally there are times when teachers just don't want to deal with grading. Amber describes one of these situations as she talks about a common homework assignment that her math department gives to the students:

It's when we got into assignments that are like, two pieces of paper so they're stapled together so I have like this whole middle section that I have to like, flip through it, and it's like time consuming for them to do, time consuming for me, if I wanna like grade it, so that's where it got frustrating, or when I hit ones like that, it was just like, alright, did they do it? I'm just gonna give them points.

Jovina describes her school-wide grading policy as the culprit for not wanting to grade at times:

Basically, what we've been told (which I think is kinda dumb) is that no matter what, the kid has to be able to turn stuff in, up until the last hour the last day... I had an assignment due on Mar. 20. And it is May 13, a month and a half, almost 2 months. [And I still have to accept it and grade it]. So I feel like that's not really. I don't know, I feel like after you've done the test and the assessment of it and then they still want to turn in the minor assignments for it, its like the test is over.

I think the ultimate experience of not wanting to grade is a story I have never forgotten. It is the story I shared in my Epöche where my professor friend in college purposely left a stack of students' final essays for a semester on an airplane because he didn't want to spend the time reading them.

To Reward or Punish? That is the Question

The following quote from Amber provides a seamless transition from the previous sub-theme, Um, I Don't Feel Like Grading Today, to this sub-theme, To Reward or Punish? That is the Question. Amber discusses both not wanting to grade assignments, and wanting to punish students temporarily for her feelings:

As a teacher, you get a little annoyed. Because the first time it happens, it's not really a big deal, but after like 8,000 students bring you stuff on the last day, your like, I almost wanna make a pile and set it over here and not put it in, just to bug everyone.

These next two stories also illustrate how first-year teachers use grades as a reward or as a punishment. First, we'll look at how Jovina uses her grades as an opportunity to reward students:

I feel like, for 95% of my grades, they are valid. But I will say there are times where I might give a kid a little bit of a bump just because I know how much effort he put in to get, to even like make it a B- paper. And so, I'll give him kind of a pat on the back. Bump it to a B.

Conversely, Amber uses grades as an opportunity to punish, or in other words, to teach a lesson, to students who haven't done their own work. She explains:

There's a couple of them that they're just trying to get away with doing nothing. So they've turned in assignments that you can 100% tell they just copied the whole thing,

and so I give them 1 point out of, this was a big group, so it was worth a little bit more. It was worth two homework assignments. So on a ten points, it was kind of like, I was almost like, I'm not even going to tell them and I was just like, I'm gonna let them see that's what they got because they, you know, like didn't deserve it.

Why Didn't I Learn This in College?

I conveniently borrowed the title for this theme from Paula Rutherford's (2002) resource book titled, "Why Didn't I Learn This in College: Teaching & Learning in the 21st Century." In Rutherford's (2002) resource book, she provides ideas and resources for helping first-year teachers, as well as veteran teachers, not only learn to teach better, but develop into school leaders too. With that thought in mind, I took the liberty to borrow her title to discuss in this section the issues and concerns that teachers have about grading and wondering why they didn't learn about this more in college.

College Lessons About Grading? I Don't Recall Any

Apparently, it is the "luck-of-the-draw," or up to fate to decide whether or not a future first-year teacher will receive any grading practice instruction while in college. When asked about the types of grading practice they received in college, Amber replied, "not helpful... not specific enough information," and Catherine remarked, "In the teacher education program, we didn't receive any, almost any instruction on how to grade and there was no instruction on how to weight a grade. None! So we really didn't receive a lot." Jason's explanation about what he learned in college introduced a new code during my third level of analysis, Surface Level

Grading Conversations:

Basically I feel that the grading conversations and lessons and things that we had in college were surface level in a general sense where they said that you need to grade on

purpose. You need to have a plan of how you're going to do it. You need to be fair. You need to consider how much you're going to weight things and it, but they really [only] focused on the surface level of grading.

Jovina describes her experience by saying that she never learned about what constitutes an A or B, or how to decide if an assignment is worth 30 points or 90, or how to weight grades, emphasizing that she never got anything like this instruction, “not in any class.” Katie summarizes her grading practice instruction in college in one word: “None.” She says that she is still completing her ARL coursework, but so far, “the emphasis has always been on how to build the assessment. Not necessarily how to grade or score.” And, Trevor describes his experience with learning about grading in college by reporting he didn’t really receive a lot, but then he tries to rationalize in his mind as to why the teacher education program didn’t give a lot of instruction:

I don't think there was a lot of instruction on how it should be graded. I think there were theories presented. You know, there is standards-based grading or based completely – but as far as how you should grade, we didn't really do that a lot. And I don't know if that’s because every school is different. Every district is different. To try and teach: this is the universal belief of how you should grade. Everyone thinks of something different and for the most part, when you walk into a school and the principal says, that's not a standards-based grade. You can't give them a grade on that assignment. Whatever you believe, you kind of have to follow that to an extent. So yeah, as far as [college, I didn’t receive] a lot. Or any.

When I received these answers from the participants, I wanted to know if there was anything else specific they could offer about how or what they learned to grade, because they had talked about surface level grading conversations, or about things that were not helpful. I was

curious to know what these were, so I asked follow up questions. The stories that resulted from this further questioning illustrate that college lessons on grading occur only in random, unpredictable scenarios. For all of these first-year teachers, there was no course, nor any objective, designed to address this topic. Amber discusses all that she learned about grading while in college, which isn't much:

[Coming out of college,] my knowledge of grading... wasn't very big. Either I slept through that class or something. Um, I remember don't, and this is how I should grade, it was don't grade with red, a red pen. Like that is the one thing I took out of college grading. [And so], I never use a red pen to grade tests. I have pink, I have green, I have purple. Purple is my favorite. Um, sometimes I use a light blue. I don't even use dark blue. I don't use black, red, or dark red or dark blue, just cuz you can't see black. And, I felt like, well, if you can't use red, that's the most normal color of pen, then you can't use blue. So, I like, you know, rainbow colors. So I use those to grade. You know, and then you have a pink smiley face next to the minus 1 and apparently it's supposed to make them feel better about themselves. So I, uh, ached that. It was kind of fun. I, I don't even remember what else did I gain from grading [in college].

Jovina, Catherine, and Jason each talked about the one lesson they had about grading, in which Dr. Glazier, a professor in the English department, who also taught the Teaching English methods course for English Education majors, took an entire class period to lecture his students about the need to use rubrics to guide grading. Jovina's recount of this experience shares what else they learned about grading during this one, single college lesson:

The main thing that I remember from the education program was one day Dr. Glazier came in and we had learned like how to create rubrics, but they never said this is how we

need to do it, but it was like the last one because last month before I went to student teaching, so I was doing my practicum and he came in one day and showed us one of his rubrics that he used in his high school class and it wasn't necessarily how to go through a paper and grade it, but it was more of this is how you can give your students effective feedback and not seem like really rude. Um, and that was really good, but other than that [one lesson], I don't remember [receiving any other instruction about grading].

As I mentioned, receiving any grading practice instruction seemed to be by happenstance. Jason reports one exception to his college experience, which came in his Education 1010 course. The instructor was Bill Sargent. Bill is also employed by JSD and works in district administration. In addition, Bill is known for presenting on a national level in Professional Development settings. As luck would have it, Bill had agreed with the university to teach the introductory education course for the semester that Jason happened to be registered to take it. Jason reports his experience in this class:

And so I took a class from Bill Sargent and he actually narrowed in on grades, as I'm sure you know. So he asked a lot of questions. What do we think is fair? And he'd show us numbers. And he'd allow us to interpret the numbers. What do you think these numbers mean? What do you think would be fair? And it really got the wheels turning on, what is effort and what is competency and things like that. Or is this just a worksheet - turn it in for points? Or is it really demonstrating proficiency or mastery over a skill? ... What does that truly, that number, truly represent? What does that zero mean? What are the bad things and good things about the average number? And providing multiple opportunities to be assessed on a skill and interventions, you know specific, intermediate, and directed. So, in his class, we actually got quite a bit [about grading].

Resources to Help Grading

Each first-year teacher reported searching for additional help in learning how to grade after his or her teacher-education coursework. Some sought help from their mentor-teachers during student teaching. Jason remembers his mentor-teacher giving him free reign to experiment with how he wanted to grade, although she did provide feedback and suggestions to help him through the process. Catherine's experience is very insightful. As described in the earlier sub-theme section, *My Grades Dictate My Self-Esteem*, Catherine did not like how she was grading her students during quarter 1. Quarter 2 was not much better, but it was because she still wasn't sure how she should even be grading. It was during this time that she began searching online for resources on how to grade, and she even traveled to a national conference held in Phoenix, AZ. The conference, she remembers, was Solution Tree's PLC: The Summit. She remembers that that conference was a major turning point for her during her first year of teaching because of being able to listen to one presentation that was all about grading. The presenter talked about aligning grades to the standards, and gave several strategies for doing that. As she shared her experience, I had the thought that this presenter she was describing sounded like Tom Guskey, another leading expert in the field of grading practices. When I asked her about the name of the presenter, she said, "Guskey. I think it was something Guskey." I have since verified that Dr. Guskey was the presenter that helped to change how Catherine viewed her grades. Catherine describes the results of her transformation process, due to her seeking out resources to help her learn about grading:

And so I felt like [the resources I found online and the conference I went to] were really good steps in the right direction and because of that, then I started figuring out how to base my grades on those standards from the Common Core and base those on rubrics that

were online with the standards and I got that information from my colleagues and then again from online and from the conference I went to... Um and by the time I got to 4th quarter, I was using the rubrics that were aligned with standards and common formative assessments with my PLC and that, that was a big change from 1st quarter... But probably 4th quarter is only the real (she starts laughing) valid grade that my kids got as far as a true grade.

But, That's How I was Graded

Most of the first-year teachers reported experiences from how they were graded as a student that have influenced how they grade today. Some experiences were positive and the first-year teachers have tried to replicate these experiences in their own classroom grading practices; others were negative that caused a lot of frustration, which also has influenced the first-year teachers in trying not to create environments that would cause their own students to experience the frustrations that they experienced.

Perhaps one reason Catherine experienced great angst with how she graded in quarter one is because she only had her own experience to rely on. While Catherine also had that same lesson described earlier from Dr. Glazier about using rubrics, she reports a challenge she had in learning how to effectively evaluate student work that didn't fully demonstrate proficiency of a skill. She explains that her model for grading was based off of how she was graded in high school and college:

Because that is my model for grading and... I did really well on pretty much everything in school, and so I didn't know how to give negative feedback or how to um, how to differentiate that and so that has been a challenge in learning how to do that because I didn't have a model for it [since I wasn't taught about it in college].

Additions to College Curriculum

It has been said that hindsight is always 20/20. If these first-year teachers could do their college experience over again, or if they could influence what future teachers will learn in college, they would each undoubtedly add components of grading practice instruction to the college curriculum. Jason remarked, “We didn’t really have a specified course on grading or assessments [in college] which, now after some of the professional development I’ve received, and in hindsight, I think that would be a good idea to add to the curriculum.” Catherine’s recommendation is:

I think there should be as part of the curriculum design class that I took, I think part of that curriculum, if not a total separate class, should be how to grade and how to align those grades with the common core. Because they already teach you how to teach to the Common Core. Give me some explicit instruction in how to grade it. And I think that is a missing step that they kind of assume that you’ll figure out... which we do.

What I Want to Change for Next Year

Over the course of each set of interviews, the first-year teachers had a unique opportunity to engage in self-reflection. Through our dialoging, they would make a comment here or there and explain how they wanted to change that for next year. Jason quipped, “Thank goodness that the years keep coming so we can keep redoing.” Another example is reflected through Amber’s desire to somehow change how she grades homework next year:

For the most part, homework is just, “Are they doing it?” And if they are, I wanna reward them. And it would be a lot to grade, so (she laughs) so, grading homework is the trickiest one that I wanna work on next year because I don’t love how I’m doing that this year.

Through this self-reflection process of considering their own grading practices, the first-year teachers identified within their own grading practices areas that needed tweaking, refining, or changed altogether.

Grades Aligned to Student Knowledge

Each first-year teacher readily agreed that they wanted their grades to align to student knowledge and what they have shown in regards to mastery of a skill or demonstrating proficiency. However, achieving this concept is easier said than done. Amber describes her desire to align her grades to students' mastery of math skills and standards, but explains that some people, "their brains just aren't developed and there's honestly nothing that you can do about that... You shouldn't fail them cuz they can't do this really hard stuff if their brains literally can't do it." Because of this, she continues, "So, I feel that the content standards should be referenced but again, you gotta, its open to interpretation."

Katie discusses an issue with grades, and whether or not other teachers can interpret them the same way. She explains the system is flawed because the grade may or may not be aligned to student knowledge:

My colleague in math because we discuss and because we talk so much, I would think that she would interpret that what we've discussed, that if they're getting an A+, they're clearly proficient. If they're getting a D-, they might be proficient, but they didn't do the work, or they might not be proficient, but they worked hard enough to be um, to have credit for their effort and for being there and there's a flaw in the system somewhere and its not the students fault.

Willingness to Change Grading Practices if Better Way Exists

These first-year teachers are a progressive group of teachers. They are open minded and very willing to change their grading practices if there is something else out there that is better. Amber shows her enthusiasm about the idea of changing, saying, “Yeah. I’m flexible. I really am like, I’m all about, let’s just try this and see how it goes.” After talking about the idea of standards-based grading for a few minutes, Katie says, “I’m excited because I think that’s an awesome thing to strive for.”

Jason also discusses his willingness to change, but cautions:

Is it going to be a hurdle? Absolutely. Grades are so sacred to teachers and how they are, what they represent. It’s going to be... hard to overcome; since I’m fresh into the system and have this kind of new progressive style of thinking, I’m easier to change. And so I’m willing to do it. Yes.

And, Jovina takes a slightly different approach in describing her willingness to change as more of a want or need to change:

I definitely think [grades] should be tied to the content standards, but I would like to find a way that we could kind of mix everything. So yeah, they knew the content, but like that kid that gets a 4 on the [end-of-level] test, but he gets a C in the class because he turned in all of his stuff a month and a half late.

Finally, Trevor provides this wise insight about his willingness to change his grading practices, viewed in connection with the current culture that surrounds grading practices in education:

I mean you look at it and [it’s] just traditions, tradition. And there is a way things have been done for so long and that doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s the best way. No matter

how engrained that is. And hopefully that is something that more and more people are going to come around and see if there is maybe a better way to do it.

Standards-Based Grading

Trevor makes a case for why he would like to do standards-based grading based on new students that come into his classroom:

I was thinking about... standards based grading and thinking about a kid coming into my class and I know that he got a B in his previous class. Okay. You know, what [does] that mean? I still have to find the holes. I still have to find, okay, what 20% are you missing? From last year? I don't know what it is. Is this 20% of effort, 20% of knowledge? It might be multiplying negatives. It might be adding or subtracting negatives. It might be something huge. That is gonna mess you up through my entire course and just having that percentage and not referencing it to anything doesn't tell me a whole lot.

Jason observes that standards-based grading has started is now the norm for how the history department at his school grades. He says, "It is happening. But perhaps it is happening in the way it needs to happen and that is grassroots with teachers doing it, experimenting with it, winning over their departments." Katie also hits on this topic, "People like us - grassroots level... I can start with a standards-based grading system... I have the freedom to do it. It never occurred to me. But I have the freedom to do that." Catherine suggests that it standards-based grading needs to occur at a bigger level than just "grassroots." She suggests that it needs to come from the school, district, and state levels:

I mean in an ideal educational setting, which hopefully we are working towards I think, is there are common grading practices aligned to the standards at a school level and then a district level and then ultimately a state level too, that we're all grading pretty much the

same way, so no matter where you go your kids are graded the same way and you know exactly what they are being graded on and why, so that there is no subjectivity I guess to it. I think that it should be that way and it should definitely be connected to the common core standards.

Motivated to begin working towards standards-based grading on his own, Jason shares his summer plans that will be used to begin the process of implementing standards-based grading in his own class next year, saying, “I plan on getting more specific to the content standards... because I'm actually taking the standard and I am creating assessments FOR learning, AS learning, and OF learning.”

If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?

Certain words carry loaded meanings. Grades is one them. Grades determine eligibility for scholarships, college admission, and extra-curricular activities. Grades communicate self-worth, privileges (or loss of) at home, and social status among peers. Grades affect class placement, grade level promotion, and teacher perceptions about students. And, this list goes on...

Ambiguity is... Wait, What is it?

Both grading practices and actual grades can be very ambiguous. Jovina describes two extremes in her time as a student that demonstrate the emotions she experienced due to the ambiguity, or lack there of, which has affected how she grades her own students today:

In college, there as one professor who was super harsh. As an English major, there are lots of different ways to interpret things. For her, if it wasn't her interpretation, it was wrong. I remember there was this one paper for class that I did and she pulled me up for

class and told me this is completely wrong, you need to redo it. Cuz, it was about Blake's poem, "The Tiger." And, so we had to write our interpretation of the poem. And because it wasn't her interpretation of the poem, she made me redo it. And for me as an English teacher, I need to be accepting of other people's interpretations. I need to teach the skills of good writing, but be understanding of the ideas behind their papers, unless they're completely out in right field, but other than that, I realized I needed to be a little more open [minded] because when I got that paper back, and she always graded in green pen and I never grade in green pen because of it... I think she used green pen because everyone else used red pen. But she wanted to seem like she was being nice, BUT SHE WASN'T BECAUSE IT WAS TOTALLY GREEN EVERYWHERE. Then at the bottom, it said, see me after class. And then she just ripped me apart.

So I had her on one end of the spectrum, and then I had... others that would not be harsh, but give really good feedback, and made me better, and those were the teachers that I really liked because they would go [through] each assignment and give me feedback and then we could do it again and give me feedback and then I could do it again, and so it would help me see what I needed to work on.

Catherine also shares her experience of dealing with ambiguous grading practices:

There weren't any clear expectations. Sometimes the lessons he gave didn't match the tests. And so, it was just always guess work as far as what to study and how much and whether we'd have to do multiple choice vs. an essay response. We just never knew.

Grades themselves are ambiguous because in traditional grading practices, everything must be forced into a single letter grade that must communicate several distinct and separate factors, just as Trevor eloquently described in the introduction to the previous section on Standards-Based

Grading. Additionally, grades are ambiguous because not only are several factors forced into a single letter grade, but each teacher gets to decide what these factors are and how many factors to include in determining final grades.

Grading is Tricky

One of the trickiest aspects of grading for teachers is in completing the ambiguous task of what was just described, which is figuring out which factors to include in a final grade and then deciding how to weight each one, so as to arrive at the desired result. Many of the first-year teachers described the trickiness involved with grading. One such aspect is in dealing with students who procrastinate turning in assignments to the very end, and stating, “That was a tricky one for me cuz I wasn’t like that. Like, I actually did do my work. Cuz I actually, I was scared of getting [called out by the teacher for not doing my work].”

Drawing on Catherine’s experiences of learning to grade, it was explained earlier that she had never received negative feedback and struggled with learning how to grade students who hadn’t demonstrated full proficiency. Here she adds to the trickiness of her situation:

As a teacher, [I had] to try and figure out where to draw the line and what makes A work vs. not A work. Because all of my experiences were for receiving high marks, so that is all I [had] to go off of. It [was] a challenge.

Trevor indicates an experience that was tricky for him in managing some students’ grades. (He is the teacher that taught his first year in the Midwest – not in JSD). An earlier reference to this story was made, but in a much briefer version. Through this vignette described below, you get a sense for the feelings Trevor experienced as he tried to figure out a suitable solution for his students through this process of grading:

The last district assessment, I had a few honor's kids that had had just a few bad weeks and just, you know, weren't doing as well at the time. But at the end, they had figured it out and were doing well. And I realized that even if they got a 100% on the district test, they would still be at like 89% instead of 90. And so I made a deal with them, and you know, after talking to my principal and a few other teachers, "Look, if you get 95% or better on the district assessment, I'll go back and fix other things that you have done, give you a little bit of a bump on those, because I can't give you extra credit on the district assessment, but this assignment that you got an 80% on and then you got a 95% on the district assessment. I'll bump that up a little bit so that you get that extra percentage point." And because they are kids. And all of those kids ended up getting 100% on the district assessment. So, to me that was enough of a reason for me to give them that extra 1% in the gradebook to give them an A because they were showing me that they - even though they didn't get every question right on the homework, they knew it. In the gradebook, or on that district assessment, they knew how to do it. So, we bumped them up a little on that.

Everything Worth Anything Hinges on Grades

In the introduction to this theme, *If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?* I describe the many things that grades have an influence on. Amber describes another dimension of this, as she perceives:

You want [students] to do well in a way and the way that makes you feel like they're doing well is if they have an A. Parents are the same way. If they have an A, their kid's smart. If they don't, then they're worried about them. And so, everything relies on this.

Through the process of analyzing the data, I recorded in an analytic memo another insight that I discovered about how all-encompassing and all-important grades are and can be:

Since beginning my dissertation research, it is amazing how often I hear conversations about grading. I've heard grades discussed in some way at church, in the grocery store, at a park, and probably a half-dozen other places too. These conversations have probably always been happening around me, but until I began to really study this topic, I didn't realize how prevalent these conversations actually were. It is clear to me that everyone seems to have an opinion about grading, even if it is the old lady down the street talking about her neighbor's grandson's teacher and how the grade the teacher gave the boy is just ridiculous. I mean, it really seems that everyone has an opinion on this subject of grades. To me, it almost seems and feels like grades could be synonymous for politics since it brings about strikingly similar conversations.

Grades Are How Performance Is Judged (of students, of teachers, etc.)

Grades play a huge role in how students' performance is judged. If they always receive high grades, then they'll be on the high honor roll and considered bright students. If they receive low grades, then they'll end up on remedial classes and be considered struggling students. Teachers are also judged similarly. If their students are passing and receiving high marks, then they are doing a good job and other students and parents want to have them for their teacher. If they have students who struggle and receive failing grades, then the teacher is not doing a good enough job at differentiating instruction to reach all their students, and other students and parents try to avoid those teachers. Amber captures her perceived judgments of how administrators judge performance based on grades in this statement:

You've got to make some type of incentive [to get kids to do their work] and sadly [their grades is] the one that makes them work because that matters to everyone. Cuz that's the only way to judge it right now. It makes teachers want them to do well because like, probably because the administration wants teachers to do, have them do well.

Statement of Essences

After I completed the analysis of Level 7 through this just completed presentation of the themes and sub-themes, I wrote the statement of essences as described in Level 8. The statement of essences is the outcome of analysis for Level 8; this is also the last phase of Moustakas' (1994) major processes of phenomenological research data analysis, which is Synthesis of Meanings and Essences. My goal was to present the phenomenon by synthesizing the data that emerged through the other stages of the research data analysis process, thus describing the many intricacies involved in first-year teachers learning to grade. This statement of essences describes the phenomenon:

Learning to grade as a first-year teacher is a tricky process. First of all, there is little to no explicit instruction given in college about how to grade. Many of the references that are made, if any are made at all, are usually surface level grading conversations that never really get at the heart of how to grade. Surface level grading conversations are often vague and deal only with the "What" of grading, but not the "How" or "Why" of grading. First-year teachers would like to see courses on grading, or at least curriculum addressed specifically on grading, added to teacher education course curriculum so that future first-year teachers will be better prepared than they were when they began teaching (and grading).

Emotions play a large part in how first-year teachers learn to grade because grades cause a wide array of emotions for students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders in

the education process. First-year teachers often recount negative experiences of how they were graded and strive within their own grading practices not to replicate these experiences in the lives of their students. First-year teachers also consider how their students will feel as a result of grades and consequently try to give grades that will motivate the students to continue performing well, or to improve their performance next time.

Additionally, because grades carry such significance in things like: determining eligibility for scholarships, college admission, and extra-curricular activities; communicating self-worth, privileges (or loss of) at home, and social status among peers; and affecting class placement, grade level promotion, and other teachers' perceptions about students, first-year teachers often experience anxiety and stress in giving final grades for report cards. First-year teachers are also concerned with their students' grades because they perceive that is how administrators and parents judge their performance, as well as how administrators and other teachers judge their students' performance.

Due to a lack of instruction in college of how to grade, first-year teachers often rely on personal experience and colleagues to figure it out. They make connections to how they were graded, as well as to strategies that their mentor teachers used during student teaching. They also glean ideas from members of their PLC teams about how they could and should grade. Depending on the schools and districts that first-year teachers work for, they may or may not have grading policies to follow. Even if there is a grading policy of some sort in place, first-year teachers often disagree with it and either follow the policy begrudgingly, or they become less strict at enforcing the grading policy as the school year moves on.

Reliability and validity are issues of first-year teachers' grading practices because others cannot easily interpret their grades the same way as they intend them to mean. This is because

each teacher employs a variety of “hodgepodge” methods to determine their grades, such as a combination of any of the following: assignments, bell work, homework, assessments, participation, projects, effort, and evidence of at least one, two, or all three of process, progress, and product. Some first-year teachers make use of points to weight their grades while others use percentages. Furthermore, first-year teachers often admit to “bumping a grade up” for various reasons, each unique to them as the teacher. They also agonize about how to get everything that goes into their gradebook to compute into one single true grade for the student. Thus, first-year teachers struggle to find a balance for what gets reflected in their final grades, and experiment with their grading practices, even changing them part-way or mid-way through the year.

Learning to grade is also a time-management concern for first-year teachers because they don’t want to let grading consume all of their lives. They acknowledge that the effort spent to grade in detail and provide relevant and timely feedback is very time consuming, and sometimes makes them not want to grade at all. However, one tool that has made grading easier is using rubrics, which they learned about because that is how they were graded, were taught about it in college, learned about it from colleagues, and/or they searched for resources on grading and discovered rubrics on their own.

Finally, first-year teachers are very open to new ideas in regards to grading. They understand the immense challenge they have experienced during their first year of learning to grade and they are willing to modify, adapt, or even completely change their grading practices if there is another grading practice method out there that is better than the one they are using. They also acknowledge a willingness to give up their current grading practices for a better one, even if it means that it will take them more time to grade. This is because they believe a better system of grading will more accurately align grades to students’ knowledge, which is also a major

concern of first-year teachers. Therefore, first-year teachers are in favor of adopting new practices like standards-based grading because it will not only communicate more clearly what students can and can't do, but it will also remove the ambiguity that is so often associated with the meaning of a grade.

Return to Epoche

In an ever-present effort to try and remove myself from the data, I return to my Epoche to examine my own thoughts regarding the presentation of themes and sub-themes and the statement of essences.

For the most part, I do not have anything to add to my Epoche that I have not already written. However, through this process of narrowing the data to the point that I could write the statement of essences, I made a discovery that shocked me a little. Each of the first-year teachers expressed their desire to adopt a new grading system if it would allow them to clearly link grades to student knowledge and the core curriculum. In other words, they are welcoming an opportunity to transition away from traditional grading practices of ABCDF to standards-based grading. Two of the teachers even make reference to this by saying that they think standards-based grading can inspire change and enthusiasm by starting at the grass-roots level.

My connection to this finding is that: It is time. What I mean by this is I have felt like this since coming out of my teacher education program at BYU-Hawaii, as described earlier in my Epoche. However, when I was hired on for my first-year of teaching, the culture at my school did not even understand the concept of standards-based grading. It was a completely foreign idea to them. But now, these first-year teachers are bringing it up and even suggesting the need and willingness to change and adopt this practice. Thus,

I think it is time that the change starts happening more aggressively – and not just from a bottom-up grass roots level approach, but also a top-down approach at either school, district, or state levels. It is time to implement this change, and it is time to also provide more uniform and systematic grading practice instruction in college and university teacher education programs.

Summary

This chapter discussed the results of this study. It began by describing each of the levels I used to analyze the data, which illustrated how the data emerged through the process of phenomenological inquiry. Themes and sub-themes were then presented and discussed in detail, giving evidence to support the phenomenon of first-year teachers learning to grade. Finally, this chapter ended with the statement of essences, which is a matter-of-fact and succinct description of the phenomenon.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The goal of this phenomenology study has been to inform teacher educators, professional development leaders for in-service teachers, policy makers, and researchers to be made aware of the phenomenon of learning to grade, which has direct importance for how instruction about grading proceeds as based on the constructivist theory and validity theory. This chapter begins with brief reviews of both the significance of the study and an overview of the study. It then provides a discussion of first-year teachers' experiences of learning to grade as they relate to answering the research questions. The emergent themes found in this study will be utilized to process the answers to the research questions. This chapter next discusses the limitations to this study, considerations for future research, and theoretical, educational, and policy implications. Finally, the researcher concludes this study with a final return to his Epoche.

Significance of Study

Report cards, graded assignments and tests, electronic grading systems, and final course grades continue to be a constant norm in education. Yet, learning to give these evaluative marks (learning to grade) is still a missing component in most teacher education and professional development programs (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Mertler, 2005; Popham, 2009; Stiggins, 2004). This study sought to give voice to a phenomenon that all teachers experience as they learn to grade. In light of the constructivist theory (Cobb, 1994; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Von Glaserfeld, 1995) and how teachers learn to grade, this information is of great importance to teacher educators as they prepare lessons and units to address this issue: lack of grading knowledge. Additionally, as this study looks through the lens of validity theory (Brookhart,

1991; Brookhart & Nitko, 2014; Kane, 1992; Messick, 1991), the results of this study also benefit policy makers as they look to see if the learning to grade phenomenon is beneficial or detrimental to a first-year's teacher development in their roles and responsibilities as an educator, thus helping them to make informed decisions about whether or not to draft legislation that would mandate grading practice instruction in teacher preparation programs and/or teacher licensure standards.

Overview of Study

This qualitative study follows recommended guidelines for reliability and validity (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2008) makes use of phenomenological methodology (Moustakas, 1994). Six first-year secondary teachers were recruited to participate in this study. Each first-year participant participated in a series of three 30-60 minute interviews that covered different topics of grading, and approached the interviews from different angles during each of the three interviews. Five themes emerged through the data analysis process of this study. These themes and their related subthemes were presented in Chapter 4, culminating with a statement of essences, or a description of the phenomenon of how first-year teachers learn to grade. The remainder of this chapter discusses the implications for the study's findings as they relate to the phenomenon as viewed through each theme that emerged in the study. The chapter then presents different implications to consider, such as limitations and suggestions for future research.

Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended)

This study presented an over-whelming amount of evidence that supports the idea that grading is emotional and receiving grades is also emotional. While the researcher, as noted in his Epoche, had expected to discover findings related to emotions in relation to how first-year teachers learn to grade, he was unprepared for the abundance of data in this area.

Good Grades Make Me Feel Good About Myself

Value judgments of self-worth are often associated as a result of grades received (Anderman, Anderman, & Griesinger, 1999). This study found that first-year teachers associated their grades with how they were as a person, saying that if they got good grades, they were a good person, and if their grades were bad, then they weren't a very good person. Some of the participants indicated that these feelings even started as elementary school for them. Additionally, first-year teachers, when making connections to how they interpreted their self-esteem levels in regards to their grades, also believed their students apply this same lens of looking at their grades to determine their self-esteem, thus validating the finding that "teachers understand the need to attend to their students' psychological needs" (Anderman, Anderman, & Griesinger, 1999, p. 6).

Contrastingly, assessment expert Doug Reeves (2004) refutes the notion of any teacher considering the self-esteem of their students when giving them grades. He exclaims:

The worst damage done to students' self-esteem is not when they are told that they do not meet a standard. Rather, it is when they find out that, although teachers told them that they could "get by" through all the years of school, now prospective employers, college professors, professional licensing boards, and others are telling students that they do not have what it takes to succeed (p. 23).

Thus, the finding that students' self-esteem is taken into account when deciding how first-year teachers grade needs to be further researched so that a solution can be reached that will both satisfy the students' emotional needs, while also not compromising the validity and reliability of the grades that receive.

Motivation!

This study also revealed that grades could instill motivation in students, although the motivation is not always to master new skills, but rather to “get the grade.” Implications for this finding could add to the knowledge of how grading practices affect achievement goals and performance goals, such as mastery learning (Senko, Hulleman, & Harakiewicz, 2011). Guskey (2010) reports there have been 40 years worth of “new” strategy implementations in classrooms and among the most replicated is that of mastery learning.

Finally, Anderman, Anderman, and Griesinger (1999) point out that if teachers are able to help students understand their possibilities of success, than this idea of students’, “possible selves as determinants of achievement and of motivation may lead to classroom [or grading] practices that foster the development of positive possible selves” (p. 6).

I’m Stressed Out

The ambiguity of students not knowing what grades they’ll receive causes them great stress. First-year teachers report the following emotions brought on by stress due to the unknown of their grades they received as students: confusion, uncomfortable, awkward, and surprise. They also report that they do not want to convey these same stressful feelings to their students. McMillan (2007) counsels teachers when grading to, “recognize that tension may exist, but keep your grading decision making based primarily on what is best for student learning” (p. 356).

Another stress that first-year teachers deal with is the worry of having to justify or defend their grades to a parent or an administrator. They cringe at the thought of having to actually be verbally accountable, and that causes stress. Reeves (2004) points out that this stress is often

caused because, “a single grade never tells the whole story and it certainly does not give students and parents the information they need to improve academic performance” (p. 23).

A final cause of stress for teachers when learning to grade is the amount of time grading takes. Grading can be time consuming, especially when reporting prescriptive feedback about a student’s progress. In an effort to alleviate the stress of spending too much time grading, one of the teachers in the study reported adjusting how many points she made assignments worth. She said she weighted her categories to account for this adjustment, but the result was that she didn’t have any assignment worth more than 5 points. This made it so that when entering scores in the computer, she only had to hit one number on the number pad instead of two or more. This self-discovered method is not a research based best practice for entering scores, but there are several resources that are recommended best grading practices to help alleviate the stress brought on by time-consuming grading (Guskey & Bailey, 2010; McMillan, 2007; Reeves, 2004). And, as McMillan (2007) points out, the challenge in this, “is to incorporate as much detail and reference to learning targets as possible when marking each piece of student work without being overwhelmed” (p. 371).

Why I am I so Frustrated?

This study revealed that teachers experienced frustration in regards to grading for myriad reasons. One of the biggest causes was confusion resulting from a lack of connection of grades to core standards and/or to student knowledge; many of the first-year teachers recall experiences of the ambiguous ways in which they were graded; thus, they labored in an attempt to seek clarity and transparency with their grading practices for their own students, despite much explicit instruction of how to do so. This concern gets at the heart of validity theory, one of the theoretical frameworks for this study. Brookhart and Nitko (2014) address this issue and explain

four essential principles that must be all used together to validate grading practices, which will eliminate this major cause for frustration of first-year teachers. Their principles are:

1. The *interpretations* (or meanings) you give to your students' assessment results are valid only to the degree that you can point to evidence that supports their appropriateness.
2. The *uses* you may make of your assessment results are valid only to the degree to which you can point to evidence that supports their appropriateness.
3. The interpretations and uses of your assessment results are valid only when the *values* implied by them are appropriate.
4. The interpretations and uses you make of your assessment results are valid only when the *consequences* of these interpretations and uses are consistent with appropriate values. (p. 38)

These recommendations are straightforward and could easily be applied by first-year teachers to bring clarity and eliminate the confusion and ambiguity of the grading process for them, which causes so much frustration. However, despite the wisdom and benefit that this information offers, it is reasonable to assume that first-year teachers have not been taught these fundamental ideas about assessment and grading practices (Guskey & Bailey, 2010).

How Valid are my Hodgepodge Grading Practices?

This study revealed a variety of “hodgepodge” grading practices that first-year teachers engaged in to assign grades. This finding is not new however; several researchers and measurement specialists have reported about the use of “hodgepodge” grading practices, a term used by researchers and measurement specialists to describe the various possible components that go into figuring a student's grade, such as attendance, assignments, behavior, projects,

assessments, effort, achievement, and progress (Brookhart, 1991). Because of the infinite variables that go into determining a single letter grade, the task of accurately interpreting that single letter grade by anyone who looks at it is a task doomed for ultimate failure.

Consider the following illustration regarding the importance of standards in industries outside of education. In the airline industry, there are certain standards that must be met each time a plane is scheduled for take off. These standards ensure the safety of everyone on board the plane. Most all professional fields (e.g. medical field, automobile industry, retail industry, engineering profession, restaurant business, hospitality and tourism, etc.) also have similar standards that direct their actions. With reference to the airline industry again, if an airplane does not meet certain safety standards prior to departure, the plane will not fly until the necessary adjustments and corrections have been made, and ultimately the plane has met all standards required.

In education, on the other hand, it is much different because standards are not used as they should be. Whether or not students meet the standards in education does not matter because of “social promotion.” Taking the liberty to be facetious, this would be like an airline mechanic saying that because only one of the airplane’s tires is flat, it is still good to take off and fly. We know this would be ludicrous, but we do the equivalent in education:

In the traditional [grading] model, the price of not meeting the standard has been a “D” (or with today’s grade inflation, perhaps a “C” or a “B”). These marks tell the parents, “This student really can’t do the work, but I’m not going to go through the political hassles associated with holding the child back a year or getting sued. Hey, he’s really unsatisfactory, but let’s call it passing” ... There is only one thing to call such a practice, and that is a lie, and a particularly destructive lie, too. (Reeves, 2004, pp. 22-23)

To complete the airline analogy, we know that their industry standards would never allow such a practice of inadequately maintained airplanes to fly. The question then begs teacher educators and administrators why allow first-year teachers to unknowingly continue this process of giving grades that don't truly reflect a students' ability (or lack thereof) to master content learning standards.

Product, Process, and Progress

One of the interview questions in this study asked first-year teachers to consider if they based their grades off of process, progress, or product, or any combination of them. The responses were not surprising. All six participants reported using different combinations of them and in different ways. Guskey (2006) offers two reasons for this variation. "First, is a lack of clarity about the purpose of grading... [Second] is the format used to report grades" (p. 671). Guskey (2006) further explains that, "teachers use widely varying criteria to determine students' grades. In most cases, these can be grouped into three broad categories: product, process, and progress criteria" (p. 672).

Guskey (2006) provides descriptions of these three categories. Product criteria include summative assessments, final reports or projects, and other demonstrations of overall learning. Process criteria include things that reflect a complete picture of student learning – not just what they learned, but how they got there; thus, process criteria include participation, effort, and work habits, in addition to formative assessments, homework, attendance, and on-time assignments. Progress criteria include measurements of how much a student has achieved during the learning experience, thus accounting for any progress or growth. Guskey (2006) points out:

Recognizing these interpretation problems, most researchers and measurement specialists recommend the exclusive use of product criteria in determining students' grades. They

point out that the more process and progress criteria come into play, the more subjective and biased grades become. How can a teacher know, for example, how difficult a task was for students or how hard they worked to complete it? (p. 673)

He further explains that the solution to this problem is in separating these three criteria into three separate grades and reporting each of them as separate grades on high school transcripts. He indicates that while this is still a relatively new idea in the United States, there have been several Canadian educators who have been doing this practice for years.

The extra-time that giving three separate grades is presumed to take is a non-issue for those already using the procedure, like the Canadian teachers. They claim that this process makes the workload lighter and easier to grade because instead of having to figure out how to combine everything into an overall grade, they no longer have to spend time weighting categories to justify grades. “As a result, they avoid irresolvable arguments about the appropriateness or fairness of various weighting strategies” (Guskey, 2006, p. 674). Despite the fact that the first-year teachers were trying to figure out how to combine all three aspects of product, progress, and process into one grade, the results of the study also showed their willingness to adopt new ideas for their grading practices if they benefited the students. This is one area that would help clear up the ambiguities of their grading practices.

Inconsistencies of Grading Practices

The results of this study revealed inconsistencies in how grades are administered on multiple levels. Findings indicated that teachers had inconsistencies with how they graded in their own classroom. Teachers that worked together at the same school teaching the same subject in the same department also had inconsistencies. Finally, results showed inconsistencies of grading practices at the school-wide level too.

Teacher Level.

Most first-year teachers in this study reported inconsistencies with their grading practices. Several of them described how their grading practices morphed from one set of procedures in quarter one to something completely different by quarter four. As quoted earlier in Chapter Four under the section, *Grades Don't Reflect What They Know/Can Do*, Amber described how her goal was to help her students understand that their grades would be weighted to reflect what they know as based on their summative assessments; Amber later described a scenario that is inconsistent with her first thought by saying that if students fail to turn in their homework, their grades could go from an A to a C-. That is a huge difference! Applying her same grading scale to another scenario in her class, a student who is scoring Cs on summative assessments that doesn't turn in their homework could easily end up with an F.

Department Level.

Although the researcher did not plan for this in his purposeful sampling of selecting research participants, it turned out that three of the first-year teachers in the study all taught together at one of the same high schools in JSD. Two of these teachers both taught ELA and were on the same department PLC team. As the researcher revealed in Table 9: *Hodgepodge Practices – Even on the Same PLC Team*, these two teachers had differing approaches to their grading practices in the areas of weighting grades, grading department-wide common formative assessments, and penalizing late work (even when they had a department policy specifically for late work).

School-wide Level.

Drawing on these two teachers again, the third teacher in the study that taught at that school taught math. He explained the differences in grading practice methods that his colleagues

in the history department were using. He revealed that they were implanting a form of standards-based grading, thus further highlighting the differences of how one student could be graded in the same school even further.

Brookhart and Nitko (2014) summarize the issue raised by these multi-level inconsistencies with grading practices and explain the need for every educator to work towards eliminating them:

Educators at different levels have differing amounts of resources and opportunities for gathering evidence about the validity of results. Teachers have the fewest opportunities and resources; school district administrators have more; and state-level educators even more. This fact does not relieve those with fewer resources (e.g., teachers) from the requirement of validating their interpretations and uses of assessment results. There is a professional obligation to raise issues about the validity of the assessments [and grading practices] being used and to seek help in establishing their validity. (p. 49)

Bump a Grade Up

“Research, reason, and experience all suggest that the meaningfulness of the grade information conveyed on report cards can be compromised” (Friedman & Frisbie, 1995, p. 6). This statement is evidenced by the finding that first-year teachers will “bump a grade up.” All but one of the first-year teachers in this study indicated that they would bump a student’s grade up for one reason or another. The interesting thing is that every reason shared by these five teachers were different reasons for bumping a grade up. The problem with just bumping a grade up is that it distorts the reliability and validity of the teachers’ grades. If grades are bumped up for some reason, an annotation would need to be provided to clarify what the grades mean for

someone who might be looking at them. Additionally, teachers could adjust their grading practices in a way that would resolve them from feeling the need to bump up a grade.

Why Didn't I Learn This in College?

It is clear to see through the issues raised under the recently discussed theme, *How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?* that there are several issues of validity at play. It is appropriate then, that this study uses validity theory (Brookhart, 1991; Brookhart & Nitko, 2014) as one of its theoretical frameworks to guide the study. Another issue, however, is that teachers often don't know their "hodgepodge" grading practices are even "hodgepodge." "There is ample evidence that most teachers receive little training in effective grading and that unintentional bias often influences teachers' grade assignments" (Guskey, 2006, p. 670).

And this was echoed among the first-year teachers, *Why didn't I learn this in college?* This theme draws on the other theoretical framework used in this study, which was the constructivist theory (Bonner & Chen, 2009; Cobb, 1994; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Von Glaserfeld, 1995), which espouses that teachers hold values that govern their actions based upon the experiences they've experienced in their own life (e.g. as students themselves). For these reasons, teacher education in general needs to start paying attention to the research in this regard.

Nothing's Changed

For years, researchers and measurement specialists have been making their case to both teacher educators and policy makers for the need to improve and standardize grading practice instruction in teacher preparation programs (Bonner & Chen, 2009; Brookhart, 2011a; DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; Mertler, 2005; Popham, 2009). This call for explicit and standardized instruction usually falls under the umbrella of assessment literacy (DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, & Cao, 2013).

Despite the call for change, and the readily available resources available to implement effective assessment literacy instruction (and grading practice instruction) in teacher preparation programs, these findings reveal that at least where the participants of this study attended college, there is still nothing that has changed, reporting what they learned about grading in college as “not helpful... not specific enough information,” and “None! We really didn’t receive a lot.” Grading practice instruction, and the bigger umbrella of assessment literacy for that matter, receive insignificant attention in teacher education programs. In essence, if anything of great worth is likely to be taught, it will be by “luck-of-the-draw” because, “setting curriculum for such courses [such as assessment literacy] remains unstandardized and largely falls within the purview of individual programs and instructors who teach assessment courses” (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013, p. 358).

Bring It On

First-year teachers are just that – they are first-year teachers. They already are busy enough getting acclimated to a new job, school culture, and preparing daily lessons aligned to core curriculum content standards. Goodwin (2012) reports two other factors that also occupy first-year teachers’ time, which are struggling with finding a balance for classroom management, and navigating through the curricular freedom they are burdened with because of, “a lack of guidance for lesson and unit planning” (p. 84). And now, because they have been ill prepared for grading responsibilities, they are also spending their precious little remaining “spare” time as a first-year teacher (which isn’t much) looking for resources on how to help them navigate the process of learning to grade. Results from this study indicated that the participants spent much of their time seeking out various resources for how to grade, including searching online as well as traveling to national conferences for this grading practice knowledge. First-year teachers were

eager to learn how to grade better because they felt the grades they gave their students was a direct reflection of their ability to teach, as viewed by their administrators.

If I was in Charge

First-year teachers reflected their grading practices needed to be tweaked or refined, or perhaps completely redone before they started their next school year. While they are anxious to change their practices in an effort to “get it right” next year, they also have recommendations for what they’d like to see added to the college curriculum. Their wish lists for these additions to college curriculum stem from their experiences as a first-year teacher and what they wished they would have known how to do. The first recommendation is for teachers to learn how to align their grades to student knowledge; they’d also like to have guidance on how to interpret grades reported by other teachers. This finding echoes a similar finding of Mertler (2005) who discusses the need for teachers to be skilled in interpreting assessment results. The second recommendation from the first-year teachers is to learn about the various ways to grade, the pros and cons of each style of grading, and then also be given a chance to really practice how to grade like they were instructed so its not a foreign practice stepping into the first-year classroom to teach (and grade). This finding also echoes similar findings of DeLuca and Bellara (2013) and DeLuca and Klinger (2010) who report that teachers need to have more opportunities to become assessment literate in college.

What I Want to Change for Next Year

Recent research conducted by Hobson and Ashby (2012) reveals that first-year teachers rely heavily on professional development support during their initial year of teaching. They report that the recognized phenomenon of “reality shock” hits the teachers a second time, but more forceful than the initial shock. The initial shock comes when they step into the classroom

for their first year of teaching. This second “reality shock” comes when teacher induction professional development support is removed at the start of the teachers’ second-year of teaching. These findings indicate that first-year teachers, and second-year teachers, not only depend on this professional development support, but that they also want it and welcome it.

Findings in this study support the findings of Hobson and Ashby (2012). First-year teacher participants in this study want and welcome professional development, in so much as it relates to what they are doing in their classroom. Through the course of the interviews, participants regularly made comments about next year like, “Next year will be better,” and “I want to change this for next year.”

Because I Didn’t Learn it in College

As previously mentioned, one of the recommendations that first-year teachers would make to add to the college curriculum would be for teachers to learn how to align grades to content standards and to student knowledge. But, since they didn’t learn this in college, this was at the top of their list of things to learn and change for next year. They want their grades to reflect whether or not a student has mastered a content standard or skill. They also want others to be able to interpret their grades as being able to accurately know if their students can indeed master their content standards or not. They’d also like help interpreting what other teachers’ grades mean. In regards to this finding, Jason insightfully explained:

And that I think is one of the challenges that we face as educators is creating that connection with, with parents. And with society. Is, what do these grades represent? Is it a snapshot? Or is it really indicative of student learning? And are we placing too much pressure on one single event, or one single letter, when we really don't see the whole picture which relates to all of the things we see going on now in policy. [exactly]. Can

they be interpreted by the same by anyone who looks at the report card? Probably not.

Probably not just because we all bring our own biases to the table.

O'Connor and Wormeli (2011) argue for this point described by Jason in their article, "Reporting Student Learning." They advise that grades need to be aligned to content standards and that the reporting, or the giving of grades, needs to reflect – and only reflect – the measurement or mastery of student learning in regards to these content standards. Following this one practice will help first-year teachers to align their grades to student knowledge.

Willing and Ready to Change

Several first-year teachers in this study self-identified themselves as progressive educators. They want to improve education by always considering what is best for students. They are open-minded and willing to change their grading practices if it is better than what they are doing, and if it will benefit students. These findings, as noted in the introduction to this section, echo the findings of Hobson and Ashby (2012) who indicate that teachers are willing and want to change. Although they recommend "further exploration of the prevalence of ['reality aftershock'] in different educational systems" (p. 189), they conclude that the need for professional development support among new teachers is great since their findings suggest that second-year teachers report feelings of professional isolation, fragmented and disrupted early professional development, and a longing to have a mentor teacher again that continues providing support post student teaching.

Standards-Based Grading

While this study did not set out to learn about standards-based grading, it is clear that the first-year teachers who participated in the study are well aware of what it is and the benefits that could come about from them making a change to grade using standards-based grading practices.

Reeves (2004) also offers two reasons to counteract naysayers who still would rather employ traditional grading practices of one letter grade, A-B-C-D-F:

First, ... the vast majority of teachers are not arbitrary and capricious in their grading policies, but the documentation of precisely what lies behind the “B” or “D+” is frequently known only known to the teacher. Thus no matter how rational the grading policy might be, if it is shrouded in mystery, it appears irrational to parents, students, and the public...

Second, it is disgraceful that emotional and professional energy, as well as extraordinary financial resources, are inappropriately allocated to programs for children whose educational achievement has been “diagnosed” through poor grades. (p. 75)

Reeves (2004) goes onto share an analogy very similar to the one captured by Trevor, as mentioned in Chapter Four under the section, Standards-Based Grading. Both Reeves’ and Trevor’s scenarios explain the ambiguity of not knowing the “missing pieces” when a student didn’t master all of the concepts during a given school year. They both then explain the difficulty for the upcoming teacher in trying to figure out the missing pieces, or holes, in the students learning. Reeves (2004) concludes his analogy by emphatically stating that had a standards-based grading system been in place to report grades of what was learned, then it would not have been, “necessary to waste a year of time and resources forcing the student to receive a failing grade in order for him to finally get help” (p. 75).

Through the process of self-reflection during the interviews, some of the first-year teachers realized that they have the power within their own classrooms to begin applying standards-based grading practices. With their positive and progressive attitude, they felt that if they start implementing standards-based grading at a grass-roots level, then it could lead to

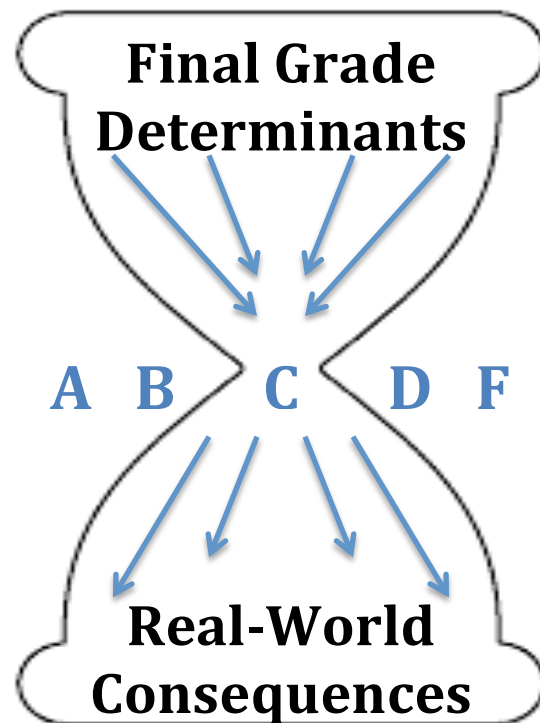
changes on a bigger scale, e.g., their departments or schools adopting standards-based grading. Katie expresses her thoughts optimistically regarding standards-based grading, saying, “I’m very intrigued and supportive.” Catherine, as quoted in Chapter Four, also acknowledges her desire to implement standards-based grading, but stated that she believed if real change in grading practices was going to happen on a bigger scale than her own classroom, then building and district administrators, and policy makers would have to implement directives and legislation from a top-down approach, to which she also added, “I think that it should be that way and it should definitely be connected to the common core standards.” Thus, it is clear to see that there is a desire here for something better, and if that better is standards-based grading to which the first-year teachers have eluded to, they are ready and willing to change their grading practices.

If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?

Research is clear about the many things that final grades impact, from student self-esteem and home-front consequences, good or bad, to college program admission and scholarship eligibility, and everything else in between (Brookhart, 1991; Marzano, 2000). Figure 7: The Hourglass Effect of Traditional Grading depicts the myriad components that go into a grade and then, as a single grade is given, the myriad outcomes and consequences of receiving such a grade.

Figure 7: The Hourglass Effect of Traditional Grading

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignments • Bell work • Assessments • Homework • Participation • Projects • Effort • Process • Quizzes • Parent Involvement • Progress • Zero • Behavior • Late work • Cheating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exempt • Didn't Grade • Averages • Attitude • Product • Citizenship • Extra-credit • Hardworking • Writing • Retakes • Alternative Assessments • Activities • Summative Assessments • Common Formative Assessments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End-of-Level Tests • Pre-assessments • Post-assessments • Standards • Mastery of Skills • Demonstrates Proficiency • Weights • Percentages • Points • Categories |
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|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem • Scholarship eligibility • College acceptance • Commencement Speakers • Graduation from high school • Eligibility for extra-curricular activities • Grade level Promotion • School grades compared to other schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement for honor's classes or intervention classes • Remedial Help decisions • Home life (Good grades=\$\$; Bad grades=grounding) • Social status among peers • Class placement • Teacher/Administrators' perceptions about students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPA • Honor Roll • National Recognition • Community Rewards (e.g. ski resort season passes for honor roll students) • Judgment of Student Performance • Motivation for future learning • Judgment of Teacher Performance |
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Suffer

Referring to Figure 7, it is clear to see that interpreting the meaning of a grade can be very difficult given the many variables that play into the final grade. One might conclude then that to interpret the grades of a student and what those grades represent is an ambiguous task because they are unaware of each teachers' grading individual grading policies that went into computing such grades.

Also ambiguous is the title of this section: Suffer. It is intentional. What do grades mean? Results of this study indicated that first-year teachers struggled with how to crunch a whole lot of factors into a single grade. Ambiguity was one of the immense causes of frustration that first-year teachers experienced in learning to grade. A question for reflection is who suffers as a result of ambiguous grades. Is it students, parents, teachers, school administrators, teacher educators, policy makers, and/or the general public? Reeves (2004) claims those who suffer from ambiguous grades most of all is the students. Findings in this study support this claim too. Remember Catherine's first quarter of teaching. She still feels bad for her kids having had to:

[Stumble] along with me until I finally figured it out... because I felt like, um especially 1st quarter. Probably none of the grades were valid... There was no real foundation under them. And, they... I still tried to grade fair, but I wasn't grading well. So probably first quarter, [my grades were] not real valid.

Fortunately for Catherine, she sought for help by researching online and attending conferences specifically for obtaining instruction on how to grade better.

Magic Show

First-year teachers in this study reported the trickiness of learning to grade. They realized the ambiguity associated with giving grades and worked hard to eliminate as much of

the ambiguity as possible from their grades. The tricky part was deciding which factors to include in the final grades and they did this by carefully designing personal grading policies that would allow (or attempt to allow) their grades to communicate student achievement.

O'Connor (2011) also understands the trickiness of learning to grade. That is why in his book, *A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades*, he offers insights, tips, and sound suggestions for improving the clarity of grading. Even if reading this book was the only grading practice instruction that first-year teachers received, they would be much better prepared to deal with the major complexities of grading (illustrated in Figure 7) than they otherwise were coming out college.

My Job Depends on it, Doesn't it?

A final finding in this study is that first-year teachers perceive that their administrators, based upon the grades they give their students, evaluate their performance as teachers. Administrators in many schools have the technological capabilities afforded by grading software programs to digitally check in on a teacher and evaluate how his or her students are doing in regards to their grades at any point during a grading period. Perhaps it is for this reason that first-year teachers feel this way. They feel that their grades must be agreeable to their administrators and indicate that all of their students are progressing and learning.

Another possible reason that teachers perceive their administrators judge their performance based on the grades they give could be the national talk happening in several states of teacher merit pay. Ritter and Jensen (2010) discuss pros and cons of teacher merit pay:

When done correctly, merit pay programs can do more than just reward teachers for excellent work. They can also result in a more collaborative, student-focused, learning environment. While the potential pitfalls of these programs are very real, there are

certainly easy ways to overcome these issues. And in the end, if rewarding excellence (and retaining excellent teachers) in the classroom is tied to increased student learning, shouldn't that at least "merit" further evaluations of these programs? (p. 37)

In light of this literature, perhaps the perception of teachers' performance being evaluated by their administrators based upon the grades they give their students is just hearsay, at least until the if and when of merit pay becomes state legislated and mandated policy. So if grades could talk, they would say that they are ambiguous, hard to interpret, tricky to give, and are the evidence of perceived evaluative judgment.

Discussion Review

This study has revealed several findings that help to answer the main research question and its ancillary questions. As a result of this study, the researcher was able to write a statement of essences that describes the phenomenon of first-year teachers learning to grade. He sent this statement of essences to each of his participants as a process of member checking (Creswell, 2008; Moustakas, 1994) so that they could each see if he got it right, or if he had overlooked and/or devalued certain aspects of this phenomenon. After reading the statement of essences, participants responded to the email, where Trevor exclaimed, "It sounds right on the money!!!" Katie added, "You are spot on!!!! Great summary and great analysis." And, Amber said it best, "I think it sounds just like my first year of grading!" In all, every one of the six participants responded with affirmations that this was indeed an accurate reflection of their experiences.

The findings of the study revealed many things about first-year teachers learning to grade, some of which were not addressed in the literature review prior to the study being conducted. Three of these findings not included in the literature review are first, both giving grades (as a teacher), and receiving grades (as a student), is an emotional process (Anderman, Anderman, &

Griesinger, 1999); second is that grades affect motivation in great ways, including mastery learning (Guskey, 2010; Senko, Hulleman, & Harakiewicz, 2011); and third, teachers perceive that their job performance (as based on administrative evaluation) is in part, based on the grades they give their students (Ritter & Jensen, 2010).

Other significant findings in this study that included recommendations for ideas previously expounded on in the literature are: first-year teachers advocate for more explicit instruction on grading practices in teacher education programs (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; Mertler, 2005; Popham, 2009); in addition, first-year teachers also want to learn how to create and implement valid grading practices that accurately connect the grades they give to both student learning and achievement, and to core content standards (Brookhart & Nitko, 2014; DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, & Chunhua, 2013; Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Reeves, 2004); as new teachers, they are busy and worried about the time-consuming process of grading – indeed, they want help in managing their time effectively (Goodwin, 2012; O'Connor, 2011); furthermore, first-year teachers are open to new ideas and also willing to modify, adapt, or even completely change their grading practices in order to better communicate student learning to students, parents, and other key stakeholders (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Hobson & Ashby, 2012); finally, a major finding of this study is that first-year teachers both understand the concept of, and desire to implement a type of grading system like standards-based grading in their own classrooms, which would help them to communicate grades more reliably, accurately, and effectively (Brookhart 2013; Guskey, 2001b; Guskey, Jung, & Swan, 2011). Each of these findings throughout this research study have addressed different aspects of the research question and contributed to the development of the phenomenon that is how first-year teachers learn to grade.

Limitations of the Study

While the researcher used the Epoche process and also wrote analytic memos, the primary and single source of data collection for this study was through recorded interviews with the participants. Triangulated data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) could have helped with the reliability of this study, meaning that more than one type of data would have been collected, thus allowing the different data sources to converge and strengthen the findings of the study. Although this study did not employ triangulation as a method of the data collection process, it did include in-depth interviews, multiple interviews with each participant, and member checking which all serve to make this less of an issue.

Data collection for this study took place over the course of a single month – the last month of the school year. While this study was intended to find out how first-year teachers learn to grade during the entire first-year of teaching, interviews were not conducted with participants at any point of the school year (the last month excepted) to account for changes in participants' grading practices. However, it can reasonably be assumed that having conducted the interviews during the last month of school was appropriate because teachers had now experienced the full spectrum of their first-year of teaching, and so the data received in the study was sufficient.

Another limitation is generalizability, which is often associated as a weakness of qualitative research, (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), meaning that this study took place in only one location involving a very small number of participants. Five of six participants all taught their first year in the same school district (JSD), while the other participant taught his first year in the Mid-west. Additionally, five of the six participants completed their teacher education program at the same university, while the other participant is finishing up her ARL requirements within the JSD. It would be interesting to know what the findings of this study would reveal if research

participants taught in a different geographical region of the United States, thus potentially having vastly different experiences that would result in a different statement of essences and description of the phenomenon.

A final limitation to consider is that this study draws upon the phenomenological approach, which relies heavily on the interpretations of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). Had another researcher conducted the study, a set of very different, yet also valid and reliable findings, could also have been revealed.

Future Research

As previously mentioned, triangulation could help strengthen this study. Thus, a future study involving triangulation could strengthen the merits of this study; additionally, as quoted in the initial part of Chapter One, “if education research is to be relied upon to develop sound policy and practice, then conducting replications on important findings is essential to moving toward a more reliable and trustworthy understanding of educational environments” (Makel & Plucker, 2014, p. 313). Therefore, replicating this study and incorporating triangulation would serve two purposes. First, it would strengthen the reliability of the study by using multiple data points; second, it would serve as additional evidence for policy makers and teacher educators to consider when making important decisions, such as instructional requirements requiring grading practice instruction.

Another possible future study directly relating to this study would be a longitudinal study in which the teacher participants participated in interviews not only during their first year of teaching, but over the course of three to five years. This would serve to add further insight to watch how their grading practices evolve from year to year, as well as provide further insight into the direct results of this study.

This study was situated in the qualitative methodology of phenomenology. A natural and applicable next step for future qualitative research on this topic would be to conduct a grounded theory study. Creswell (2007) explains that a study using grounded theory methodology is a logical next step because in phenomenology, the focus that is traditionally studied is the shared lived experience (or phenomenon) of participants; in a grounded theory study, the focus of the study becomes how participants involved themselves to with a certain aspect of the phenomenon, or to how they have reacted to a certain aspect of the phenomenon. Thus, a grounded theory study focused on an idea or theme that has emerged from this study in which participants acted upon, such as working on the process of aligning grades with student knowledge and content standards, would be an appropriate next step to follow up this phenomenology study.

Another future study possibility stemming from findings in this study could focus on the time-management of teachers in regards to grading (Goodwin, 2012). This could be a quantitative study that tracks the amounts of time teachers spend grading various types of assessments, and at what times during a grading period do they spend more time grading than others. Other larger scale qualitative studies that could branch off of this study could involve teacher training studies, such as comparing grading practices of new and veteran teachers, or comparing grading practices of new teachers where half (control group) receive the same grading practice instruction in college as they normally would get, and the other half (experimental group) receives explicit grading practice instruction and is given opportunities to practice and apply it, and then study the results of these two groups as they teach in first-year classrooms.

Moreover, this study raised issues on a broader scale than just how first-year teachers learn to grade. Other considerations for future research could include studies focused on standards-based grading and how new teachers are negotiating to grade in this format as opposed

to traditional grading methods (Brookhart, 2013; DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, & Chunhua, 2013; Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Reeves, 2004).

Another important direction for consideration of future study is the current status of assessment literacy in teacher education (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013) and what teacher educators are doing to better prepare first-year teachers in the area of implementing valid grading practices that connect to core content standards and accurately reflect student learning and knowledge (Brookhart & Nitko, 2014; DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, & Chunhua, 2013; Reeves, 2004).

Finally, on a much broader scale than what this study focused on is based on the finding that grades affect motivation. Studies could look at the relationship of motivation and grades in ways that have to do with mastery learning which is concept that implies students will work on a concept until they have mastered it, regardless of the source or type of motivation for learning (Guskey, 2010; Senko, Hulleman, & Harakiewicz, 2011). Another approach to this topic of motivation and grades could look at goal orientation theory, which has to do with performance goals and mastery goals, meaning a concept that students either want to learn for the sake of learning and/or to be perceived as competent by others (Bong, 2009; Shim & Ryan, 2005). It would be interesting to see the affect that motivation and grades have on either or both of performance and mastery goals.

Implications of the Study

Theoretical

This study used the theoretical frameworks of the constructivist theory and validity theory. The constructivist theory considers how teachers' prior knowledge influences future practice, as well as how teachers build (or construct) new ideas based on the current times and cultures that surround them (Bonner & Chen, 2009; Cobb, 1994; Colburn, 2000; Packer &

Goicoechea, 2000; Von Glaserfeld, 1995). This study revealed that first-year teachers' prior experience with grading, based upon either positive or negative experiences, has influenced their current grading practice habits. It can reasonably assumed then that if first-year teachers had received more explicit instruction in the area of grading practices during college, this would have added to their prior knowledge and thus also influenced their current grading practices.

Validity theory was also used as a theoretical framework for this study. Validity theory suggests that knowledge of theory and empirical evidence work together to guide adequate and appropriate interpretations of assessments and other measurement criteria (Brookhart & Nitko, 2014; Messick, 1991). This study revealed that first-year teachers value judgments of their grades were often lacking in terms of validity or reliability. Reasons for this could be that they have not had enough time to learn proper uses of measurement tools; or, it could be because they are unintentionally making misguided validity judgments due to lack of knowledge concerning grading practice theory and its supporting empirical research (Guskey, 2006).

However, although this study was situated in the constructivist theory and validity theory, neither of these theories convincingly explains the emotional aspect of this study's finding. The theoretical framework of emotional intelligence could serve as a useful framework for this study in which to view the findings of the emotional aspect. Salovey and Mayer (1990) state:

The emotionally intelligent person... does not mindlessly seek pleasure, but rather attends to emotion in the path toward growth. Emotional intelligence involves self-regulation appreciative of the fact that temporarily hurt feelings or emotional restraint is often necessary in the service of a greater objective. (p. 201)

Keeping the idea of emotional intelligence in mind as described above by Salovey and Mayer, now consider an experience of Amber's that was shared earlier to talk about reasons for not wanting to grade:

But it's when we got into assignments that are like, two pieces of paper so they're stapled together so I have like this whole middle section that I have to like, flip through it, and it's like time consuming for them to do, time consuming for me, if I wanna like grade it, so that's where it got frustrating, or when I hit ones like that, it was just like, alright, did they do it? I'm just gonna give them points. So I think that was just my biggest frustration, was longer homework assignments.

If the goal of Amber's homework assignments were to check for student learning and provide feedback on that learning, then Amber allowed her emotions to inhibit the learning growth of her students because she changed her grading practice to reflect that the homework assignment was only based on effort – did they do it or not. Emotional intelligence, therefore, could also be a useful lens to view the results of this study through, in addition to the constructivist theory and validity theory.

Educational

The findings of this study have direct implications for policymakers and teacher educators, including professional development instructors. First and foremost is the finding, although not new (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; Mertler, 2005; Popham, 2009; Stiggins, 2004), which is that teacher education programs are sending first-year teachers into the field ill prepared to deal with matters of assessment measurement and reporting those results through grading. Teacher educators need to take action in providing systematic instruction on grading and assessment practices to curb this national problem in education. Guskey and Bailey (2010)

stated their hope for writing their book, *Developing Standards-based Report Cards*, was that, “[the book] finds its way into undergraduate education courses to help those preparing to become teachers develop a deeper understanding of grading and reporting issues” (p. 12). Guskey and Bailey understand the need to better prepare future teachers about grading and reporting, and it is important that teacher educators understand this too.

Teacher educators and professional development leaders need to take responsibility for the colloquial phrase, “where the rubber meets the road,” when it comes to helping educational research inform practice (Frederiksen & Beck, 2010). They can do this by sharing the latest in educational research with teachers because often teachers, in a climate of constant educational reform, are not aware of what research is even communicating. Recommendations for how teacher educators can do this is to include requiring at minimum, a 3 credit hour class dedicated to classroom assessment. DeLuca and Bellara (2013) assert that this alone, however, is not enough because where these courses already exist, the “curriculum for such courses remains unstandardized and largely falls within the purview of individual programs and instructors who teach assessment courses” (p. 358), and generally only cover the topics of, “educational assessment theory, philosophy, and practice as delineated by student assessment standards” (p. 358). Thus, classroom assessment classes *should* be a part of a teacher education’s core curriculum, *and* the curriculum for such a course should be standardized to include opportunities to not only learn about topics of assessment theory and philosophy, but also grading practices, i.e. traditional methods as well as contemporary methods like standards-based grading, including the historical evolution of assessment and grading (to help students understand the “Whys” behind them), as well as the students being required to evaluate the pros and cons of various types of assessments and grading practices. Another component of the curriculum should also include

practical implementation of the content, meaning that students would be required to design and implement various types of assessments, to some degree, and to practice grading each of these assessments using both traditional grading methods and standards-based grading methods. This component of the curriculum could either be embedded in the class of classroom assessment, or it could be a required extension, such as an educational lab class, or an internship or apprenticeship where the pre-service teacher is assigned to work with master teacher.

Policy

Another implication of the study is for policy makers and teacher educators to consider the recent (and ever-changing) changes in educational assessment mandates. DeLuca and Bellara (2013) explain:

As the landscape of student assessment changes toward... an accountability and standards-based orientation,... there is a continued need to shift preservice assessment education experiences that prepare teachers to embrace multiple purposes and practices of assessment in schools. This shift will not be easy. It confronts teacher candidates' as well as teacher educators' historical experiences with assessments as strictly summative tasks" (p. 367)

In line with DeLuca and Bellara's recommendation, current educational reforms currently being funded by our federal government should also be taken into account. According to the United States Department of Education (2015):

The key initiative in this K-12 reform effort has been the Race to the Top program, which has provided more than \$4 billion to support and spotlight some of the most promising ideas to improve education, through comprehensive reform strategies based on college-

and career-ready academic standards and assessments, increased use of data to improve instruction, great teachers and principals in every school, and an intense focus on turning around the lowest-performing schools. (K-12 Reforms)

It should be noted that based on this statement, even though a current focus of education reforms is on standards and assessments, there is not a focus on the reporting of said assessments. It does mention reforms for “increased use of data to improve instruction” (K-12 Reforms), but it does not say where this data is coming from, although it can reasonably be assumed the data being referred to is from the standardized assessments, meaning that the reporting (or grading) on standards and assessments is still not an issue being addressed in current educational reforms.

Therefore, in light of the findings in this study, two recommendations for the consideration of future policies are given: 1- legislation that mandates educator-licensing standards to include a component addressing both assessment of student learning, and the reliable and valid reporting of such assessments (i.e. grading), and 2- legislation that mandates the implementation of standards-based grading, which could be affixed as an addendum to existing policies of educational reform regarding standards-based assessments. Or, said in other words, recall Catherine’s plea:

I think there should be... a total separate class... [on] how to grade and how to align those grades with the common core. Because they already teach you how to teach to the Common Core. Give me some explicit instruction in how to grade it.

These recommendations are both timely and valid because it is likely that educational research will continue to provide new and stronger evidence in support of standards-based grading. This would only be a natural development in the current era of standards-based education, and now standards-based assessment. Also, based on the findings of this study, first-year teachers have

already developed the mind-set to accept this change in the educational landscape. Now this change must be fully embraced.

Summary

This research study was a phenomenological study that focused on answering the research question, How do first-year teachers decide how to grade? Applying the major processes of phenomenological inquiry, the researcher interviewed six first-year teachers in three separate interviews. Each interview focused on a different angle of addressing the research question. As a result of this study, five themes emerged, which were: 1- Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended); 2- How Valid are my Hodgepodge Grading Practices?; 3- Why Didn’t I Learn This in College; 4- What I want to Change for Next Year; and 5- If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say? Through further analysis of these themes and their related sub-themes, a statement of essences was generated to describe the phenomenon of first-year teachers learning to grade. This statement of essences underwent the process of member checking as each participant read the statement of essences and agreed with its content, thus affirming the validity of the results of this study. The study then discussed the findings in connection with the literature on grading practices, as well as through the lenses of the constructivist theory and validity theory. Limitations of the study and directions for further research were discussed, as well as future implications for policy makers and educators. This research study also contains seven figures and nine tables to help present the evidence and interpretations of the results.

Return to Epoche

Completing the task of the Epoche is the researcher’s attempt to try and remove themselves and their biases from the study. This is never an easy task with a perfect result, but the more the researcher returns to his Epoche, the clearer he is able to think about the data

presented him without clouding his thinking with his own ideas about the study at hand (Creswell, 2008; Moustakas, 1994). And for this reason, I return to my Epoche one last time:

The process of writing Chapter 5 and blending the results of Chapters 3 and 4 together with the research discussed in Chapter 2, as well as new research not discussed in the literature review, was very enjoyable because I made many connections to what the results of the study showed and what has already been written about in the literature. Nonetheless, this discovery also made it hard for me to keep my own biases on this subject out of the writing for Chapter 5. This was because there was so much **I wanted to say**, but I knew that I needed to let the results of the study and the literature **say it instead**.

My biggest connection has to do with standards-based grading. Again, ever since my time at BYU-Hawaii as an undergrad student, I have been a huge advocate for standards-based grading. I have already mentioned my frustrations with both myself for grading with “hodgepodge” traditional grading methods instead of standards-based grading practices, and for the culture that created the need for me to use traditional grading methods. However, through the process of this study, I have discovered that the time is now. What I mean by this is that when I started teaching, the overall minds of educators weren’t ready or willing to consider a change to their grading practices. This is different now. The first-year teachers in this study have experienced the necessary paradigm shift in how they consider the purpose of grading and they are enthused with the idea of learning to grade using standards-based grading practices.

As I was writing Chapter 5, I re-immersed myself in the literature to bring me back to what the research is saying about grading and I made what I think is a grand

discovery that I had not addressed in my literature review. This discovery came as I was reading Guskey and Bailey's (2010) book, *Developing Standards-based Report Cards*, which is that the idea of defining standards and clarifying learning goals as being a new and recent development in education is all wrong. I share the three paragraphs from their book as it beautifully illustrates the discovery I made. They point out:

Ralph W. Tyler (1949) stressed that prior to teaching anyone anything, two fundamental questions must be addressed: (1) What do we want students to learn and be able to do? and (2) What evidence would we accept to verify that learning?

As Tyler put it,

if an educational program is to be planned and if efforts for continued improvement are to be made, it is necessary to have some conception of the goals being sought. These educational objectives become the criteria by which materials are selected, content is outlined, instructional procedures are developed and tests and examinations are prepared. All aspects of the educational program are really means to accomplish these basic educational purposes.

As self-evident as this may seem, Tyler (1949) also pointed out that most decisions regarding curriculum and instruction in schools are not based on student learning. Instead, they are based on *time*. We tend to worry more about what content should be covered in the time available than about what students learn and acquire. As a result, we cannot say with certainty what the graduates of our schools have learned and are able to do. All we know for sure, argued Tyler, is how much time they spent in the school environment. (pp. 15-16)

This insightfulness that is pointed out by Tyler (1949) (as quoted in Guskey & Bailey, 2010) helped me realize that the idea of standards is not such a new concept, like so many think it is, including myself in my literature review. And, standards-based grading is a solution so many are looking for to bring clarity to what students know and can do, but yet are afraid to fully embrace. Also, it helped me to realize that the “take away” from this phenomenological study is about time. Not the time referred to by Tyler, but rather about the time meaning the here and now. Seeds of thought regarding standards-based grading have been planted – for even longer than many have thought – and, these seeds of thought have also been cultivated now for several years (Brookhart, 2013; DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, & Chunhua, 2013; Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Reeves, 2004). Now it is time to reap the rewards of the harvest and embrace the changing world that is standards-based grading.

APPENDIX A: Interview 1: Structure and Questions

Face-to-Face Interviews: Interviews will be conducted in a private, comfortable setting for the participant of their choosing. Interviews will be scheduled for one hour and they will be audio recorded using the digital computer program, Audacity.

Interview Protocol: The first interview will center on the first-year teacher's experience with grades prior to their teaching assignment. That is, they will be asked to identify how they have learned about grades, including being graded themselves and content on grading in their teacher education programs, as well as any other experiences that surface. The interview protocol will have some preliminary basic guiding questions that are open-ended designed to get the participants thinking about their knowledge of grading practices and how it was done before they began teaching. Some of the initial questions to guide this first interview are listed below:

1. Describe experiences of how you were graded. What experiences stand out above the rest?
2. Did your grades influence you as a student? In what ways?
3. Were you satisfied or frustrated with your teachers' grading practices? Explain.
4. What types of instruction did you receive on grading practice in the college/teacher preparation program?

APPENDIX B: Interview 2: Structure and Questions

Face-to-Face Interviews: Interviews will be conducted in a private, comfortable setting for the participant of their choosing. Interviews will be scheduled for one hour and they will be audio recorded using the digital computer program, Audacity.

Interview Protocol: The second interview will center on the first-year teacher's experience with grades as it relates to their current job and first teaching assignment. That is, they will be asked to identify how they have learned to give scores to their own students, including the accountability piece that comes with first-year teachers like being responsible for the final grades and dealing with parents regarding grades. The interview protocol will have some preliminary basic guiding questions that are open-ended designed to get the participants thinking about their knowledge of grading practices and how they are actually grading. Some of the initial questions to guide this second interview are listed below:

1. Describe experiences of how you are grading. What experiences stand out above the rest?
2. Are your grades valid? Explain.
3. What types of scores/marks are included in a final grade?
4. Do your grades reflect progress, product, or process? Or do they reflect some combination of any two or all three?
5. Do your students know what their grades mean?
6. How would someone interpret your grades?
7. Are your grades connected to the content standards? Do your assessments match the content standards? Do your grades match the assessments?

8. Do you have school-wide or department-wide grading policies?

APPENDIX C: Interview 3: Structure and Questions

Face-to-Face Interviews: Interviews will be conducted in a private, comfortable setting for the participant of their choosing. Interviews will be scheduled for one hour and they will be audio recorded using the digital computer program, Audacity.

Interview Protocol: The third interview will center on the first-year teacher's experience with grades prior to their teaching assignment and any connections that they have to how they currently are learning to grade. That is, they'll be asked to connect experiences from their learning about grades and being graded to how they are now grading, and to what they've learned about grading and how they are/aren't applying that knowledge in. The interview protocol will have some preliminary basic guiding questions that are open-ended designed to get the participants thinking about their knowledge of grading practices and how it was done before they began teaching as well as how they are grading now and how their beliefs have changed, if at all. Some of the initial questions to guide this third interview are listed below:

1. Describe experiences of how you were graded. What experiences stand out above the rest? Do you see any connection with these experiences and how you are grading now?
2. Did your grades influence you as a student? In what ways? Do these influences carry over today as you grade your own students?
3. Were you satisfied or frustrated with your teachers' grading practices? Explain. If you were a student in your own class, how would you feel about your grading practices?
4. What types of instruction did you receive on grading practice in the college/teacher preparation program? How have you applied this instruction into your practice?

5. Do you consider your grades to be valid? Can they be interpreted the same by anyone who looks at the report card?
6. How should grades be interpreted? Should they be referenced to the content standards?

APPENDIX D: Example of Meaning Units

Theme: How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?

Sub-theme: Bump a Grade Up

And, if they turned in all of their homework, it might bump it up like half, or 2/3 of a letter grade, or maybe a third.

And I was like, he just wants an A. And that's where his thinking is, "I need an A. My parents want me to get an A. But I don't wanna have to work for it." But, he still wants an A. And he's at an A-. And its like, he still wants it. But I like that there is the motivation to do well, so it was, but that was kind of like, I don't know. That was a tricky one for me cuz I wasn't like that... And I was like, "you know you copied the whole thing" He's like, "well, okay, I'll do it." So I hand it to him and then he started working. So it kind of gave him a second opportunity to do it and he actually did it.

They're starting to realize that after me telling them 15 times, Hey, if you want your grade to go up, you can turn in your 10 missing homework assignments. That might bump you from a, you know, a C+ to a B-. But if you wanna go from a C+ to a B+ or A- or something, you gotta take that test score that is a 70 and bump it to a 90 something.

I attached my grades to self worth a lot as a kid and I wanted to be a perfectionist and a people pleaser, and so if I got a good grade I was a good person and if I didn't I was disappointed in myself and felt like I wasn't good enough. Um, and so when I am grading my students, I tend to error on the side of mercy and perhaps bump their grades up a little bit if there is ever a question and simply because it did mean a lot to me to get a higher grade.

I am less strict with when they master something. And am more focused on, can they do, or perform, or show, or whatever it is on the actual skill - show proficiency. That is what my focus is on. So yes, there is definitely that impact.

but then, with process it also depends sometimes on the kid. Because I have a few kids that um, are really, really smart. And really, really good kids. And they, like their home situation might not be the best or whatever. But they'll work really hard. And so, if I know they've worked really, really hard. And it might be a B- paper. But I feel okay giving them maybe a B on it because they came in met with me a week before it was due. And then they did another draft. And they did another draft.

there are times where I might give a kid a little bit of a bump just because I know how much effort he put in to get, to even like make it a B- paper. And so, I'll give him kind of a pat on the back. Bump it to a B. That's all.

I know that they've, they've worked really hard and come and talked to me a few times, and maybe gone to the tutoring at lunch or whatever. And I know that they've put in the work. Even though it might be, it might not be quite the same level as this kid over here that got like a B without as much work, I might not bump this kid up from maybe a B- to a B just for that effort. And I don't know if thats like really good thing because I think courage should be interpreted. Like they're like, they should portray how much, how well they know the content. Um, and what they've learned. But at the same time, I think it kind of is a learning think for the kid to see, "Oh, I worked really hard and I got a B out of it." Then the next time he is going to work just as hard or harder and maybe go for a B+ or an A paper. Something like that.

And then if they went back and you know, I guess where things got unique, was... the last district assessment I had a few honor's kids that had had just a few bad weeks and just, you know, weren't doing as well at the time. But at the end, they had figured it out and were doing well. And I realized that even if they got a 100% on the district test, they would still be at like 89% instead of 90. And so I made a deal with them, and you know, after talking to my principal and a few other teachers, look if you get 95% or better on the district assessment, I'll go back and fix other things that you have done, give you a little bit of a bump on those, because I can't give you extra credit on the district assessment, but this assignment that

you got an 80% on and then you got a 95% on the district assessment. I'll bump that up a little bit so that you get that extra percentage point. And because they are kids. And all of those kids ended up getting 100% on the district assessment. So, to me that was enough of a reason for me to give them that extra 1% in the gradebook to give them an A because they were showing me that they - even though they didn't get every question right on the homework, they knew it. In the gradebook, or on that district assessment, they knew how to do it. So, we bumped them up a little on that... When I did that in [the Midwest], I had to do it carefully. I couldn't give them an extra, those couple kids that would've had an 89% and really, what was graded... all they had to get to was 89.5% and then it rounds up. So they're at 89.1. To give them that extra .4% because they - it really was a reflection on what they knew. I had to be careful about how I did it. I couldn't just change old assignments. I couldn't just give them an extra credit assignment. I couldn't add that to the district assessment. So I had to go back and find specific quizzes or tests that they didn't score as well on. That on the district assessment, they showed that they knew it. And in there, I had to keep the original grade in the notes. And when I changed it, I had to say, this is why. I changed it because it says on this question in the district assessment, they knew that standard. And I knew it was a pain the butt.

Researcher: Which is a reflection of what the kids know. Which is what it should be. So, yeah, grades, and again, depending on how you look at the word progress, it's really a combination of all of them. And it should be, to wait till the end to say this is what grades you get in the class just makes your job hard because then I didn't know they were varying along the way. But it hopefully, its never, hopefully there's an opportunity along the way to fix those things and show... I didn't know how to do it last week, but now I do. And that should be adjusted in there somewhere, hopefully. I don't know very many teachers now that wouldn't. Most of the teachers I've seen would change that now. They wouldn't of when I was in school, maybe. A lot of them wouldn't have said, let's go and change that, but that's because it was looked at differently. Hopefully now more teachers are looking at it that way.

[for missing assignments] you got it bumped up to a 50

But if the kid only knows 70%, it's harder for me to give him fluff work or things to bump him up to a B.

I had a substitute, so I gave them an assignment that I wanted to be something that they knew how to do. It wasn't really standards based, so I didn't put it in the gradebook. If I had, that would have bumped everybody up just a little bit.

The kids that their grades changed because of their district assessment. That wasn't common knowledge. That's something that they didn't even share with their parents. That's something that we kept between me and them and you know, we had a long talk about why I was doing it and what I thought if they felt like they deserved for that to happen. So I think they were pretty well aware of what their grade reflected that way. There are always those that have no idea.

APPENDIX E: Matrices of Each Participant's Set of Interviews

Matrix Summary of Amber's Meaning Units that Align with 5 Themes

Themes	Group of 1 st Interviews	Group of 2 nd Interviews	Group of 3 rd Interviews
Emotional "Tiers" of Grading (pun intended)	it was, you knew, I have to get an A in the class, I knew I needed an A in the class, because originally I was going to do hygiene, so I was like, I had to get an A, so I was like I had to get an A on every single test. (1:61)	Um, like those kind of assignments? Um, well, that was homework assignments, so that's something that depending on what mood we're all in at that particular time is how much people are gonna care of what it's like (2:38)	so I didn't do what was I technically taught in my um, practicum. Student teaching is the one that didn't grade and she was, she was just chill and happy and so I went with that one, cuz I went with the one that will keep me sane I guess (3:28)
How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	You get that he was pretty lenient there, but you would only get you know 9 out of 10, things like that, so it wasn't perfect to where you were just a solid A without getting any points on the test. And so, it was intense. Like I mean, you had people dropping out of his class and you had people fighting like with the president, administration, saying, this isn't right. There should be a way to make this work. But, it was so fun to have this work that way because I just knew if I could get one problem right on this test, I felt like the smartest person in the world. Again, it was so cool. (1:105)	If someone came and talked to me about homework and said, "Why did you, why did they get this?" It would be like, well, that one would be more like, you know we can work through that one because I wouldn't want to stand by, like well I gave you a 3 cuz you did half of it, but it's like, I did the hard half, so there's things like that, so I'm like, you know, homework wise, I wouldn't, you know, I wouldn't stand there and never make a change for the way I've graded that because I don't... but it's also not worth that much, so again it's not something that like I, "I'll just give them the points" it's not too big of an issue there. (2:13)	And then so I'm just like, "Just tell me what to do" cuz right now I really don't know what's the best so I'm all about, "Yeah, I'll try that for a year" and just stick with it and if I don't like it, I'll do something else so, I like experimenting. It doesn't bug me to much. (3:8)
Why Didn't I Learn This in College?	Um, I um... not helpful, well, not not helpful, but NOT specific enough information. I remember um, don't, and this would be how I should grade, it was DON'T grade with red, a red pen. Like that is the one thing that I took out of college grading. (1:92)	For the most part, homework is just, "are they doing it?" and if they are, I wanna reward them. And it would be a lot to grade, so (laughs) so, grading homework is the trickiest one that I wanna work on next year because I don't love how I'm doing that this year. (2:3)	Well, we talked about my knowledge of grading and it wasn't very big. Either I slept through that class or something. Um, I never use a red pen to grade tests. I have pink, I have green, I have purple. Purple is my favorite. Um, sometimes I use a light blue. I don't even use dark blue. I don't use black, red, or dark red or dark blue, just cuz you can't see black. And, I felt like, well, if you can't use red, that's the most normal color of pen, then you can't use blue. So, I like, you know, rainbow colors. So I used those to grade. You know, and then you have a pink smiley face next to the minus 1 and apparently it's supposed to make them feel better about themselves. So, I, uh, aced that. It was kind of fun. I, I don't even remember what else did I gain from grading. I was gonna ask some people in my cohort since I work with them. (3:20 & 3:21)
What I Want to Change for Next Year	So it was like really detailed. You couldn't just read and answer the questions (1:15)	depending on each test, the complexity of the problem is how many points its worth, and then I go through and I grade them all myself and look through. (2:5)	that would give you, at least, if you were looking at that type of report card, you'd be able to interpret it exactly how, like it'd be pinned down a lot tighter. Like they've got, and that's why they have an A vs, well they retook it 15 times, but they really

			<p>don't get it but they have an A cuz they did enough. They worked hard enough to get there. Um, that would be really nice to figure that out. Um, I'd be all for it. I see that it would be more work. You'd have to categorize a little bit better. You'd have to be more organized with your tests and what they're testing. And maybe certain questions on it would be referenced to each standard, um and then if they were retaking and things like that, that would be, that would be hard to judge, like where that would go. (3:40)</p>
<p>If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?</p>	<p>I'm not one for, this is wrong, or why are they doing this. I try not to complain, so especially where at the beginning, if someone tells me, this is how it's gonna be, it's usually easy for me to accept that and go with it so it doesn't bug me. So like, in high school, this is normal. This is how it is. This is what I gotta do. So, I never really was unhappy with anything. Um, and I don't ever remember an experience where I feel like I was unfairly graded for the most part. Like that one assignment was like, this isn't fair. I worked really hard on this. But, I didn't know how to do it. And I got it back and it was an F. And I was like, Okay, I understand. I felt bad like this isn't fair in a way. But I also kind of recognized in a way that I didn't meet the requirements so I didn't feel like it was something that I would go talk to the teacher and tell them this isn't fair and you should fix this. So I never had any of those experiences where I felt like I was being cheated. Um, college, again, since it was on the disclosure, and this is how it's gonna be, especially when I hit those classes that were a little different from what you generally see, um, for a minute, you kind of like, think, okay. Can I do this? But, the teacher is really fair and mostly just wanted to encourage you to do well. (1:102)</p>	<p>m, our grade scale is just like how it's 70, no, oh my goodness, is it 70% for tests? And 30% homework? I think we're at 70-30 (2:16)</p>	<p>Um, kinda, I kinda mentioned this a little bit last time. Anyone that looks at it is gonna think if they have an A, they must be brilliant or they have a D, they must not have gotten it, but you've got those students that are just super intelligent. And math is one of those that, some of your, well I guess every subject, this is very true. But I think especially with students that are really good with things like math. They don't, they've never been challenged. They don't want to do the work. And so they're my D students. Um, so, reflective of exactly what they know. I wouldn't say they're perfectly valid. (3:29)</p>

Matrix Summary of Catherine's Meaning Units that Align with 5 Themes

Themes	Group of 1 st Interviews	Group of 2 nd Interviews	Group of 3 rd Interviews
Emotional "Tiers" of Grading (pun intended)	I became frustrated with those that didn't have clear expectations... So, the classes that I struggled with or became frustrated with were the ones that I never how I'd be graded or what I'd be graded on or how that would be weighted on my grade. Everything else was fine. If I knew what to expect, I didn't feel any anxiety. But, if I didn't know what to expect, then it stressed me out. (4:29)	I give participation points for participating through the whole process of learning. So rather than showing the progress, um, even though they are progressing, I feel like the participation points show that and I feel like the final product shows, did they get it? So I do rely mostly on the product and the process. (5:53)	I am in love with rubrics because of that teacher. I never knew what he wanted or what he would expect or what he would grade on, and that was incredibly frustrating, so I try to do the opposite of that for sure. (6:4)
How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	There weren't any clear expectations. Sometimes the lessons he gave didn't match the tests. And so, it was just always guess work as far as what to study and how much and whether we'd have to do multiple choice vs an essay response. We just never knew. (4:23)	I put kind of random things on their grade that I hoped was good for their grade and part way through the quarter, I was looking at the grades and thinking, uh - oh, it doesn't match where I think they're at. And it didn't match what I felt or thought proficient was. (5:5)	first quarter, I think they had no idea what to expect, umm and they may have been confused by their grades and their things I chose to put on their grades and the things I left off their grade. There was probably confusion sometimes maybe for that. (6:6)
Why Didn't I Learn This in College?	In the teacher education program, we didn't receive any, almost any instruction on how to grade and there was no instruction on how to weight a grade. None! So we really didn't receive a lot. (4:30)	I think there should be as part of the curriculum design class that I took, I think part of that curriculum, if not a total separate class, should be how to grade and how to align those grades with the common core. Because they already teach you how to teach to the Common Core. Give me some explicit instruction in how to grade it. And I think that is a missing step that they kind of assume that you'll figure out... which we do. (5:37)	Yeah I was just the model. It was never really taught explicitly. (6:9)
What I Want to Change for Next Year		So online, especially with the new Common Core, there is a lot of resources that people are developing and offering to other teachers online and so I found some sites that have those and talked about the standards based grading. I also went to a conference in Phoenix, AZ. And there was a class there that I went to that was only about grading practices and how to align it to standards and um, many ways to do a lot of that. And so I felt like those were really good steps in the right direction and because of that, then I started figuring out how to base my grades on those standards from the Common Core and base those on rubrics that were online with the standards and I got that information from my colleagues and then again from online and from the conference I went to. (5:33 & 5:34)	By the standards. I mean in an ideal educational setting, which hopefully we are working towards I think, is there are common grading practices aligned to the standards at a school level and then a district level and then ultimately a state level too, that we're all grading pretty much the same way, so no matter where you go your kids are graded the same way and you know exactly what they are being graded on and why, so that there is no subjectivity I guess to it. I think that it should be that way and it should definitely be connected to the common core standards (6:13)
If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?	No, they didn't all use rubrics. Just mainly the Language Arts and Education ones. I'm not	and so I remember I knew I wanted to grade mostly on summative things, so maybe an	By the standards. I mean in an ideal educational setting, which hopefully we are working

	<p>entirely sure how some of my other general education teachers graded me. Psychology, I'm not sure how they graded me.</p> <p>Nutrition - I don't know what her grading practice was based on. I just know that if I did work, I received a grade and it went in my grade book. (4:11)</p>	<p>end of unit test or things where I felt like the student should have the skill down by then and a little bit of participation,</p> <p>I put kind of random things on their grade that I hoped was good for their grade and part way through the quarter, I was looking at the grades and thinking, uh - oh, it doesn't match where I think they're at. And it didn't match what I felt or thought proficient was. (5:3 & 5:5)</p>	<p>towards I think, is there are common grading practices aligned to the standards at a school level and then a district level and then ultimately a state level too, that we're all grading pretty much the same way, so no matter where you go your kids are graded the same way and you know exactly what they are being graded on and why, so that there is no subjectivity I guess to it. I think that it should be that way and it should definitely be connected to the common core standards (6:13)</p>
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Matrix Summary of Jason's Meaning Units that Align with 5 Themes

Themes	Group of 1 st Interviews	Group of 2 nd Interviews	Group of 3 rd Interviews
Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended)	I've also had some experiences of like, not getting a paper in on time and in one of my classes, I felt, I felt really bad for turning the paper in late and I was sick and stuff and so what I did as a student is, I knew he would take it. But I felt, cuz this was in college and this was later - my junior year - and I felt like I kinda had disrespected my professor cuz I really admired him. And so I ended up turning in that paper, but at the same time, I turned in the next two papers that were due. So I sat down and I finished the one and I finished the next two and I turned them all in. And I said, "Hey, I'm really sorry that my first one was late. here are my next two in advance, kind of a thing. Would I, the reason why I did that, is I said that I admired him and I looked to him as an example of a teacher that I would want to be, to be able to establish that relationship with students to where they respected and admire you and not take advantage of their time and things like that and to show that and he taught me a lot about grading and of course, he accepted the paper and gave me the grades that it deserved but didn't dock or anything for lateness, but rather graded on the content and what I was able to accomplish so that taught me a valuable lesson about grading... rather than just some of the other teachers that say, I won't take it. It's late. (7:18)	Sometimes I'll put it on their grade. Sometimes I won't. Just kind of depends on the situation. I grade enough that my students think that their being, that they are being assessed on everything. (8:36)	Another thing I do as well is to mitigate the time I spend on grading. I focus a lot on that prework for writing. And, have them with that best draft, and guess what? I workshop it. So I guide them through specific things to look at. So by the time I really do grade it, we've gone through as many buffers as possible. [to get there]. So it kind of, well especially with those procrastinators, if they know that best draft is due, they do it the night before. And they think, "Now I'm done." Well now at least you've got something we can work with when you didn't have it before, so I try to look at those things the way I would be as a student and some of my weaknesses as a learner and I tried to create ways to overcome those obstacles as well. (9:19)
How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	When I got to middle school, it was the same kind of a concept. Really, but now it was with the A-F scale and everything like that. But I worked hard to make sure that I did well on all of the tests and to turn in my homework and it felt like that as long as I turned in the homework, then I scored really well on the test, then I would get the A as long as it was all on time. That was one of the big things. (7:2)	But I don't put everything on the grade. Because I don't think that it is necessary for every little thing to put on the grade. But it's not like they're guessing to the point that maybe I should do this. They just do everything now because they know that's part of what we're going to do regardless of whether or not it goes on the grade. (8:37)	It is happening. But perhaps it is happening in the way it needs to happen and that is grassroots with teachers doing it, experimenting with it, winning over their departments and... (9:46)
Why Didn't I Learn This in College?	So, college, we didn't really have a specified course on grading or assessments which, now after some of the professional development I've received, and in hindsight, I think that would be a good idea to add to the curriculum. Basically I feel that the grading conversations and lessons and things that we had in college were surface level in a general sense where they said	My students appreciate the opportunities to redo things that they've not understood. I've had a lot of positive feedback from students that say, "I wish every teacher allowed me to show this stuff and graded that way rather than focusing on a point total or a time limit type thing." So I've had a lot of positive experiences. [Interviewer: And you've taken that philosophy from Bill	And so he was discovering it in a process. And he definitely mastered this skill. And so he got the grade that reflected that. But it was a different way then how we originally set up the assessment. So, the way [Bill Sargent] taught me about grading mattered more about, Can they show the skill rather than the form that they showed it? (9:13)

	that you need to grade on purpose. You need to have a plan of how you're going to do it. You need to be fair. You need to consider how much you're going to weight things and it, but they really focused on the surface level of grading. (7:19)	Sargent? Or are a lot of ideas from that from Bill from that class then?] A lot of it yeah. A lot of it from him, there is a lot of different people that I've had the opportunity to know, rub shoulders with, that have given me some fantastic advice. Some people that I definitely admire. In fact, [professional development class for] technology endorsement, Ted Chavez - fantastic. We talk a lot about theory and a lot of these different concepts on how to actually use technology to advance these learning situations. Grading and stuff like that. (8:70)	
What I Want to Change for Next Year	[My mentor teacher] taught a valuable lesson about teaching or allowing students to have a positive learning experience in her classroom. So if a student were to come up at the end of the quarter and say, "what do I gotta do to get an A?" She taught me that students have a lot more positive learning experience and will remember the feeling that they experienced in the class more than what they specifically learned skill based and so she showed me, "look, if they're coming, and making an effort, have them do something. Show the skill. Don't just say, 'fill out this worksheet,' but rather show me this particular skill and we'll put it in the computer and see what happens. And so that was a good learning experience for me as well to focus on the student and build that trust. Build that positive experience with them through allowing these second chances and the opportunities to demonstrate that competency. So I definitely took that away from the experience. (7:27)	If [a new grading system] was more accurate, sure, [I'd change my grading practices]. But it's a culture shift... Absolutely. I'm not afraid of change. In fact, there is a lot of things that we are limited by because of the grading system now. So, yeah, absolutely... In fact, elementary is probably a better way than it is in the high school is. In a lot of ways... Not saying that it is the ideal, but it is much more specific. (8:63)	So, would I like to get there? Absolutely. But its definitely going to be a process. But hopefully next year, I'll be closer to that than I was this year. But I feel like I made some pretty good progress and I'm excited to see how things work and how the students relate to it. (9:44)
If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?	I liked, yeah, I had a couple teachers, especially in college, that were in the education program that were very specific on their expectations and when I had the rubric, it was easy to know what I was going to get because I would use the rubric to complete the assignment and there were other teachers that gave the assignment but were very unclear about what their expectations were so it was kind of a hit and miss thing. So, it was fun to a degree that I could kind of twist things and make it fun to my personality, but to be honest, I didn't know what the expectations were that has dramatically impacted the way that I teach. I try to be as clear as	And we would have, I would do interventions and things like that to make sure that they were at least proficient. And then that would come, all of that together, fortunately, ends up being, great. Now I say unfortunately because I'm not a big fan of the average. I didn't have enough time to structure it to give multiple assessments for that one skill to really get the best score which I would use the mode which would be the most common one to give that final grade. I'm not there yet. (8:12)	And so he was discovering it in a process. And he definitely mastered this skill. And so he got the grade that reflected that. But it was a different way then how we originally set up the assessment. So, the way he taught me about grading mattered more about, Can they show the skill rather than the form that they showed it? (9:13)

	possible and I know that I'm not always as clear as my students because I get feedback from them when they have the dazed look on their face. So I make a real conscious effort to be clear and explicit with my, with what I expect from my students. (7:15)		
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Matrix Summary of Jovina's Meaning Units that Align with 5 Themes

Themes	Group of 1 st Interviews	Group of 2 nd Interviews	Group of 3 rd Interviews
Emotional "Tiers" of Grading (pun intended)	There were some subjects that you could do just the bare minimum and still get a 100% on the assignment, then I would just do that... not that I didn't respect the teacher. It was just that maybe I wasn't as interested in that subject. (10:29)	We have Common Formative Assessments. And different things that we do for our GVCs. But each of us kind of weigh those differently in our grade. We all do them, but each of them are kind of weighed differently. And what goes into their final grade. Um, the school wide ones... we don't normally have a school wide one. (11:19)	its kind of the way they approach it. Um, as to whether I'm gonna be, I don't wanna say lenient, but I guess lenient in the way that, okay I won't say lenient, I'll say, approachable, like when he said that in his email, it was like, What the heck? You think... kinda just that attitude like, Yeah, I missed your class, but it shouldn't really matter because like you know that I know it anyways. I shouldn't have to show you that I know it. (12:17)
How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	I've seen it done both ways. Teachers that some do it by points and they do a really good job, but others like the percentage thing and they do a really good job. I think you just have to find what you like. So far I've done it by points. [Is that because that's how you did it in student teaching with your cooperating teacher?] Yes, yes! And so, now this year, I'm just trying to keep my head above water and so I do it just how she did and it worked for her. But, then I've talked to other teachers that have said, "well, you can still do the points, but if you give the kids categories, then you with PowerSchool, these categories, even whatever points you give them, it's still going to be the same percentage at the end, so it works out the same." So, I might switch it up for next year. (10:46)	For the most part, um, yeah. I'm still going to say yes. I think. I think. (more laughing). Um, yeah, I think so. Cuz even with those kids that are really good kids and I might give 'em a B instead of a B-, its not far off from where they were, so I guess maybe they're not totally valid. Maybe I take in the human element too much. Maybe I'm too nice!?! (11:12)	Yeah, and I think that, yeah, I'll admit that sometimes I do look at, um, a student's work: an essay. And if I know that they've, they've worked really hard and come and talked to me a few times, and maybe gone to the tutoring at lunch or whatever. And I know that they've put in the work. Even though it might be, it might not be quite the same level as this kid over here that got like a B without as much work, I might not bump this kid up from maybe a B- to a B just for that effort. And I don't know if thats like really good thing because I think courage should be interpreted. Like they're like, they should portray how much, how well they know the content. Um, and what they've learned. But at the same time, I think it kind of is a learning think for the kid to see, "Oh, I worked really hard and I got a B out of it." Then the next time he is going to work just as hard or harder and maybe go for a B+ or an A paper. Something like that. (12:37)
Why Didn't I Learn This in College?	The main thing that I remember from the education program was one day Dr. Glazier came in and we had learned like how to create rubrics, but they never said this is how we need to do it, but it was like the last one because last month before I went to student teaching, so I was doing my practicum and he came in one day and showed us one of his rubrics that he used in his high school class and it wasn't necessarily how to go through a paper and grade it, but it was more of this is how you can give your students effective feedback and not seem like really rude. Um, and that was really good, but other than that, I don't remember. (10:41)		So we had one day in my whole year long teacher education program that we actually, I mean they talked about, they sort of talked about like time management and stuff as far as grading, but they didn't really say this is how you should grade, or this is how you should set up a rubric, except for the one day that Dr. Glazier came in. But they never really said like this is how you should divide up your class or um, stuff like that. (12:30)
What I Want to Change for Next Year	I also know a teacher that kind of grades like the standards. She	it was first quarter because I never did it again! (11:23)	I think I might switch up a little bit next year. Um, just so the

	<p>gives the students a 1, 2, 3, or 4. In gradebook, she just marks that she's collected the assignments, but that's all. Then, at the end, she inputs the standards and she puts 4/4 or 3/4. It works out in the end that they get an A, B, C or D.</p> <p>I think I am going to make changes for next year. (10:47)</p>		<p>kids aren't as point driven, but learning driven and like they know I have to show that I know this concept. Um, instead of what do I need to do to get the 100 points. You know. Um, so, yeah, that's what I've done from hers. (12:32)</p>
<p>If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?</p>	<p>She, I never knew how she was gonna take, like I was always nervous to write something because that was like the very first paper that I turned in and she didn't even grade it. She was like this is completely wrong. You read the poem completely wrong. You're interpretation is totally off so you need to write it and this is what you need to say. And I totally didn't agree with it and so I'm writing this paper and I don't even agree with what I'm writing, but, so the rest of the semester, I was always just nervous to write more papers because I was always worried that it wouldn't be her interpretation. (10:13)</p>	<p>I feel like they do for the most part. Sometimes I feel like those assignments that I kind of just check off, I don't know whether I should even like be putting them on their grade because its not, its a reflection of learning. But it wasn't like part of the core standards or whatever. But then I think about it and I'm, we're supposed to be teaching them the core standards. But we can also teach them other stuff, and so I included it on their grade because it is a reflection of them learning. But, yeah, for the most part I feel like they are pretty valid. I guess. (11:4)</p>	<p>I think grades should be interpreted as, well, what I would like. I don't know. I have a hard time with this one. I would like to say, "yeah, it should be totally based off of how well they show that they know the content." But then, like high school kids, I feel like we're trying to teach them so much more than just this is how you write a thesis statement. This is how you do close reading. Or this is what I am trying to teach you so you can interpret this book. Um, or trying to teach them responsibility and integrity and all of that stuff. That, I definitely think they should be tied to the content standards, but I would like to find a way that we could kind of mix everything. So yeah, they knew the content, but like that kid that gets a 4 on the SAGE test, but he gets a C in the class because he turned in all of his stuff a month and a half late. So, I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong in that. I don't know. I don't know. (12:38)</p>

Matrix Summary of Katie's Meaning Units that Align with 5 Themes

Themes	Group of 1 st Interviews	Group of 2 nd Interviews	Group of 3 rd Interviews
Emotional "Tiers" of Grading (pun intended)	And, I did talk to her about it, but she wouldn't change the grade. And yeah, I was very frustrated. Very discouraged about that. And very scared about what my grade was. My senior year. The last part of my senior year. [Interviewer: It makes you feel anxiety?] Tremendous. Yeah, it was. (13:22)	Yeah, it is not their fault if they haven't been given the tools that they need to work. Yeah. And if I have done everything in my power to help them to have those tools, its just not documented. Its not that students fault. (14:30)	if they struggle, are they... do they have the um, cognitive ability to get that? I mean some people don't. They don't. And so they learn, they do other things, which is the gift of being human. (15:23)
How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	it's when I feel like I am having to guess what the teacher cares about vs. what I care about. And everyone says, and I get lots of advice about, No, you just have to do it" and I'm like well, if what I'm thinking doesn't match what the teacher is thinking, then the grade isn't going to be very good and who knows, if I want to go on and go to graduate school, then that grade has to be good. So, that's the most frustrating is not knowing what the teacher is thinking or not being able to match what the teacher's thinking. Which is crazy, because you don't know what somebody else is thinking. (13:26)	On the subjective part, and I tend to go back to it. It really, really opened my mind when I thought about that research paper without even realizing how much of an influence because I'm just, I just don't believe there is black and white when it comes to any kind of written, any kind of give my your thoughts, um, explanation. It depends on the individual person and uh, and I think that now, I'm thinking that I've got to find a better way to quantify that and I don't know what it is. I haven't discussed it with my colleagues yet, but there are a few things. (14:13)	going back to, um how should grades be interpreted? I guess I'm coming to, I guess you're brining out with this series of interviews that I don't know how much emphasis I do place on grades now. (15:20)
Why Didn't I Learn This in College?	[Interviewer: What types of instruction did you receive on grading practice in college or teacher preparation programs?] NONE. (13:28)		And as I'm interpreting it, I have received NO INSTRUCTION. However, I have had lots of ancillary experience in looking at how other people grade and what their grading system is. And it goes back to the rubrics. Way back as a teacher's aide, when I wasn't, when I wasn't sure what to do, I could go back to the rubric and say, "did they do this part of it?" That's an A. "Did they do this? Nope, not quite. That one's more like C work. So there was an outline that I could look at. But nobody ever really said to me, "this is how we do it." They said, "you can use this if you want" kind of thing. (15:10 & 15:11)
What I Want to Change for Next Year			I'm thinking, if you introduce the idea of standards-based grading... at least some of my colleagues who have been teaching for 20 years, no way. Yeah. Yeah. And we have, lots of people, have enough trouble with the Common Core - just the whole idea of the Common Core - um, there is enough of an uproar about that. But I can't... but I'm excited because I think that's an awesome thing to strive for. (15:25)
If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?	And again, so like if I remember in high school, learning how to do a research paper, oh I	That's a really good question. And what is valid? And who gets to define what valid is? You tell	And they, we have, worked towards, towards referencing the standards. [So you guys might be

	<p>remember this experience in my senior year of course, we had to write a research paper and I don't recall, well I know I didn't get any kind of written outline because I think that they thought that by the time you were seniors, you were supposed to know how to write a research paper so I did not get a written outline of how to do this paper and I turned it in without citing any references and of course she failed me because I didn't cite any references and it never occurred to me to cite any references. But, I recall that if I had some kind of outline or guideline to follow, I would have cited the references. So that is interesting. I haven't thought about that in a long time. [Did she let you redo that, or did you just end up with the F the whole time?] No. She wouldn't let me redo it. I had enough other grades that I passed the class, but that was a major portion. Well, I think as it is today, well I know in our school today, it counts quite a bit towards a senior's grade. (13:10)</p>	<p>me. If I could see something written down that says you have to grade, would this way, but I haven't seen it. (14:39)</p>	<p>even further along.] Actually, to hear the way you're talking about it... I know that we do. And we've just gone to the idea of testing out because I understand that that's now district policy if the student can test out. [Demonstrate what they know]. Then why sit in class. And we have to have the standards referenced, um, so that when the student takes the test or exam, if there is clearly a whole section of the standards that they don't, then they get to do that part of the instructions. I know what we worked very hard today. And we do in our math. I think I mentioned that. That um, Clara Campos is the other math teacher. And we reference the standards everyday on the assignments that we are doing. (15:28)</p>
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Matrix Summary of Trevor's Meaning Units that Align with 5 Themes

Themes	Group of 1 st Interviews	Group of 2 nd Interviews	Group of 3 rd Interviews
Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended)	It drove me crazy to not be at the top. Especially in college. Not in much in high school. I cared about my grades. My parents cared about my grades. Um, but you know, if I had an A, I was usually pretty happy, even if it was a low A? (16:14)	Um, but I had to answer that question. Why is this different than what your saying their grade in the class is. Which was scary. I never realized I might have to do something... now I know. But would I change it? No. I wouldn't. (17:45)	ah. It bothered me not to... and it wasn't necessarily the A... It bothered me to not see the best in the class. You know, all the way up through college it drove me crazy. Um, and that pushed me to do better and better. As far as grading students now. Um, I guess I, I don't know how much it has to do with grading. But I spend a lot of time looking for ways to motivate them. Trying to get them to want that grade. Trying to get them to see for themselves what they want. Not why their parents think they should get, not why their teachers think they should get it, but why they might want to get there. Um, and I have a lot of success with that. (18:3)
How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	You were mostly graded on tests. They weighted, usually 60% at least, it seems like. Then every once in a while, that teacher would give you 10% or some form of showing up to class, especially those, you know, undergrad classes where everyone was right out of high school and they were trying to give you a reason to show up. Uh, and then the rest was work. Um, quizzes, different things like that. (16:18)	um, tests and quizzes, um, where were we usually? Probably most of my tests ended up being worth about a week's worth of homework. So if you broke it down, that other 70%, um forty percent of it was probably tests and quizzes. Um, 20% was homework and the other 10% was bellwork and other things like that and problem solving and that kind of stuff. So that's about how it came out. (17:31)	I like having that little bit in there. I think we talked about yesterday, just having those couple of points. At the end of the day, it's not going to make a huge difference. But its a little bit of motivation. Its a little bit of reason to do it. And especially for those kids that could use that extra couple percent. Um, it might help them stay motivated. But it, if they're not doing the homework, you know if... its not like they're going to, its a pretty good reflection of how they are going to do on the test. So you know, having that little bit of homework in their grade, isn't going to make that big of a difference I've noticed. (18:14)
Why Didn't I Learn This in College?	I don't think there was a lot of instruction on how it should be graded. I think there were theories presented. You now there is standards-based grading or based completely... but as far as how you should grade, we didn't really do that a lot. (16:27 & 16:28)	Um I saw it in student teaching. Um, its just, if there's not, it doesn't take much. If a kid can come and just pass the test - speaking for myself - why go do the homework? (17:6)	Well, I guess as far as, you know college courses, classes I took. I'm gonna say I didn't receive any instruction because I can't remember a single time even discussing or how to do it or what. It meant, and hopefully I didn't just fade away that day. But has far my experience in preparing to be a teacher, I had a lot of other opportunities. Student teaching. I had a lot more chance to see, you know, I guess the grading practices there. And I had a mentor teacher that wanted me to be a big part of that. And wanted me to experience even as much as giving them something that I thought they were going to do well on and didn't realize they were prepared for and watch and my reaction to the grades that they got and realizing where they were all the way through it. In

			the classes. No. Not a lot of instruction. But through the program, um, there were other opportunities for it. (18:8 & 18:9)
What I Want to Change for Next Year		Right next to every question is the standard that it is coming from. On the district assessment, we were working on, as a school, it was a big transitional year. (17:56)	I was thinking about... standards based grading and thinking about a kid coming into my class and I know that he got a B in his previous class. Okay. You know, what [does] that mean? I still have to find the holes. I still have to find, okay, what 20% are you missing? From last year? I don't know what it is... It might be multiplying negatives. It might be adding or subtracting negatives. It might be something huge. That is gonna mess you up through my entire course and just having that percentage and not referencing it to anything doesn't tell me a whole lot. (18:17)
If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?	The first class I took with him, I took as a challenge because I'd never had to work that hard in a class. After that, I appreciated what he was doing. Um, I appreciated even that class that where I got 46% on the first test was probably my fourth class from him. And, I knew what he was doing. I knew he was just pushing us. He was pushing me. And I was okay with that. (16:20)	It didn't matter if it was a quiz, a test, or homework, it all went under one category. That category's percentage for, I had 45 students um for 41 of my students, that's category's assessment, or that category's percentage was within 7% of their district assessment score. So for me, I felt like my grade was really close because the test, the district assessment was completely standards based. And my kids got within 7% of their classroom grade, to within, so they were pretty close. (17:7)	I think they were a representation of what the kid knew of the content they were supposed to know. You know, it was a percentage. If they had 80% then that was a pretty good idea that if you gave them everything, they would know I had a ten. So as far as interpreting it, yeah. I think people looking at it, and not just the idea of, uh, having those common percentages, but just the fact that they were laid out the way that they were. Things were broken out so that you could see, you know, here is this assessment that kind of gives you an idea of where your kid is overall. And right next to it is how they compared in their classwork. You know, side by side. Those percentages were right next to each other. So, I think anybody looking at that would see that commonality there. (18:16)

APPENDIX F: Matrices of Each Theme and Related Sub-themes

Theme: Emotional “Tiers” of Grading (pun intended)

	Amber	Catherine	Jason	Jovina	Katie	Trevor
My Grades Dictate My Self-Esteem	it was, you knew, I have to get an A in the class, I knew I needed an A in the class, because originally I was going to do hygiene, so I was like, I had to get an A, so I was like I had to get an A on every single test. (1:61)	And I wondered, am I failing my students? Are they not learning? Or is my grading bad? Or what is it? So that's when I started to really look into my grading that they were right where they should be. They were learning. I was teaching well. I wasn't grading well. (laughing). And so that turned a new leaf for me. (5:72)	My first memories of being graded started in Kindergarten when we got the Gs and Es so, a G was for Good and Es were for Excellent. So my goal was to get Es. So, I usually got Gs and Es mostly, Es, so that was kind of the start of my grading experience. And throughout elementary school, my goal was to get top scores which ended up being a trend I didn't like and so I always had to be the best as far as I could get with my grades. That was kind of my elementary experience. (7:1)	I didn't get a 4.0 in college, but having a 4.0 in high school and always having an A, I remember that first paper that I got all the green on, I was just distraught. (10:20)	Oh, I was crushed. I was crushed. I don't know if I was as angry as I was um, disappointed in myself. It really affected my self-esteem. Yeah, not getting good grades really had an impact on my self-esteem. (13:11)	ah. It bothered me not to... and it wasn't necessarily the A... It bothered me to not see the best in the class. You know, all the way up through college it drove me crazy. Um, and that pushed me to do better and better. As far as grading students now. Um, I guess I, I don't know how much it has to do with grading. But I spend a lot of time looking for ways to motivate them. Trying to get them to want that grade. Trying to get them to see for themselves what they want. Not why their parents think they should get, not why their teachers think they should get it, but why they might want to get there. Um, and I have a lot of success with that. (18:3)
Confusion Breeds Frustration	I have no idea how my teacher graded these, but my AP history class was like a shock when I got in it because the assignments that we get every day were reading assignments and we would have to go and read and answer the questions, but it wasn't easy like, "what year was	I guess I never knew how they graded other than you got the answer right or wrong and then you got points based on that. (4:15)	I liked, yeah, I had a couple teachers, especially in college, that were in the education program that were very specific on their expectations and when I had the rubric, it was easy to know what I was going to get because I would use the rubric to complete the	She, I never knew how she was gonna take, like I was always nervous to write something because that was like the very first paper that I turned in and she didn't even grade it. She was like this is completely wrong. You read the poem completely wrong. You're interpretation is	You know what, I can't say because I didn't know what they were thinking. (13:8)	Um, I don't think there was as much confusion because we were all doing it the same. And it made it a little bit easier when every class is, you know, even the district assessments. It was the same weight as it is in every other class. The science district assessment is also worth 30%,

	<p>this war?" it was "how did this cause this and this? And what did affect did this have on this?" So it was like really detailed. You couldn't just read and answer the questions. You had to really read and think and answer questions that were really hard. And I remember that being difficult. I remember my first time trying to do it. I completely failed. Like a basic everyday assignment because I was looking for easy answers. So, I just completely failed. And after that, I thought, "I need friends, and they have to help me with my reading." And I had help from my parents. (1:14)</p>		<p>assignment and there were other teachers that gave the assignment but were very unclear about what their expectations were so it was kind of a hit and miss thing. So, it was fun to a degree that I could kind of twist things and make it fun to my personality, but to be honest, I didn't know what the expectations were that has dramatically impacted the way that I teach. I try to be as clear as possible and I know that I'm not always as clear as my students because I get feedback from them when they have the dazed look on their face. So I make a real conscious effort to be clear and explicit with my, with what I expect from my students. (7:15)</p>	<p>totally off so you need to write it and this is what you need to say. And I totally didn't agree with it and so I'm writing this paper and I don't even agree with what I'm writing, but, so the rest of the semester, I was always just nervous to write more papers because I was always worried that it wouldn't be her interpretation. (10:13)</p>		<p>and in the English. Yeah. Pretty universal. That helped. At least in the core classes. It got a little different in some of the... it was still standards based. They still had standards for the elective classes, but the district assessments weren't there yet. (17:53)</p>
<p>Too Much Stress? Take a Chill Pill</p>	<p>all of my students thought that they were going to fail the end of level, (2:45)</p>	<p>I was definitely a perfectionist, so I never wanted anything less than an A. So everything I did, I did my very best because I wanted that and I looked forward to an A. So, it did, it influenced my work and how I did it. And, it um, I didn't want just an A in a specific area, I wanted it in everything. So, anyways, I guess that is how it influenced me.</p>	<p>So, I was a straight A student until I was in 11th grade when I received my first A-. I was very bitter about that A- because it came down to the last test right before the end of the quarter. And I scored, I can't even remember what it was... it was like an 88 or 89 or something like that, but it was enough to change my grade from the</p>	<p>I think I was too um, too, I don't want to say, obsessed, but I was too like perfectionist about it. And I guess like being a perfectionist isn't a bad thing, but sometimes I was too like stressed out about it. But, then again, if I wouldn't have gotten the 4.0, then I wouldn't have gotten Academic All-State. (12:14)</p>	<p>So, I am satisfied when there is a logical path to follow about how the grade was determined. When it is subjective, I get frustrated. And I can think of a time that um, it was when I um had to write a paper and this was a class where I had to write several papers, but I don't remember specifically what the class was, but throughout the class, I had to write papers.</p>	<p>It drove me crazy to not be at the top. Especially in college. Not in much in high school. I cared 'about my grades. My parents cared about my grades. Um, but you know, if I had an A, I was usually pretty happy, even if it was a low A? (16:14)</p>

		<p>It made me want to continue to push because I did want that A. (4:20)</p>	<p>93 or A, or 94 or A to like 1% below and I was so mad because I wanted that A and so I went to my teacher and I said, can I retake this? Can I do anything to show that I can do this stuff? And he's like, Nope, you have to take the A-. So I was really bitter about that. And it ruined my 4.0 streak. (7:3)</p>		<p>But they were usually about a page to two pages, but then there would be a big one that would be about 5 pages. But, anyways, there as an extra credit assignment and um, well I remember I'd go through, well I didn't take the class very seriously, but it wasn't a very critical class, so I um, even though I would stress about it, I didn't give maybe my full effort, and I'd be getting like, like I would be getting extra grade, like more than the full points. And, so then there was an extra credit assignment. And I thought, well, I'm interested in this so let me do it because I'm interested in this extra credit assignment. So I really tried very hard and I got nothing on it. And I was so frustrated. And then, I was just like, I don't understand why this one is okay and this one is not. And in my estimation, the one I had done on the extra credit was much better, much better analysis, much better argument, much better paper, than these little mini assignments. (13:17)</p>	
<p>Motivation: How Bad Do</p>	<p>It was self motivating</p>	<p>I was definitely a perfectionist,</p>	<p>And, I made it my mission,</p>	<p>yeah, they totally</p>	<p>I would think they would. And</p>	<p>I don't like putting grade</p>

You Want that A?	<p>because I got to do my homework because I need these as my backup, but I have to understand enough to do just well enough on the test. That, I don't know, I was like, I never thought that something like that would motivate me, but I was so motivated to grasp riches a little bit of a concept. (1:50)</p>	<p>so I never wanted anything less than an A. So everything I did, I did my very best because I wanted that and I looked forward to an A. So, it did, it influenced my work and how I did it. And, it um, I didn't want just an A in a specific area, I wanted it in everything. So, anyways, I guess that is how it influenced me. It made me want to continue to push because I did want that A. (4:20)</p>	<p>then to, change my grade to prove him wrong. Or so I thought, right? Smart guy. And I did all my missing work. I turned in everything. And I made sure by the end of that quarter, I had an A in his class. So, I really taught him? No. He taught me the lesson because he's a smart guy and he knew my personality in high school. And I really admired him for that. I want to tell him that story now and see if he still remembers. (7:9)</p>	<p>influenced me. My goal in high school was to graduate with a 4.0. And, I did that, but I feel like um, it was definitely like a major part of how I defined myself as a student (10:19)</p>	<p>even if I can't point to it directly, I would think sub-consciously they'd probably do. Getting... consistently getting Ds in English does not sit well with me because I'm getting A+s in math. Even though I know today, even though I tell my students, there are two different kinds of thinking. And its okay that you may not be, but you know, growing up, it was all about self-esteem. So I'm sure that influenced me as a student and growing up and it probably does have something going on today. (15:6)</p>	<p>points for returning a disclosure. It's one of those things that sometimes students, if they don't see points attached to it, then they won't turn it in. So, it's kind of one of those things, where if I have to, for that reason, then I make it so minimal that it's more inconsequential, but at least the students think that it's doing something and that's one of the battles that we face is that motivation. Some of them are so extrinsically motivated that sometimes, you have to do it. But I try to make sure that those types of things are very, very small, so not, wouldn't change the grade from below proficient, to proficient. It wouldn't be that much. (8:29)</p>
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Theme: How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?

	Amber	Catherine	Jason	Jovina	Katie	Trevor
Grades Don't Reflect What They Know/ Can Do	No. Um, I'd say a lot of their students, I'd say their grade reflects what they know. The ones that have come up, their grade does not reflect what they know. (2:36)			For the most part, um, yeah. I'm still going to say yes. I think. I think. (more laughing). Um, yeah, I think so. Cuz even with those kids that are really good kids and I might give 'em a B instead of a B-, its not far off from where they were, so I guess maybe they're not totally valid. Maybe I take in the human element too much. Maybe I'm too nice!?! (11:12)	<i>Researcher:</i> So now their grades truly are not <i>Katie:</i> oh my gosh <i>Researcher:</i> reflecting <i>Katie:</i> look at this <i>Researcher:</i> that growth. So, they demonstrated that progress, but we're not going to let them... the grade doesn't reflect that progress because of our policy. <i>Katie:</i> thank goodness I'm only a first year teacher. Oh my gosh. Okay. You got me on that one. (laughing.) You got me on that one. To be discussed. Thank you. (14:37)	It doesn't obviously always get to work out that way, but at the same time, what I had a hard time with in Cheyenne was say, 1st quarter, a lot of that test was based on adding and subtracting integers and working with negative numbers and all of these things. By the end, by Christmas, most of them that didn't get it 1st quarter, they've got it. And there are a few that don't, but most of them that were struggling have seen it enough and gotten extra practice and now they get it. But I am going to give them a grade in January based on the test they took in October on stuff that now they know and that was a problem for me because it wasn't a reflection of what they know at the end of the class. It was a reflection of what they know at that time. And I was frustrated that I couldn't show that they had learned it since. There was no opportunity. (17:11)
Let's See What Happens When the	I wish my students cared as much about		So, I still think my grades are valid. I call	Um... I think some kids do. I think some kids		I'll go back and fix other things that you have

Scores Are Entered	<p>grades as I did. Uh, grades did influence me a little bit and the students that care - that you can tell care about their grades, its easier to help them get the grade they want because they actually come in and I don't really know if that influences like how, like I don't really know if that gets carried over and that one thing that I was actually thinking about today since it is the end of the quarter and I've got all my students handing me stuff and they want me to put it in like right as they hand it to me. (3:10)</p>		<p>those A chasers or Grade Chasers. The ones that come to me when they have that 88% and want that A. And I welcome that. And what I do is regardless of how they worked to whatever level, so this is for any student. A student that did it that first time, or whatever time it is, I take a look at the gradebook and I say, let's take a look at all of these test items. These are the ones that are going to be the bulk of your grade and make sure you got anything down and so I get the retake ready (8:42)</p>	<p>see it as, B+, that's pretty good. Maybe I wasn't all the way there, but I still did pretty good. Um, but then there is still those students that they will be at a B+ and they're like, "Do you think this presentation will bring me up another 4%?" I don't now. But, yeah. I feel like some kids would. Maybe not all. Maybe some kids would look at a B+ and think, "Dang, I'm bad." (11:14)</p>		<p>done, give you a little bit of a bump on those, because I can't give you extra credit on the district assessment, but this assignment that you got an 80% on and then you got a 95% on the district assessment. I'll bump that up a little bit so that you get that extra percentage point. (17:24)</p>
Bump a Grade Up	<p>it might bump it up like half, or 2/3 of a letter grade, or maybe a third. (2:96)</p>	<p>Yes. Um as well. I attached my grades to self worth a lot as a kid and I wanted to be a perfectionist and a people pleaser, and so if I got a good grade I was a good person and if I didn't I was disappointed in myself and felt like I wasn't good enough. Um, and so when I am grading my students, I tend to error on the side of mercy and perhaps bump their grades up a little bit if there is ever a question and simply because</p>	<p>I might give a kid a little bit of a bump just because I know how much effort he put in to get, to even like make it a B- paper. And so, I'll give him kind of a pat on the back. Bump it to a B. That's all. (11:29)</p>	<p>Yeah, and I think that, yeah, I'll admit that sometimes I do look at, um, a student's work: an essay. And if I know that they've, they've worked really hard and come and talked to me a few times, and maybe gone to the tutoring at lunch or whatever. And I know that they've put in the work. Even though it might be, it might not be quite the same level as this kid over here that got like a B without as much work, I might not bump this kid up from maybe a B- to a</p>		<p>When I did that in Cheyenne, I had to do it carefully. I couldn't give them an extra, those couple kids that would've had an 89% and really, what was graded... all they had to get to was 89.5% and then it rounds up. So they're at 89.1. To give them that extra .4% because they - it really was a reflection on what they knew. I had to be careful about how I did it. I couldn't just change old assignments. I couldn't just give them an</p>

		it did mean a lot to me to get a higher grade. So that is one personal way that I guess my grading is influenced by my experiences. I do error on the side of mercy. (6:5)		B just for that effort. And I don't know if that's like really good thing because I think courage should be interpreted. Like they're like, they should portray how much, how well they know the content. Um, and what they've learned. But at the same time, I think it kind of is a learning think for the kid to see, "Oh, I worked really hard and I got a B out of it." Then the next time he is going to work just as hard or harder and maybe go for a B+ or an A paper. Something like that. (12:37)		extra credit assignment. I couldn't add that to the district assessment. So I had to go back and find specific quizzes or tests that they didn't score as well on. That on the district assessment, they showed that they knew it. And in there, I had to keep the original grade in the notes. And when I changed it, I had to say, this is why. I changed it because it says on this question in the district assessment, they knew that standard. And I knew it was a pain the butt. [which is a reflection of what the kids know] which is what it should be. (17:36)
Willing to Adjust Grade if Students... Argue, Bribe, etc.	If someone came and talked to me about homework and said, "Why did you, why did they get this?" It would be like, well, that one would be more like, you know we can work through that one because I wouldn't want to stand by, like well I gave you a 3 cuz you did half of it, but it's like, I did the hard half, so there's things like that, so I'm like, you know, homework		If someone came and talked to me about homework and said, "Why did you, why did they get this?" It would be like, well, that one would be more like, you know we can work through that one because I wouldn't want to stand by, like well I gave you a 3 cuz you did half of it, but it's like, I did the hard half, so there's things like that, so I'm like, you know, homework wise, I	I actually had an experience with that this week. Do you want me to tell about it? {yeah, share it}. So I had this kid. He's really, really intelligent. He's awesome. But sometimes, he doesn't like put like a lot of effort into what he does. And he was gone for baseball on their presentation day. And, he was gone the two or three class periods before that too for, I don't know why. Um, but as a	've never worked in a traditional high school, but I'm guessing there might be a little bit of this. All of the students that I work with come to us with such different life experiences that I almost have to take into account, well I do take into account. What is this particular student truly capable of doing? And there are a lot of learning disabilities that aren't not necessarily documented. Because you know, it's the system and they get through the system. ON the subjective part, and I tend to go back to it.	And then if they went back and you know, I guess where things got unique, was... the last district assessment I had a few honor's kids that had had just a few bad weeks and just, you know, weren't doing as well at the time. But at the end, they had figured it out and were doing well. And I realized that even if they got a 100% on the district test, they would still be at like 89% instead of 90.

	<p>wise, I wouldn't, you know, I wouldn't stand there and never make a change for the way I've graded that because I don't... but it's also not worth that much, so again it's not something that like I, "I'll just give them the points" it's not too big of an issue there. (2:13)</p>		<p>wouldn't, you know, I wouldn't stand there and never make a change for the way I've graded that because I don't... but it's also not worth that much, so again it's not something that like I, "I'll just give them the points" it's not too big of an issue there. (9:6)</p>	<p>department, as an English department, we decided that anybody who got a 4 on the SAGE test, um, could be guaranteed an A as long as they turned in work. Don't know if I really agree with it or not, but that's what we decided on. So, this kid, missed his presentation and so his grade went, he already had an A. But it went down to a C. And then, he, so, cuz he missed his presentation. And he missed his, some other assignment. So, like the night after, an hour after I put in grades, I get this email from him: "Hey, why did my grade drop to a D+? I had an A this morning." I was like, "well, you didn't come. Like I know you were at baseball the one day, but you still didn't come like on your presentation day. And he's like, well, I could tell you about it. I could, you know I could do it. And I was like, well, you weren't there to actually do it. So you need to come in and actually do it and we got his grade back up. Just like little things like that. (12:10)</p>	<p>It really, really opened my mind when I thought about that research paper without even realizing how much of an influence because I'm just, I just don't believe there is black and white when it comes to any kind of written, any kind of give my your thoughts, um, explanation. It depends on the individual person and uh, and I think that now, I'm thinking that I've got to find a better way to quantify that and I don't know what it is. I haven't discussed it with my colleagues yet, but there are a few things (14:13)</p>	<p>And so I made a deal with them, and you know, after talking to my principal and a few other teachers, look if you get 95% or better on the district assessment, I'll go back and fix other things that you have done, give you a little bit of a bump on those, because I can't give you extra credit on the district assessment, but this assignment that you got an 80% on and then you got a 95% on the district assessment. I'll bump that up a little bit so that you get that extra percentage point. And because they are kids. And all of those kids ended up getting 100% on the district assessment. So, to me that was enough of a reason for me to give them that extra 1% in the gradebook to give them an A because they were showing me that they - even though they didn't get every question right on the homework, they knew it. In the gradebook, or on that district assessment, they knew how to do it. So, we bumped them up a little on that. (17:24)</p>
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Um, I Don't Feel Like Grading Today	the only thing that is hard about grading is tests cuz its, its a long and I can't find a way to make it quicker unless I want to do something that that I can't really actually test. Like if I made it all scan tron, then I wouldn't actually understand how they're getting what they're getting. (2:8)		No that's not worth it. Unless I assign a paper at the end of the quarter - like I did this time - so I did have a lot in the stack - but it wasn't like, super crazy. (8:54)	And I think that could help as far as, um, well thing I have done to alleviate that is do several drafts. Like they'll do their rough draft, peer edit, do another one, do another edit, then turn in their final. So when I get their final draft, I don't have to make as many comments because we've been talking about it all along. Then they get that final grade and they're not overwhelmed. Because if I had them just turn in one draft and I did all these comments, then they'd just be like I was when that professor gave me back my paper when it was... [all in green] covered in green. (laughing). You know. So I guess it goes back to this question of progress, product, or process. (11:26)	And I don't know that it is all, but time... but [a lot of times, its simple, its easy, its fast] its simple, its easy, its fast. (15:24)	Absolutely. Absolutely. And especially, if you have a group working together, like you said, trying to come up with all that on your own. Trying to create a rubric. Um, for every test. Um, and every teacher creating every test all by themselves. And a rubric for each one of them. But when you're working together on it. When you have 1 test that all the 7th grade teachers are giving, that you've written together. That you all feel represent the standards. What it should. And together, you're putting together a rubric. Um, you know, what's it going to look like if they are proficient? What's it going to look like if they're not? Um, thats feasible to do that if you have a group working together. By yourself - holy cow. That's daunting. (18:19)
To Reward or Punish? That is the Question	Um, and its something like, as a teacher, you get a little annoyed. Because the first time it happens, its not really a big deal, but after like 8,000 students brining you		I still got good grades, but that was really the one that stands out as the game changer, I guess. But, it was interesting, I had another experience. I was somewhat of a smart alec in high school	Yeah, and I think that, yeah, I'll admit that sometimes I do look at, um, a student's work: an essay. And if I know that they've, they've worked really hard and come and talked to me a few times,	When it is subjective, I get frustrated. And I can think of a time that um, it was when I um had to write a paper and this was a class where I had to write several papers, but I don't remember specifically what the class was, but throughout the class, I had to write papers.	

	<p>stuff on the last day, your like, "I almost wanna make a pile and set it over here and not put it in, just to bug everyone." But, its things like that I think about, well, if that was me, like, I know how I felt back then when I was in high school and you just wanted to make sure you were okay and so, I think that is the biggest thing I've actually noticed influence me is like all day today, was like, "Alright, hand it to me. Let's put it in. I'll tell you what your grade is. I'll tell you how we can fix it." So things like that, but thats more just putting grades in on time, not really like 'my style' of grading I guess. (3:11)</p>		<p>and I was on the debate team and I did well and I remember going into this medical anatomy class and he told us that there was going to be a quiz today and we said, wait a minute, you told us the quiz wasn't going to be till Thursday and he gave us the quiz on Wednesday. This is when we had the classes everyday and we didn't have an A day B day schedule. And he said, well, it doesn't matter. You should have been doing your studying and you should be prepared for it today anyway. And so I looked at my table group and we all just started laughing because we knew that we weren't ready for the quiz. We had planned on it Thursday, so we weren't ready. It's not the only class that we have stuff anyway and so we all start laughing and he comes and he takes the quiz from all of us. And we're like, "what are you doing?" and he says, "you're cheating. I'm gonna take your quiz." And I said, "how are you cheating?" and he said,</p>	<p>and maybe gone to the tutoring at lunch or whatever. And I know that they've put in the work. Even though it might be, it might not be quite the same level as this kid over here that got like a B without as much work, I might not bump this kid up from maybe a B- to a B just for that effort. And I don't know if thats like really good thing because I think courage should be interpreted. Like they're like, they should portray how much, how well they know the content. Um, and what they've learned. But at the same time, I think it kind of is a learning think for the kid to see, "Oh, I worked really hard and I got a B out of it." Then the next time he is going to work just as hard or harder and maybe go for a B+ or an A paper. Something like that. (12:37)</p>	<p>But they were usually about a page to two pages, but then there would be a big one that would be about 5 pages. But, anyways, there as an extra credit assignment and um, well I remember I'd go through, well I didn't take the class very seriously, but it wasn't a very critical class, so I um, even though I would stress about it, I didn't give maybe my full effort, and I'd be getting like, like I would be getting extra grade, like more than the full points. And, so then there was an extra credit assignment. And I thought, well, I'm interested in this so let me do it because I'm interested in this extra credit assignment. So I really tried very hard and I got nothing on it. And I was so frustrated. And then, I was just like, I don't understand why this one is okay and this one is not. And in my estimation, the one I had done on the extra credit was much better, much better analysis, much better argument, much better paper, than these little mini assignments. [Did you ever ask why?] No. I never asked the teacher why. She was too busy. And she was kind of, haphazard anyway. She was kind of all over the place anyway. Yeah, I get frustrated. It still affects my self-esteem!! So yeah, INTERESTING(13:17)</p>	
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			<p>"well your talking." And I said, "wait, is laughing talking?" And because we were, we didn't say a word to each other and we were just laughing and we were all rolling our eyes because we knew we were going to bomb it. And he said, "yep, your cheating." And I said, "oh, okay, if laughing is talking then, I guess. Because we really hadn't said a word. So we weren't cheating. (7:6)</p>			
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Theme: Why Didn't I Learn This in College?

	Amber	Catherine	Jason	Jovina	Katie	Trevor
College Lessons About Grading? I Don't Recall Any	Um, I um... not helpful, well, not not helpful, but NOT specific enough information. I remember um, don't, and this would be how I should grade, it was DON'T grade with red, a red pen. Like that is the one thing that I took out of college grading. (1:92)	But it would be great if there were classes that taught that. It would make it so much easier and my poor kids would have valid grades from 1st quarter instead of stumbling along with me until I finally figured it out by 4th quarter. (5:38)	So, college, we didn't really have a specified course on grading or assessments which, now after some of the professional development I've received, and in hindsight, I think that would be a good idea to add to the curriculum. Basically I feel that the grading conversations and lessons and things that we had in college were surface level in a general sense where they said that you need to grade on purpose. You need to have a plan of how you're going to do it. You need to be fair. You need to consider how much you're going to weight things and it, but they really focused on the surface level of grading. (7:19)	The main thing that I remember from the education program was one day Dr. George came in and we had learned like how to create rubrics, but they never said this is how we need to do it, but it was like the last one because last month before I went to student teaching, so I was doing my practicum and he came in one day and showed us one of his rubrics that he used in his high school class and it wasn't necessarily how to go through a paper and grade it, but it was more of this is how you can give your students effective feedback and not seem like really rude. Um, and that was really good, but other than that, I don't remember. (10:41)	<i>Interviewer:</i> What types of instruction did you receive on grading practice in college or teacher preparation programs? <i>Katie:</i> NONE. <i>Interviewer:</i> So, did you just finish that this year, or did you do that a long time ago? <i>Katie:</i> I'm in the process of, I'm getting, I have a math degree. I have a Bachelor's in math. <i>Interviewer:</i> So, you're doing ARL then? <i>Katie:</i> So, I am doing ARL then. <i>Interviewer:</i> Okay, and so through your ARL program, you haven't received... <i>Katie:</i> I'm not touching on it. So far, there has been some emphasis on that there needs to be assessments, a lot of emphasis that there needs to be assessments, [but] how to do it, there hasn't been any training. (13:29)	I don't think there was a lot of instruction on how it should be graded. I think there were theories presented. You now there is standards-based grading or based completely... but as far as how you should grade, we didn't really do that a lot. (16:27)
Resources to Help Grading	So, yeah, so I didn't do what was I technically taught in my um, practicum. Student teaching is the one that didn't grade and she was, she was just chill and happy and so I went with that one, cuz I went with the one that will keep me sane I guess.	I'm not really great at creating my own rubrics necessarily, but I can find them through SAGE or through other teachers at my school or online resources and that's where, if I need most of my material that is helping me grade because I don't have any	We have... it's super cool to be a first year teacher and to know that I can walk into any one of their classrooms and they are totally willing to help me out. (8:73)	The place that I learned most about grading was when I actually stepped in the classroom with my cooperating teacher in student teaching and she was so awesome. (10:44)		When I student taught, I was with Debbie Barfus, and she felt that it should be completely based on their test scores. They would give, all of their homework, they would get a Citizenship grade for. But, no one cared

	<p>So, I didn't use one theory. I used another. And so now what I've noticed since I've been teaching, that's kinda how I'm leaning that way, so... (3:28)</p>	<p>of my own at this point.</p> <p>So online, especially with the new Common Core, there is a lot of resources that people are developing and offering to other teachers online and so I found some sites that have those and talked about the standards based grading.</p> <p>I also went to a conference in Phoenix, AZ. And there was a class there that I went to that was only about grading practices and how to align it to standards and um, many ways to do a lot of that. And so I felt like those were really good steps in the right direction and because of that, then I started figuring out how to base my grades on those standards from the Common Core and base those on rubrics that were online with the standards and I got that information from my colleagues and then again from online and from the conference I went to.</p> <p>I know the seminar that I went to, the conference, and the speaker that talked about grading practices referenced the</p>				about it. (16:24)
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		[standards-based grading] work in Kentucky. And so hopefully it is getting more recognition (5:21, 5:33, & 5:34, & 6:15)				
But, That's How I was Graded	<p>I'd say, the main things that I grade, the majority of the grade is tests and thats how my class, my math class was in high school. It was majority, uh, yeah, I think it was majority tests.</p> <p>Um, as far college, that one hasn't been, I feel like, has influenced my grading at all, but again, I don't think my high school teachers graded my homework assignments. They just gave me points too,</p> <p>so you could say that I'm just doing the same thing they're doing. (3:1, 3:2, & 3:3)</p>	<p>But giving positive feedback, um one of the things teachers would do is make comments on my essays, write comments. And so I find that I do that when I am grading, and I'm looking for similar things that they were looking for, because I remembered getting comments on certain aspects of my writing so I comment on my students writing in the same way. So that stands out. (6:2)</p>	<p>lets talk about the A- first and then we'll clear up the one that we kind of started to talk about. And we talked about the connection a little bit, but I don't feel like I was very clear in my response. So the A- has definitely impacted the way that I grade. (9.1)</p>	<p>I don't even buy a pack if it has a green pen in it. (laughing). No, I don't use green pen. Sometimes I use pink pen, or orange pen. I never use red either. Just because they say that thats harsh. So...</p> <p><i>Interviewer: So besides pens, any other connection with how you grade?</i></p> <p>Yeah, I think with how some of my teachers took in, um, like, I liked to call them employability grades. Like, were you there when we did it? Like even though I know like if you weren't. If I, even though they might know that I could tell them that I knew it if I wasn't there. They'd still take points off because I wasn't there to do the presentation or whatever. So I think there is a connection there where sometimes I still take in, like, were you here? Did you put the effort in to do it? Did you put in the time in class to show me that you knew it? (12:8 & 12:9)</p>	<p>any connections there? I will always give a student a second chance. Yes. So I don't know if that is like a sub-conscious, or if thats just the philosophy I've developed or if its because of the students that I work with, but I will always give a student a 2nd chance or even a 3rd if I'm seeing enough progress an enough willingness and enough effort then I will give them the chance to make the grade up. (15:5)</p>	<p>so I think what stands out the most was high school, being able to just pass classes without being there. That influences a lot of what i do in the classroom now, not just grading, but making sure that I better be doing something worthwhile for them to be there if they can pass my class. (18:1)</p>
Additions to		I think there	So, college, we		That's a really	Well, I guess as

College Curriculum		<p>should be as part of the curriculum design class that I took, I think part of that curriculum, if not a total separate class, should be how to grade and how to align those grades with the common core. Because they already teach you how to teach to the Common Core. Give me some explicit instruction in how to grade it. And I think that is a missing step that they kind of assume that you'll figure out... which we do.</p> <p>But it would be great if there were classes that taught that. It would make it so much easier and my poor kids would have valid grades from 1st quarter instead of stumbling along with me until I finally figured it out by 4th quarter. (5:37 & 5:38)</p>	<p>didn't really have a specified course on grading or assessments which, now after some of the professional development I've received, and in hindsight, I think that would be a good idea to add to the curriculum. (7:19)</p>		<p>good question. And what is valid? And who gets to define what valid is? You tell me. If I could see something written down that says you have to grade, would this way, but I haven't seen it. (14:39)</p>	<p>far as, you know college courses, classes I took. I'm gonna say I didn't receive any instruction because I can't remember a single time even discussing or how to do it or what. It meant, and hopefully I didn't just fade away that day. (18:8)</p>
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Theme: What I Want to Change for Next Year

	Amber	Catherine	Jason	Jovina	Katie	Trevor
Grades Aligned to Student Knowledge	<p>should they be referenced to the content standards? I think so. I think that's the best way to at least link them to something. Um, otherwise, what would you even be grading? (3:37)</p>	<p>I put kind of random things on their grade that I hoped was good for their grade and part way through the quarter, I was looking at the grades and thinking, uh - oh, it doesn't match where I think they're at. And it didn't match what I felt or thought proficient was. (5:5)</p>	<p>So, my assessments had several skills and they got one clump score and by the time I finished the year, 3rd quarter I started it, 4th quarter I continued it. So after Christmas, I actually separated those scores out. So instead of having an assessment that's worth a 160 points. Now every skill was worth 10 pts. And everything that I put on my grades was 10 points. So instead of them seeing this assessment worth 150 points and this project worth 50 pts. Nope, it was a specific skill theme states, "can you read a piece of literature or a short story or whatever it is." Can you underline the evidence to support a theme? Can you articulate that? That would be the theme. 10 points. And I structured my grading system so assessments were worth 80% of the grade and everything else was considered practice and that was worth 20%. So they knew right away that I was more concerned about their mastery and their</p>	<p>most of my, most of what I teach comes from the standards. Not all of it, but most of it. So I would say most of what's in my, what goes into their final grade is from the standards. I need to do better at putting that into PowerSchool as to what standard this assessment or assignment goes with. But, I would say my assessments match. (11:17)</p>	<p>And they, we have, worked towards, towards referencing the standards. Actually, to hear the way you're talking about it... I know that we do. And we've just gone to the idea of testing out because I understand that that's now district policy if the student can test out. Then why sit in class. And we have to have the standards referenced, um, so that when the student takes the test or exam, if there is clearly a whole section of the standards that they don't, then they get to do that part of the instructions. I know what we worked very hard today. And we do in our math. I think I mentioned that. That um, Christie Clark is the other math teacher. And we reference the standards everyday on the assignments that we are doing. (15:28)</p>	<p>I think they were a representation of what the kid knew of the content they were supposed to know. You know, it was a percentage. If they had 80% then that was a pretty good idea that if you gave them everything, they would know I had a ten. So as far as interpreting it, yeah. I think people looking at it, and not just the idea of, uh, having those common percentages, but just the fact that they were laid out the way that they were. Things were broken out so that you could see, you know, here is this assessment that kind of gives you an idea of where your kid is overall. And right next to it is how they compared in their classwork. You know, side by side. Those percentages were right next to each other. So, I think anybody looking at that would see that commonality there. (18:16)</p>

			competency of the skill and that we did the smaller things to help us get to that point. (8:8)			
Willingness to Change Grading Practices if Better Way Exists	Uh, yeah. I'm flexible. I really am like, I'm all about, let's just try this and see how it goes which is trickier for like some, like some I said earlier, of the teachers I work with are so awesome and sometimes they want to try new things and sometimes they don't. (3:9)	I know the seminar that I went to, the conference, and the speaker that talked about grading practices referenced the work in Kentucky. And so hopefully it is getting more recognition (6:15)	yes. Thank goodness that the years keep coming so we can keep redoing. (9:20)	I think grades should be interpreted as, well, what I would like. I don't know. I have a hard time with this one. I would like to say, "yeah, it should be totally based off of how well they show that they know the content." But then, like high school kids, I feel like we're trying to teach them so much more than just this is how you write a thesis statement. This is how you do close reading. Or this is what I am trying to teach you so you can interpret this book. Um, or trying to teach them responsibility and integrity and all of that stuff. That, I definitely think they should be tied to the content standards, but I would like to find a way that we could kind of mix everything. So yeah, they knew the content, but like that kid that gets a 4 on the [end-of-level] test, but he gets a C in the class because he turned in all of his stuff a month and a half late. So, I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong in that. I don't know. I	Absolutely. But now this is the, I thought about this too. This is the okay, so I've thought about this too and wanted to ask. So, we talked about process, progress, and product. And so, if its standards based, as I recall, as we were saying last week, could be, do you have the grade for effort or the process? The product is the one that would count towards the GPA which is the ones that the colleges would look at. I'm not sure I agree with that. But I understand that is the way our world works here, right now. If we had a way to incorporate that or to translate that or um, that the product wasn't the be all and end all of, of what a college looks at. And I don't know that it is all, but time... wow! I need to relook at some things and make sure that I'm doing what needs to be done, not what I think needs to be. But what needs to be according to the students and, as a professional, ethical teacher. Yeah, and I feel	I mean you look at and it just, traditions tradition. And there is a way things have been done for so long and that doesn't necessarily mean that its the best way. No matter how engrained that is. And hopefully that is something that more and more people are going to come around and see if there is maybe a better way to do it. (18:20)

				don't know.	good about this after today. Cuz I have the freedom to do that. (15:24 & 15:31)	
Standards-Based Grading	Um, I don't mind more work if it would actually tell me what's going on. If you're making me do more work is stupid, then yeah. And I'm like, I don't wanna do it. But if it was actually like, it was, okay, we can see why this is good and helpful, I'd have no problem doing it. (3:41)	By the standards. I mean in an ideal educational setting, which hopefully we are working towards I think, is there are common grading practices aligned to the standards at a school level and then a district level and then ultimately a state level too, that we're all grading pretty much the same way, so no matter where you go your kids are graded the same way and you know exactly what they are being graded on and why, so that there is no subjectivity I guess to it. I think that it should be that way and it should definitely be connected to the common core standards (6:13)	Absolutely. Yeah, and it, well, and the other thing that is a little harder is if they're not proficient. That concept of fail. It becomes a little harder when you're talking about teenagers. We know that holding a student can do more harm than good and that a good teacher can bring them up two grade levels in a single class. So its, its trying to find, does that mean fail? Or does that mean pass? Or where do you put those types of students? College is a little different. You've got people that are paying to be in that seat. You've got people that want to be there so the motivation is a little different. Whereas the public education system, we take all who come. And so its absolutely standards based. But where's going to be that line of, "does a one go on to the next grade level?" And/or is it two? Or is it growth? And things like that that have to be taken into consideration. But at least a	I think I might switch up a little bit next year. Um, just so the kids aren't as point driven, but learning driven and like they know I have to show that I know this concept. Um, instead of what do I need to do to get the 100 points. (12:32)	: Right, and if they struggle, are they... do they have the um, cognitive ability to get that? I mean some people don't. They don't. And so they learn, they do other things, which is the gift of being human. So, um, I like the idea of referencing something to a standard rather than one all incorporated score or grade. Yeah. Yeah. (15:23)	if it was standards based grading, then [I] would know... exactly where they were... exactly where they were. Yep. Save me lots of time. (18:18)

			standards-based grading allows us to know the why behind the D. Or the C. Or the B. Or the A. So we can narrow in and help the student as needed. And for the A students - some of them, lets be honest. Some of my students are at the level, or above the level, of some of my 11th grade students. (9:34)			
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Theme: If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?

	Amber	Catherine	Jason	Jovina	Katie	Trevor
Ambiguity is... Wait, What is it?		<p>I guess I never knew how they graded other than you got the answer right or wrong and then you got points based on that.</p> <p>I had a professor in college that their expectations were completely unclear. I never knew what they expected so I struggled as a student. So I guess part of my grading practices is I always give a rubric beforehand so that my kids know what to expect and what they will be graded on so that their grades shouldn't be a surprise. (4:15 & 6:3)</p>	<p>I liked, yeah, I had a couple teachers, especially in college, that were in the education program that were very specific on their expectations and when I had the rubric, it was easy to know what I was going to get because I would use the rubric to complete the assignment and there were other teachers that gave the assignment but were very unclear about what their expectations were so it was kind of a hit and miss thing. So, it was fun to a degree that I could kind of twist things and make it fun to my personality, but to be honest, I didn't know what the expectations were that has dramatically impacted the way that I teach. I try to be as clear as possible and I know that I'm not always as clear as my students because I get feedback from them when they have the dazed look on their face. So I make a real conscious effort to be clear and explicit with my, with what I expect from my students. (7:15)</p>	<p>She, I never knew how she was gonna take, like I was always nervous to write something because that was like the very first paper that I turned in and she didn't even grade it. She was like this is completely wrong. You read the poem completely wrong. You're interpretation is totally off so you need to write it and this is what you need to say. And I totally didn't agree with it and so I'm writing this paper and I don't even agree with what I'm writing, but, so the rest of the semester, I was always just nervous to write more papers because I was always worried that it wouldn't be her interpretation. (10:13)</p>	<p>And again, so like if I remember in high school, learning how to do a research paper, oh I remember this experience in my senior year of course, we had to write a research paper and I don't recall, well I know I didn't get any kind of written outline because I think that they thought that by the time you were seniors, you were supposed to know how to write a research paper so I did not get a written outline of how to do this paper and I turned it in without citing any references and of course she failed me because I didn't cite any references and it never occurred to me to cite any references. But, I recall that if I had some kind of outline or guideline to follow, I would have cited the references. So that is interesting. I haven't thought about that in a long time. [Did she let you redo that, or did you just end up with the F the whole time?] No. She wouldn't let me redo it. I had enough other grades that I passed the class, but that was a major portion.</p>	<p>Parents over the summer. You know, I got a report card for my daughter. She's in elementary. Um, and they did a pretty good job breaking down, you know, what areas she was proficient and which ones she wasn't. So, that was something that I haven't seen before. You know, looking at her math, she's above the average everywhere, except for measurements. And all of a sudden, its like theres this big drop... so I know what I'm doing this summer. You know we're working on measurement so she can go into next year and bring that up a little bit, yeah. If I just saw that she got 90%, well, what percent did she miss? It doesn't tell me anything. Nope. (18:21)</p>

					Well, I think as it is today, well I know in our school today, it counts quite a bit towards a senior's grade. (13:10)	
Grading is Tricky	<p>Test wise, I feel like they're pretty valid. What I'm doing there, I mean obviously it's tricky because we have the same tests. So, sometimes, I'm more lenient in a situation whereas the other teacher is not. Or vice versa.</p> <p>Just the only thing it does make me not want to do that is the few students that there's a couple of them that they're just trying to get away with doing nothing. So they've turned in assignments that you can 100% tell they just copied the whole thing, and so I give them 1 point out of, this was a big group, so it was worth a little bit more. It was worth two homework assignments. So on a ten points, it was kind of like, I was almost like, I'm not even going to tell them and I was just like, I'm gonna let them see that's what they got because they, you know, like didn't deserve it. And I was like, or I could could name the student</p>	<p>that is interesting because as a teacher, to try and figure out where to draw the line and what makes A work vs not A work. Because all of my experiences were for receiving high marks, so that is all I have to go off of. It is a challenge. (4:6)</p>	<p>And that taught me another great lesson about the importance of being able to identify groups, the different individuals in my class and how my making sure that these are challenged while the little kids are also being brought up to proficiency so that was a great example of grading. Of how to grade. (7:23)</p>			<p>Yeah, absolutely. And I hope that more teachers do that and I hope that is something that they're able to do. I hope that is something that I'm always able to do. It gets tricky when you.... you have to grade a final grade at some point. (17:35)</p>

	specifically. And I was like, he just wants an A. And that's where his thinking is, "I need an A. My parents want me to get an A. But I don't wanna have to work for it." But, he still wants an A. And he's at an A-. And its like, he still wants it. But I like that there is the motivation to do well, so it was, but that was kind of like, I don't know. That was a tricky one for me cuz I wasn't like that. (2:14 & 3:12)					
Everything Worth Anything Hinges on Grades	Um, yeah... same thing where I didn't feel like I had to get good grades, but I also felt like I should. Um, I had a scholarship. I ended up getting a scholarship for my grades. So I had to keep a 3.0 through college which was really wasn't too big of a deal. Um, it, so I, for me, I'm like a, shoot really far so I don't miss. So, I have to get an A, but I was like, what if I don't and get a B, well, then I should be fine (1:29)	the final product ends up on their grade to show their proficiency. Did they master it? But it doesn't show their progress along the way. They have that in their hands, but not on their grades. (5:51)	Is it going to be a hurdle? Absolutely. Grades are so sacred to teachers and how they are, what they represent. Its gong to be a hard to overcome; since I'm fresh into the system and have this kind of new progressive style of thinking, I'm easier to change. And so I'm willing to do it. Yes (9:32)	I think grades should be interpreted as, well, what I would like. I don't know. I have a hard time with this one. I would like to say, "yeah, it should be totally based off of how well they show that they know the content." But then, like high school kids, I feel like we're trying to teach them so much more than just this is how you write a thesis statement. This is how you do close reading. Or this is what I am trying to teach you so you can interpret this book. Um, or trying to teach them responsibility and integrity and all of that stuff. That, I definitely think they should be tied to the	it's when I feel like I am having to guess what the teacher cares about vs. what I care about. And everyone says, and I get lots of advice about, No, you just have to do it" and I'm like well, if what I'm thinking doesn't match what the teacher is thinking, then the grade isn't going to be very good and who knows, if I want to go on and go to graduate school, then that grade has to be good. So, that's the most frustrating is not knowing what the teacher is thinking or not being able to match what the teacher's thinking. Which is crazy, because you don't know what somebody else is thinking.	it seems like, so... I'm sure there is a lot more to it, but it almost seems like you're standards based report card - yes, you're presenting different information. But there is a way to take that information and turn it into a number that is, you know... give it a value. I don't know. But, its never as easy as it feels like it should be. But thats great. I like that. I like that. And like you said, once you get to college, they still use the A, the B, the C. But I don't think the teachers are looking at it the same way. I don't think it is like the professor like my professor. He could care

				<p>content standards, but I would like to find a way that we could kind of mix everything. So yeah, they knew the content, but like that kid that gets a 4 on the [end-of-level] test, but he gets a C in the class because he turned in all of his stuff a month and a half late. So, I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong in that. I don't know. I don't know. (12:38)</p>	<p>(13:26)</p>	<p>less. He could care less that you got 20% on the first test. So? [so what?] That means nothing to me. As long as it is by the end of the class you can show me that this is what you know, we'll get you there, you know. You know, I've never had that 46% test. My grade at the end of that class wasn't any different than it was in in any other class. I showed that if I knew this much and thats what my grade represented. So thats cool. I like that. (17:55)</p>
<p>Grades Are How Performance Is Judged (of students, of teachers, etc.)</p>	<p>but like I said, parents, and anyone else that's gonna look at and think that this is exactly what this means and its not. Its just really not. Theres no black and white way to say this is what the, your student knows. I don't know. (3:31)</p>	<p>Yes. Um as well. I attached my grades to self worth a lot as a kid and I wanted to be a perfectionist and a people pleaser, and so if I got a good grade I was a good person and if I didn't I was disappointed in myself and felt like I wasn't good enough. Um, and so when I am grading my students, I tend to error on the side of mercy and perhaps bump their grades up a little bit if there is ever a question and simply because it did mean a lot to me to get a higher grade. So that is one personal way that I guess my grading is influenced by my experiences.</p>		<p>just in the last like 2 weeks I've found that because teachers will look at it - if you got a B-, some teachers will be like, Okay, they were pretty... they kind of understood it. They were kind of like that bottom line proficiency. Other teachers will look at it and say, Well, he must of just not done all the work. And some parents will be that way too, like I've had parents emailing me even though their student has turned in stuff like month and a half late, there still saying, oh well, so and so has these two assignments turned into you this morning.</p>	<p>I will say she was a hard teacher. She was a senior English teacher and so she was demanding. But she was very good, very knowledgeable, and I did learn a lot of mechanics from her that carried forth, so what I learned from her was good. I just never, it was never good enough to get an A in her class and I was terribly frustrated about the Fs on that research paper because it was such a big part of the grade and because truly, I felt like it wasn't fair (13:20)</p>	<p>Um, but a student in my own class. Uh, how are they going to feel about my grading? Well, hopefully, especially this last year, because we spent so much time looking at their grades and um, working on improving them and working on making things up and working on fixing things and focusing more on what that grade represented. What knowledge they were missing. What knowledge they didn't have. You know we had checklists as we would go through units if we didn't live or they didn't pass something. They wouldn't</p>

		<p>I do error on the side of mercy. (6:5)</p>		<p>Hopefully when he turns it in, he'll have an A. Even though its a month and a half late. I feel like sometimes there are so many things that go into a grade, um, the maybe not everyone would interpret it the same. (12:35)</p>		<p>check mark that box. And they'd go back, and before the test, they'd go back and see what they needed to practice. I think they got to see a lot of correlation between what they were doing in their grade and so I don't think they were frustrated with it. I think they, I think we did a lot of work to help them see what it represented. And it wasn't just some magical letter that they got at the end of the semester. It kinda meant something to them. (18:6)</p>
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APPENDIX G: Matrices of Each Theme Represented by Each Group of Interviews

Matrix Summary of Participants' Meaning Units that Align with 5 Themes During Group of 1st Interviews

	Emotional "Tiers" of Grading (pun intended)	How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	Why Didn't I Learn This in College?	What I Want to Change for Next Year	If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?
Amber	it was, you knew, I have to get an A in the class, I knew I needed an A in the class, because originally I was going to do hygiene, so I was like, I had to get an A, so I was like I had to get an A on every single test. (1:61)	You get that he was pretty lenient there, but you would only get you know 9 out of 10, things like that, so it wasn't perfect to where you were just a solid A without getting any points on the test. And so, it was intense. Like I mean, you had people dropping out of his class and you had people fighting like with the president, administration, saying, this isn't right. There should be a way to make this work. But, it was so fun to have this work that way because I just knew if I could get one problem right on this test, I felt like the smartest person in the world. Again, it was so cool. (1:105)	Um, I um... not helpful, well, not not helpful, but NOT specific enough information. I remember um, don't, and this would be how I should grade, it was DON'T grade with red, a red pen. Like that is the one thing that I took out of college grading. (1:92)	So it was like really detailed. You couldn't just read and answer the questions (1:15)	I'm not one for, this is wrong, or why are they doing this. I try not to complain, so especially where at the beginning, if someone tells me, this is how it's gonna be, it's usually easy for me to accept that and go with it so it doesn't bug me. So like, in high school, this is normal. This is how it is. This is what I gotta do. So, I never really was unhappy with anything. Um, and I don't ever remember an experience where I feel like I was unfairly graded for the most part. Like that one assignment was like, this isn't fair. I worked really hard on this. But, I didn't know how to do it. And I got it back and it was an F. And I was like, Okay, I understand. I felt bad like this isn't fair in a way. But I also kind of recognized in a way that I didn't meet the requirements so I didn't feel like it was something that I would go talk to the teacher and tell them this isn't fair and you should fix this. So I never had any of those experiences where I felt like I was being cheated. Um, college, again, since it was on the disclosure, and this is how it's gonna be, especially when I hit those classes that were a little different from what you generally see, um, for a minute, you kind of like, think, okay. Can I do this?

					But, the teacher is really fair and mostly just wanted to encourage you to do well. (1:102)
Catherine	I became frustrated with those that didn't have clear expectations... So, the classes that I struggled with or became frustrated with were the ones that I never how I'd be graded or what I'd be graded on or how that would be weighted on my grade. Everything else was fine. If I knew what to expect, I didn't feel any anxiety. But, if I didn't know what to expect, then it stressed me out. (4:29)	There weren't any clear expectations. Sometimes the lessons he gave didn't match the tests. And so, it was just always guess work as far as what to study and how much and whether we'd have to do multiple choice vs an essay response. We just never knew. (4:23)	In the teacher education program, we didn't receive any, almost any instruction on how to grade and there was no instruction on how to weight a grade. None! So we really didn't receive a lot. (4:30)		No, they didn't all use rubrics. Just mainly the Language Arts and Education ones. I'm not entirely sure how some of my other general education teachers graded me. Psychology, I'm not sure how they graded me. Nutrition - I don't know what her grading practice was based on. I just know that if I did work, I received a grade and it went in my grade book. (4:11)
Jason	I've also had some experiences of like, not getting a paper in on time and in one of my classes, I felt, I felt really bad for turning the paper in late and I was sick and stuff and so what I did as a student is, I knew he would take it. But I felt, cuz this was in college and this was later - my junior year - and I felt like I kinda had disrespected my professor cuz I really admired him. And so I ended up turning in that paper, but at the same time, I turned in the next two papers that were due. So I sat down and I finished the one and I finished the next two and I turned them all in. And I said, "Hey, I'm really sorry that my first one was late. here are my next two in advance, kind of a thing. Would I, the reason why I did that, is I said that I admired him and I looked to him as an example of a teacher that I would want to be, to be able to establish that	When I got to middle school, it was the same kind of a concept. Really, but now it was with the A-F scale and everything like that. But I worked hard to make sure that I did well on all of the tests and to turn in my homework and it felt like that as long as I turned in the homework, then I scored really well on the test, then I would get the A as long as it was all on time. That was one of the big things. (7:2)	So, college, we didn't really have a specified course on grading or assessments which, now after some of the professional development I've received, and in hindsight, I think that would be a good idea to add to the curriculum. Basically I feel that the grading conversations and lessons and things that we had in college were surface level in a general sense where they said that you need to grade on purpose. You need to have a plan of how you're going to do it. You need to be fair. You need to consider how much you're going to weight things and it, but they really focused on the surface level of grading. (7:19)	[My mentor teacher] taught a valuable lesson about teaching or allowing students to have a positive learning experience in her classroom. So if a student were to come up at the end of the quarter and say, "what do I gotta do to get an A?" She taught me that students have a lot more positive learning experience and will remember the feeling that they experienced in the class more than what they specifically learned skill based and so she showed me, "look, if they're coming, and making an effort, have them do something. Show the skill. Don't just say, 'fill out this worksheet,' but rather show me this particular skill and we'll put it in the computer and see what happens. And so that was a good learning experience for me as well to focus on the student and build that trust. Build that positive experience with them through allowing	I liked, yeah, I had a couple teachers, especially in college, that were in the education program that were very specific on their expectations and when I had the rubric, it was easy to know what I was going to get because I would use the rubric to complete the assignment and there were other teachers that gave the assignment but were very unclear about what their expectations were so it was kind of a hit and miss thing. So, it was fun to a degree that I could kind of twist things and make it fun to my personality, but to be honest, I didn't know what the expectations were that has dramatically impacted the way that I teach. I try to be as clear as possible and I know that I'm not always as clear as my students because I get feedback from them when they have the dazed look on their face. So I make

	relationship with students to where they respected and admire you and not take advantage of their time and things like that and to show that and he taught me a lot about grading and of course, he accepted the paper and gave me the grades that it deserved but didn't dock or anything for latework, but rather graded on the content and what I was able to accomplish so that taught me a valuable lesson about grading... rather than just some of the other teachers that say, I won't take it. It's late. (7:18)			these second chances and the opportunities to demonstrate that competency. So I definitely took that away from the experience. (7:27)	a real conscious effort to be clear and explicit with my, with what I expect from my students. (7:15)
Jovina	There were some subjects that you could do just the bare minimum and still get a 100% on the assignment, then I would just do that... not that I didn't respect the teacher. It was just that maybe I wasn't as interested in that subject. (10:29)	And, then the tests, he would have us grade each other and so I know a lot of kids that just fixed their answers as they went. But, I don't really feel like he ever really read our stuff. He just looked at it and said, oh you did it. You got a 100%. (10:12)	The main thing that I remember from the education program was one day Dr. Glazier came in and we had learned like how to create rubrics, but they never said this is how we need to do it, but it was like the last one because last month before I went to student teaching, so I was doing my practicum and he came in one day and showed us one of his rubrics that he used in his high school class and it wasn't necessarily how to go through a paper and grade it, but it was more of this is how you can give your students effective feedback and not seem like really rude. Um, and that was really good, but other than that, I don't remember. (10:41)	I also know a teacher that kind of grades like the standards. She gives the students a 1, 2, 3, or 4. In gradebook, she just marks that she's collected the assignments, but that's all. Then, at the end, she inputs the standards and she puts 4/4 or 3/4. It works out in the end that they get an A, B, C or D. I think I am going to make changes for next year. (10:47)	She, I never knew how she was gonna take, like I was always nervous to write something because that was like the very first paper that I turned in and she didn't even grade it. She was like this is completely wrong. You read the poem completely wrong. You're interpretation is totally off so you need to write it and this is what you need to say. And I totally didn't agree with it and so I'm writing this paper and I don't even agree with what I'm writing, but, so the rest of the semester, I was always just nervous to write more papers because I was always worried that it wouldn't be her interpretation. (10:13)
Katie	And, I did talk to her about it, but she wouldn't change the grade. And yeah, I was very frustrated. Very discouraged about that. And very scared about what my grade was. My	it's when I feel like I am having to guess what the teacher cares about vs. what I care about. And everyone says, and I get lots of advice about, No, you just have to do it" and I'm	[Interviewer: What types of instruction did you receive on grading practice in college or teacher preparation programs?] NONE. (13:28)		And again, so like if I remember in high school, learning how to do a research paper, oh I remember this experience in my senior year of course, we had to write a research paper and I

	<p>senior year. The last part of my senior year. [Interviewer: It makes you feel anxiety?] Tremendous. Yeah, it was. (13:22)</p>	<p>like well, if what I'm thinking doesn't match what the teacher is thinking, then the grade isn't going to be very good and who knows, if I want to go on and go to graduate school, then that grade has to be good. So, that's the most frustrating is not knowing what the teacher is thinking or not being able to match what the teacher's thinking. Which is crazy, because you don't know what somebody else is thinking. (13:26)</p>			<p>don't recall, well I know I didn't get any kind of written outline because I think that they thought that by the time you were seniors, you were supposed to know how to write a research paper so I did not get a written outline of how to do this paper and I turned it in without citing any references and of course she failed me because I didn't cite any references and it never occurred to me to cite any references. But, I recall that if I had some kind of outline or guideline to follow, I would have cited the references. So that is interesting. I haven't thought about that in a long time. [Did she let you redo that, or did you just end up with the F the whole time?] No. She wouldn't let me redo it. I had enough other grades that I passed the class, but that was a major portion. Well, I think as it is today, well I know in our school today, it counts quite a bit towards a senior's grade. (13:10)</p>
Trevor	<p>It drove me crazy to not be at the top. Especially in college. Not in much in high school. I cared 'about my grades. My parents cared about my grades. Um, but you know, if I had an A, I was usually pretty happy, even if it was a low A? (16:14)</p>	<p>You were mostly graded on tests. They weighted, usually 60% at least, it seems like. Then every once in a while, that teacher would give you 10% or some form of showing up to class, especially those, you know, undergrad classes where everyone was right out of high school and they were trying to give you a reason to show up. Uh, and then the rest was work. Um, quizzes, different things like that. (16:18)</p>	<p>I don't think there was a lot of instruction on how it should be graded.</p> <p>I think there were theories presented. You now there is standards-based grading or based completely... but as far as how you should grade, we didn't really do that a lot. (16:27 & 16:28)</p>		<p>The first class I took with him, I took as a challenge because I'd never had to work that hard in a class. After that, I appreciated what he was doing. Um, I appreciated even that class that where I got 46% on the first test was probably my fourth class from him. And, I knew what he was doing. I knew he was just pushing us. He was pushing me. And I was okay with that. (16:20)</p>

Matrix Summary of Participants' Meaning Units that Align with 5 Themes During Group of 2nd Interviews

	Emotional "Tiers" of Grading (pun intended)	How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	Why Didn't I Learn This in College?	What I Want to Change for Next Year	If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?
Amber	Um, like those kind of assignments? Um, well, that was homework assignments, so that's something that depending on what mood we're all in at that particular time is how much people are gonna care of what it's like (2:38)	If someone came and talked to me about homework and said, "Why did you, why did they get this?" It would be like, well, that one would be more like, you know we can work through that one because I wouldn't want to stand by, like well I gave you a 3 cuz you did half of it, but it's like, I did the hard half, so there's things like that, so I'm like, you know, homework wise, I wouldn't, you know, I wouldn't stand there and never make a change for the way I've graded that because I don't... but it's also not worth that much, so again it's not something that like I, "I'll just give them the points" it's not too big of an issue there. (2:13)	For the most part, homework is just, "are they doing it?" and if they are, I wanna reward them. And it would be a lot to grade, so (laughs) so, grading homework is the trickiest one that I wanna work on next year because I don't love how I'm doing that this year. (2:3)	depending on each test, the complexity of the problem is how many points its worth, and then I go through and I grade them all myself and look through. (2:5)	m, our grade scale is just like how it's 70, no, oh my goodness, is it 70% for tests? And 30% homework? I think we're at 70-30 (2:16)
Catherine	I give participation points for participating through the whole process of learning. So rather than showing the progress, um, even though they are progressing, I feel like the participation points show that and I feel like the final product shows, did they get it? So I do rely mostly on the product and the process. (5:53)	I put kind of random things on their grade that I hoped was good for their grade and part way through the quarter, I was looking at the grades and thinking, uh - oh, it doesn't match where I think they're at. And it didn't match what I felt or thought proficient was.(5:5)	I think there should be as part of the curriculum design class that I took, I think part of that curriculum, if not a total separate class, should be how to grade and how to align those grades with the common core. Because they already teach you how to teach to the Common Core. Give me some explicit instruction in how to grade it. And I think that is a missing step that they kind of assume that you'll figure out... which we do. (5:37)	So online, especially with the new Common Core, there is a lot of resources that people are developing and offering to other teachers online and so I found some sites that have those and talked about the standards based grading. I also went to a conference in Phoenix, AZ. And there was a class there that I went to that was only about grading practices and how to align it to standards and um, many ways to do a lot of that. And so I felt like those were really good steps in the right direction and because of that, then I started figuring out how to base my grades on those standards from	and so I remember I knew I wanted to grade mostly on summative things, so maybe an end of unit test or things where I felt like the student should have the skill down by then and a little bit of participation, I put kind of random things on their grade that I hoped was good for their grade and part way through the quarter, I was looking at the grades and thinking, uh - oh, it doesn't match where I think they're at. And it didn't match what I felt or thought proficient was. (5:3 & 5:5)

				the Common Core and base those on rubrics that were online with the standards and I got that information from my colleagues and then again from online and from the conference I went to. (5:33 & 5:34)	
Jason	Sometimes I'll put it on their grade. Sometimes I won't. Just kind of depends on the situation. I grade enough that my students think that their being, that they are being assessed on everything. (8:36)	But I don't put everything on the grade. Because I don't think that it is necessary for every little thing to put on the grade. But it's not like they're guessing to the point that maybe I should do this. They just do everything now because they know that's part of what we're going to do regardless of whether or not it goes on the grade. (8:37)	My students appreciate the opportunities to redo things that they've not understood. I've had a lot of positive feedback from students that say, "I wish every teacher allowed me to show this stuff and graded that way rather than focusing on a point total or a time limit type thing." So I've had a lot of positive experiences. [Interviewer: And you've taken that philosophy from Bill Sargent? Or are a lot of ideas from that from Bill from that class then?] A lot of it yeah. A lot of it from him, there is a lot of different people that I've had the opportunity to know, rub shoulders with, that have given me some fantastic advice. Some people that I definitely admire. In fact, [professional development class for] technology endorsement, Ted Chavez - fantastic. We talk a lot about theory and a lot of these different concepts on how to actually use technology to advance these learning situations. Grading and stuff like that. (8:70)	If [a new grading system] was more accurate, sure, [I'd change my grading practices]. But it's a culture shift... Absolutely. I'm not afraid of change. In fact, there is a lot of things that we are limited by because of the grading system now. So, yeah, absolutely... In fact, elementary is probably a better way than it is in the high school is. In a lot of ways... Not saying that it is the ideal, but it is much more specific. (8:63)	And we would have, I would do interventions and things like that to make sure that they were at least proficient. And then that would come, all of that together, fortunately, ends up being, great. Now I say unfortunately because I'm not a big fan of the average. I didn't have enough time to structure it to give multiple assessments for that one skill to really get the best score which I would use the mode which would be the most common one to give that final grade. I'm not there yet. (8:12)
Jovina	We have Common Formative Assessments. And different things that we do for our GVCs. But each of us kind of weigh those differently in our grade. We all do	For the most part, um, yeah. I'm still going to say yes. I think. I think. (more laughing). Um, yeah, I think so. Cuz even with those kids that are really good kids and I might give		it was first quarter because I never did it again! (11:23)	I feel like they do for the most part. Sometimes I feel like those assignments that I kind of just check off, I don't know whether I should even like be putting them on their

	<p>them, but each of them are kind of weighed differently. And what goes into their final grade. Um, the school wide ones... we don't normally have a school wide one. (11:19)</p>	<p>'em a B instead of a B-, its not far off from where they were, so I guess maybe they're not totally valid. Maybe I take in the human element too much. Maybe I'm too nice!?! (11:12)</p>			<p>grade because its not, its a reflection of learning. But it wasn't like part of the core standards or whatever. But then I think about it and I'm, we're supposed to be teaching them the core standards. But we can also teach them other stuff, and so I included it on their grade because it is a reflection of them learning. But, yeah, for the most part I feel like they are pretty valid. I guess. (11:4)</p>
Katie	<p>Yeah, it is not their fault if they haven't been given the tools that they need to work. Yeah. And if I have done everything in my power to help them to have those tools, its just not documented. Its not that students fault. (14:30)</p>	<p>On the subjective part, and I tend to go back to it. It really, really opened my mind when I thought about that research paper without even realizing how much of an influence because I'm just, I just don't believe there is black and white when it comes to any kind of written, any kind of give my your thoughts, um, explanation. It depends on the individual person and uh, and I think that now, I'm thinking that I've got to find a better way to quantify that and I don't know what it is. I haven't discussed it with my colleagues yet, but there are a few things. (14:13)</p>			<p>That's a really good question. And what is valid? And who gets to define what valid is? You tell me. If I could see something written down that says you have to grade, would this way, but I haven't seen it. (14:39)</p>
Trevor	<p>Um, but I had to answer that question. Why is this different than what your saying their grade in the class is. Which was scary. I never realized I might have to do something... now I know. But would I change it? No. I wouldn't. (17:45)</p>	<p>um, tests and quizzes, um, where were we usually? Probably most of my tests ended up being worth about a week's worth of homework. So if you broke it down, that other 70%, um forty percent of it was probably tests and quizzes. Um, 20% was homework and the other 10% was bellwork and other things like that and problem solving and that kind of stuff. So</p>	<p>Um I saw it in student teaching. Um, its just, if there's not, it doesn't take much. If a kid can come and just pass the test - speaking for myself - why go do the homework? (17:6)</p>	<p>Right next to every question is the standard that it is coming from. On the district assessment, we were working on, as a school, it was a big transitional year. (17:56)</p>	<p>It didn't matter if it was a quiz, a test, or homework, it all went under one category. That category's percentage for, I had 45 students um for 41 of my students, that's category's assessment, or that category's percentage was within 7% of their district assessment score. So for me, I felt like my grade was really close because the test, the district</p>

		that's about how it came out. (17:31)			assessment was completely standards based. And my kids got within 7% of their classroom grade, to within, so they were pretty close. (17:7)
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Matrix Summary of Participants' Meaning Units that Align with 5 Themes During Group of 3rd Interviews

	Emotional "Tiers" of Grading (pun intended)	How Valid Are My Hodgepodge Grading Practices?	Why Didn't I Learn This in College?	What I Want to Change for Next Year	If Grades Could Talk, What Would They Say?
Amber	so I didn't do what was I technically taught in my um, practicum. Student teaching is the one that didn't grade and she was, she was just chill and happy and so I went with that one, cuz I went with the one that will keep me sane I guess (3:28)	And then so I'm just like, "Just tell me what to do" cuz right now I really don't know what's the best so I'm all about, "Yeah, I'll try that for a year" and just stick with it and if I don't like it, I'll do something else so, I like experimenting. It doesn't bug me to much. (3:8)	Well, we talked about my knowledge of grading and it wasn't very big. Either I slept through that class or something. Um, I never use a red pen to grade tests. I have pink, I have green, I have purple. Purple is my favorite. Um, sometimes I use a light blue. I don't even use dark blue. I don't use black, red, or dark red or dark blue, just cuz you can't see black. And, I felt like, well, if you can't use red, that's the most normal color of pen, then you can't use blue. So, I like, you know, rainbow colors. So I used those to grade. You know, and then you have a pink smiley face next to the minus 1 and apparently it's supposed to make them feel better about themselves. So, I, uh, aced that. It was kind of fun. I, I don't even remember what else did I gain from grading. I was gonna ask some people in my cohort since I work with them. (3:20 & 3:21)	that would give you, at least, if you were looking at that type of report card, you'd be able to interpret it exactly how, like it'd be pinned down a lot tighter. Like they've got, and that's why they have an A vs, well they retook it 15 times, but they really don't get it but they have an A cuz they did enough. They worked hard enough to get there. Um, that would be really nice to figure that out. Um, I'd be all for it. I see that it would be more work. You'd have to categorize a little bit better. You'd have to be more organized with your tests and what they're testing. And maybe certain questions on it would be referenced to each standard, um and then if they were retaking and things like that, that would be, that would be hard to judge, like where that would go. (3:40)	Um, kinda, I kinda mentioned this a little bit last time. Anyone that looks at it is gonna think if they have an A, they must be brilliant or they have a D, they must not have gotten it, but you've got those students that are just super intelligent. And math is one of those that, some of your, well I guess every subject, this is very true. But I think especially with students that are really good with things like math. They don't, they've never been challenged. They don't want to do the work. And so they're my D students. Um, so, reflective of exactly what they know. I wouldn't say they're perfectly valid. (3:29)
Catherine	I am in love with rubrics because of that teacher. I never knew what he wanted or what he would expect or what he would grade on, and that was incredibly frustrating, so I try to do the opposite of that for sure. (6:4)	first quarter, I think they had no idea what to expect, umm and they may have been confused by their grades and their things I chose to put on their grades and the things I left off their grade. There was probably confusion sometimes maybe for that. (6:6)	Yeah I was just the model. It was never really taught explicitly. (6:9)	By the standards. I mean in an ideal educational setting, which hopefully we are working towards I think, is there are common grading practices aligned to the standards at a school level and then a district level and then ultimately a state level too, that we're all grading pretty much the same way, so no matter where you go your	By the standards. I mean in an ideal educational setting, which hopefully we are working towards I think, is there are common grading practices aligned to the standards at a school level and then a district level and then ultimately a state level too, that we're all grading pretty much the same way, so no matter where you go your

				kids are graded the same way and you know exactly what they are being graded on and why, so that there is no subjectivity I guess to it. I think that it should be that way and it should definitely be connected to the common core standards (6:13)	kids are graded the same way and you know exactly what they are being graded on and why, so that there is no subjectivity I guess to it. I think that it should be that way and it should definitely be connected to the common core standards (6:13)
Jason	Another thing I do as well is to mitigate the time I spend on grading. I focus a lot on that prework for writing. And, have them with that best draft, and guess what? I workshop it. So I guide them through specific things to look at. So by the time I really do grade it, we've gone through as many buffers as possible. [to get there]. So it kind of, well especially with those procrastinators, if they know that best draft is due, they do it the night before. And they think, "Now I'm done." Well now at least you've got something we can work with when you didn't have it before, so I try to look at those things the way I would be as a student and some of my weaknesses as a learner and I tried to create ways to overcome those obstacles as well. (9:19)	It is happening. But perhaps it is happening in the way it needs to happen and that is grassroots with teachers doing it, experimenting with it, winning over their departments and... (9:46)	And so he was discovering it in a process. And he definitely mastered this skill. And so he got the grade that reflected that. But it was a different way then how we originally set up the assessment. So, the way [Bill Sargent] taught me about grading mattered more about, Can they show the skill rather than the form that they showed it? (9:13)	So, would I like to get there? Absolutely. But its definitely going to be a process. But hopefully next year, I'll be closer to that than I was this year. But I feel like I made some pretty good progress and I'm excited to see how things work and how the students relate to it. (9:44)	And so he was discovering it in a process. And he definitely mastered this skill. And so he got the grade that reflected that. But it was a different way then how we originally set up the assessment. So, the way he taught me about grading mattered more about, Can they show the skill rather than the form that they showed it? (9:13)
Jovina	its kind of the way they approach it. Um, as to whether I'm gonna be, I don't wanna say lenient, but I guess lenient in the way that, okay I won't say lenient, I'll say, approachable, like when he said that in his email, it was like, What the heck? You think... kinda just that attitude like, Yeah, I missed your class,	Yeah, and I think that, yeah, I'll admit that sometimes I do look at, um, a student's work: an essay. And if I know that they've, they've worked really hard and come and talked to me a few times, and maybe gone to the tutoring at lunch or whatever. And I know that they've put in the work. Even though it might be, it	So we had one day in my whole year long teacher education program that we actually, I mean they talked about, they sort of talked about like time management and stuff as far as grading, but they didn't really say this is how you should grade, or this is how you should set up a rubric, except for the	I think I might switch up a little bit next year. Um, just so the kids aren't as point driven, but learning driven and like they know I have to show that I know this concept. Um, instead of what do I need to do to get the 100 points. You know. Um, so, yeah, thats what I've done from hers. (12:32)	I think grades should be interpreted as, well, what I would like. I don't know. I have a hard time with this one. I would like to say, "yeah, it should be totally based off of how well they show that they know the content." But then, like high school kids, I feel like we're trying to teach them so much more than

	<p>but it shouldn't really matter because like you know that I know it anyways. I shouldn't have to show you that I know it. (12:17)</p>	<p>might not be quite the same level as this kid over here that got like a B without as much work, I might not bump this kid up from maybe a B- to a B just for that effort. And I don't know if that's like really good thing because I think courage should be interpreted. Like they're like, they should portray how much, how well they know the content. Um, and what they've learned. But at the same time, I think it kind of is a learning think for the kid to see, "Oh, I worked really hard and I got a B out of it." Then the next time he is going to work just as hard or harder and maybe go for a B+ or an A paper. Something like that. (12:37)</p>	<p>one day that Dr. Glazier came in. But they never really said like this is how you should divide up your class or um, stuff like that. (12:30)</p>		<p>just this is how you write a thesis statement. This is how you do close reading. Or this is what I am trying to teach you so you can interpret this book. Um, or trying to teach them responsibility and integrity and all of that stuff. That, I definitely think they should be tied to the content standards, but I would like to find a way that we could kind of mix everything. So yeah, they knew the content, but like that kid that gets a 4 on the SAGE test, but he gets a C in the class because he turned in all of his stuff a month and a half late. So, I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong in that. I don't know. I don't know. (12:38)</p>
Katie	<p>if they struggle, are they... do they have the um, cognitive ability to get that? I mean some people don't. They don't. And so they learn, they do other things, which is the gift of being human. (15:23)</p>	<p>going back to, um how should grades be interpreted? I guess I'm coming to, I guess you're brining out with this series of interviews that I don't know how much emphasis I do place on grades now. (15:20)</p>	<p>And as I'm interpreting it, I have received NO INSTRUCTION.</p> <p>However, I have had lots of ancillary experience in looking at how other people grade and what their grading system is. And it goes back to the rubrics. Way back as a teacher's aide, when I wasn't, when I wasn't sure what to do, I could go back to the rubric and say, "did they do this part of it?" That's an A. "Did they do this? Nope, not quite. That one's more like C work. So there was an outline that I could look at. But nobody ever really said to me, "this is how we do it." They said, "you can use this if you want" kind of thing. (15:10 & 15:11)</p>	<p>I'm thinking, if you introduce the idea of standards-based grading... at least some of my colleagues who have been teaching for 20 years, no way. Yeah. Yeah. And we have, lots of people, have enough trouble with the Common Core - just the whole idea of the Common Core - um, there is enough of an uproar about that. But I can't... but I'm excited because I think that's an awesome thing to strive for. (15:25)</p>	<p>And they, we have, worked towards, towards referencing the standards. [So you guys might be even further along.] Actually, to hear the way you're talking about it... I know that we do. And we've just gone to the idea of testing out because I understand that that's now district policy if the student can test out. [Demonstrate what they know]. Then why sit in class. And we have to have the standards referenced, um, so that when the student takes the test or exam, if there is clearly a whole section of the standards that they don't, then they get to do that part of the instructions. I know what we worked very hard today. And we do in our math. I think I mentioned that. That um, Clara Campos is the other math</p>

					teacher. And we reference the standards everyday on the assignments that we are doing. (15:28)
Trevor	<p>ah. It bothered me not to... and it wasn't necessarily the A... It bothered me to not see the best in the class. You know, all the way up through college it drove me crazy. Um, and that pushed me to do better and better. As far as grading students now. Um, I guess I, I don't know how much it has to do with grading. But I spend a lot of time looking for ways to motivate them. Trying to get them to want that grade. Trying to get them to see for themselves what they want. Not why their parents think they should get, not why their teachers think they should get it, but why they might want to get there. Um, and I have a lot of success with that. (18:3)</p>	<p>I like having that little bit in there. I think we talked about yesterday, just having those couple of points. At the end of the day, it's not going to make a huge difference. But its a little bit of motivation. Its a little bit of reason to do it. And especially for those kids that could use that extra couple percent. Um, it might help them stay motivated. But it, if they're not doing the homework, you know if... its not like they're going to, its a pretty good reflection of how they are going to do on the test. So you know, having that little bit of homework in their grade, isn't going to make that big of a difference I've noticed. (18:14)</p>	<p>Well, I guess as far as, you know college courses, classes I took. I'm gonna say I didn't receive any instruction because I can't remember a single time even discussing or how to do it or what. It meant, and hopefully I didn't just fade away that day.</p> <p>But has far my experience in preparing to be a teacher, I had a lot of other opportunities. Student teaching. I had a lot more chance to see, you know, I guess the grading practices there. And I had a mentor teacher that wanted me to be a big part of that. And wanted me to experience even as much as giving them something that I thought they were going to do well on and didn't realize they were prepared for and watch and my reaction to the grades that they got and realizing where they were all the way through it. In the classes. No. Not a lot of instruction. But through the program, um, there were other opportunities for it. (18:8 & 18:9)</p>	<p>I was thinking about... standards based grading and thinking about a kid coming into my class and I know that he got a B in his previous class. Okay. You know, what [does] that mean? I still have to find the holes. I still have to find, okay, what 20% are you missing? From last year? I don't know what it is... It might be multiplying negatives. It might be adding or subtracting negatives. It might be something huge. That is gonna mess you up through my entire course and just having that percentage and not referencing it to anything doesn't tell me a whole lot. (18:17)</p>	<p>I think they were a representation of what the kid knew of the content they were supposed to know. You know, it was a percentage. If they had 80% then that was a pretty good idea that if you gave them everything, they would know I had a ten. So as far as interpreting it, yeah. I think people looking at it, and not just the idea of, uh, having those common percentages, but just the fact that they were laid out the way that they were. Things were broken out so that you could see, you know, here is this assessment that kind of gives you an idea of where your kid is overall. And right next to it is how they compared in their classwork. You know, side by side. Those percentages were right next to eachother. So, I think anybody looking at that would see that commonality there. (18:16)</p>

APPENDIX H: Consent Form



INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Teaching & Learning

TITLE OF STUDY: A Phenomenology Study of First Year Teachers Looking at the Shared Lived Experience of Learning to Grade

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Jane McCarthy and Brandon Yost

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Purpose of the Study

Teaching current and future teachers about grading practices ideally means that they will be taught about its larger concept of assessment literacy as well. Gotch and French (2014) discuss the current “need for studies to connect teacher assessment literacy to student outcomes. Not only is this work needed to build support for assessment literacy measures, but also to build support for assessment literacy as a necessary attribute of effective teachers” (p. 17). DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, and Cao (2013) explain there “is a dearth of research on preservice assessment education including both its curricular and pedagogical approaches” (p. 128).

Stiggins (1999) reports that as of January 1998, only 15 states had teacher certification standards that required competency in assessment and 10 other states explicitly required assessment course work during training. The remaining 25 states did not even mention competence of assessment as any requirement for teacher certification or licensure. DeLuca and Klinger (2010) emphatically state that there is a “need for greater attention on pre-service programming related to assessment” (p. 422). While Stiggins (1999) work is now 15 years old, it should be noted that to the author’s knowledge and ability to research, this study has not been replicated to bring current findings to the table. This is also concerning because “if education research is to be relied upon to develop sound policy and practice, then conducting replications on important findings is essential to moving toward a more reliable and trustworthy understanding of educational environments” (Makel & Plucker, 2014, p. 313).

The Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students have been in place for nearly a quarter century to guide teacher educators in helping pre-service and in-service teachers develop their assessment literacy skills. These seven standards were developed in 1990 through a joint effort between the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), and National Education Association (NEA). These standards have also been referred to and used as a guide for researchers in more current studies.

Among the seven standards, there is one focused solely on grading. Standard 5 states, “teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments” (AFT, et al., 1990). Since the development of these standards in 1990, multiple studies have been done to measure the degree to which both pre-service and in-service teachers are competent in the standards for educational assessment of students (Campbell, et. al., 2002; Mertler, 2005; Plake, 1993). In each study, results indicated that both pre-service and in-service teachers scored low in competency for

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standard 5, which says “teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments” (AFT, et al., 1990).

Stiggins (2004) offers historical insight as to why teacher education programs aren’t sufficiently preparing pre-service teachers with the assessment literacy skills they need so as to be competent in creating, administering, and evaluating assessments. He explains, Decades ago, we separated assessment from instruction, assigned the tasks to different people, and built a wall between them... As a result, of this apparent lack of understanding of the connection between assessment and instruction, teacher licensing laws have failed to require competence in assessment as a condition of licensure to teach. Thus teacher preparation programs have failed to weave assessment training into their curriculum. (p. 26)

Popham (2009) argues that this current situation is problematic because teachers have an insufficient knowledge of both classroom assessments and accountability assessments. He stresses that assessment literacy should and must be an important content area for teachers to study and become proficient in.

Given this brief overview of current research in regards to assessment instruction, and more particularly grading practice instruction, for both pre-service and in-service educators (Campbell, et. al., 2002; DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Mertler, 2005; Plake, 1993; Popham, 2009; Stiggins, 2004), it is clear that more needs to be done to educate current (in-service training) and future (teacher preparation programs) teachers about grading practices. Therefore, the research questions for this study are:

Main Question: How do new teachers (first or second year) decide how to assign grades? Ancillary Questions:

- What experiences have teachers had that helped them to learn about grading?
- How do teachers’ grading practices relate to explicit instruction they received on grading practices?
- In what ways have teachers learned about grading during their first year as a teacher?
- How are they applying this new knowledge to their teaching/grading practice?
- And, in what ways have they learned about grading practices from their peers/colleagues? Through the answers to these questions, it is anticipated that teacher educators, policy makers, school leaders, and teachers in general will have empirical data to guide instructional development of grading practice instruction to incorporate in teacher education programs and in-service teacher professional development courses. You are invited to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to be able to understand the phenomenon of how new teachers learn to grade, thus guiding those charged with instructing pre-service and in-service teachers regarding assessment literacy practices, and more specifically, grading practices.

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Procedures

• If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: Participate in three interviews during your first year (or second year as the case may be) of teaching to find out more about your experience with being graded as a student, your experience of learning to grade during your first teaching assignment, and any thoughts on how these two sets of experiences may or may not relate to each other.

Benefits of Participation

There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn and articulate the phenomenon of how new teachers learn to grade. You may also learn more about your own self through this reflective process and as a result become a more disciplined teacher in regards to how you prepare, teach, and assess your students.

Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. However, you may feel uncomfortable about answering questions regarding your grading practices during the interviews, especially if your grading practices stem from emotional, personal, prior experiences.

Cost /Compensation

There will be no financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take approximately 3 hours of your time (1 hour per interview). There is no compensation for your time.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Jane McCarthy at 702/895- 1208, jane@unlv.nevada.edu, or Brandon Yost at 435/652-8418, yostb@unlv.nevada.edu. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794 or toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.**

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 5 years after completion of the study. After the storage time, the information gathered will be destroyed. However, unidentifiable data that cannot be linked to you may be kept and used for future studies.

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Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Do you agree to allow audio recordings of interviews? Yes No

Signature of Participant

Participant Name (Please Print)

Date

APPENDIX I: Email Message

Recruitment Methods:

Initial Email Verbiage:

Good Day (Name),

My name is Brandon Yost. I am the Title I Site Coordinator at Sunset Elementary School. I am also a PhD Candidate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I am conducting my dissertation research and am recruiting first year teachers as participants for my study.

As a first year teacher yourself, I invite you to learn more about my study and encourage you to participate. Please see the attached Informed Consent document that explains the purpose of the study and its benefits, as well the flyer inviting you to a Q & A meeting with refreshments provided where I can meet you in person and answer any questions you might have about the study.

Thanks for your time and I hope to meet you at the Q&A session on Thursday, April 16 at 4:00 pm at the St. George library in the basement level in a study room that I have reserved.

Sincerely,
Brandon Yost
PhD Candidate in Teacher Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

APPENDIX J: Full Epoche (Including all Return to Epoche Addendums)

My first recollection of receiving grades is from 2nd or 3rd grade when my Dad encouraged me to earn all As on my report card because if I did, he would pay me \$1 for each A earned. As I grew older, I remember in the 6th and 7th grades eagerly anticipating the results of our averaged grades on report cards to be published in the local newspaper for the Honor Roll. For example, our GPAs (Grade Point Averages) were not published, but rather our actual percentage grade averages (e.g. if I had a 100% in math, a 99% in English, a 98% in Science, a 99% in History, and a 100% in P.E., my cumulative average for the report card period would be 99.2). Each time report cards were sent home, any students averaging 90.0 or above would be published in the newspaper for all to see their achievements. I prided myself on being the top boy in my grade on several occasions, although I was always outdone by at least 3 or 4 girls who scored higher overall averages. My only other lasting memory of being graded from my K-12 experience was in the 9th grade with Ms. Wright, which I wrote about in the first pages of this dissertation proposal.

Although I don't have any more specific memories of being graded, I do know how I felt on a broader scale about my grades that I received. As a senior in high school, I recall great pleasure in earning Academic All-State honors in baseball for maintaining a high GPA. Additionally, I know that I received certain scholarships in high school as a direct result of my GPA.

However, it was not until I began my pre-service education coursework that I started to actively think about my own philosophies for how grading should be done. The major catalyst for me in developing my own grading philosophy is a direct result of the assessment course that I had to take. My professor was from New Zealand where they

utilize a standards-based grading system for the entire country K-13. This professor not only taught us about standards-based grading and its benefits, but he also graded us on standards established for the course. There were multiple students in my section who had failed the course twice already because they couldn't demonstrate mastery on one of the standards for the course. This act alone created a paradigm shift in my way of thinking – since I was accustomed to averages of assignments comprising a final grade, in which case these students would have passed the course the first time they took it. Instead, they were required to re-enroll multiple times until they could demonstrate mastery of all standards required in the course.

Another powerful learning experience at this time came when I was talking to a good friend who happened to also be a professor in a different department at the university. He told me of a recent conference he had attended out of state. During his trip he had planned to grade one class' five-page research papers. However, he was tired of grading for that semester, so he decided to conveniently leave them on the airplane when he got off – thus not having to grade them at all. I realized then and there that “hodgepodge” grading practices exist and that I didn't want to be associated with that kind of grading practice during my career. Therefore, during my student teaching, I sought permission from my cooperating teacher to allow me to develop my units to be graded using standards-based grading methods. This was a great chance for me to practice what I had learned.

Unfortunately, when I began my first-year of teaching, I was in a new state and learning the new curriculum. Additionally, there was no direct support for me to implement my standards-based grading strategies that I had employed during student

teaching. And, since I was now the teacher of record, it was expected of me to grade in the traditional ABCDF methods that was/still is so common today.

Therefore, I started grading against how I wanted to grade because the school climate and culture were not ready for a change like this to happen. As a result of this, I had to learn how and what to grade in the traditional sense. I remember giving out worksheets on concepts I had taught. If the worksheet had 20 problems, the assignment was worth 20 points. If it had more questions, it was worth more points, etc. I didn't weight any of my grades, so sometimes I had a summative assessment worth 100 points that was only worth a few more points than an assignment with lots of questions. As I got into grading each worksheet, I realized I spent hours and hours and hours grading worksheets and tests during my first few months of teaching. I quickly realized that I needed to do something different. I stopped grading worksheets problem-by-problem, question-by-question. Thus, I changed mid-year how I was grading assignments. I had become one of those teachers that used "hodgepodge" grading practices to meet my needs.

I have personally fought this idea that I have to convert my grades to ABCDF at the end of grading periods when I'd much rather assign grades of meets the standard, exceeds the standard, approaching the standard, or does not meet it at all. But in reality, I have for the most part kept my grading in line with what has been traditionally done with grading. I feel like a hypocrite at times because I profess my philosophy to be with standards-based grading, yet I don't practice what I so strongly believe.

When I began working on my doctorate degree four years ago, I quickly came to know the topic that would consume my research and studying for my career as a doctoral

student. This topic was on grading. I knew and still know that how teachers grade has a huge effect on students' self-esteem, perceived self-worth, and motivation to keep trying to learn. Therefore, I wanted to learn all I could about grading so that one day I might position myself in a way to contribute more meaningfully to this topic to help future teachers, educators, and students learn how to grade and what grading can be done.

During my studies at UNLV, I have taken advantage of opportunities to extend myself as a graduate student. Twice I have written proposals for the AERA (American Education Research Association) annual conference. Both times I have had my proposals accepted. My first study I conducted and subsequently presented at AERA was about pre-service teachers and their perceptions of daily assessment and grading practices in student teaching. During this study, I recruited four student teachers and interviewed them prior to the start of their student teaching semester about their beliefs and perceptions of daily assessments and grading practices. As the student teaching semester progressed, I collected artifacts to support or negate the things that the student teachers had shared during their first interview. I also met with their cooperating teachers who had also given consent to participate in the study, and asked them about their ideas on daily assessments and grading practices. Then, upon the completion of the student teaching internships, I interviewed the student teachers again following the same interview protocol as in their first interviews. What I discovered was that for the most part, the practices of the student teachers had evolved from their initial ideas discussed in the first interviews to practices that mirrored the daily assessment and grading practice habits and philosophies of their cooperating teachers. These results supported other

findings in regards to how student teachers learn to teach, which is that they commonly adopt the practices modeled for them by their cooperating teachers (Yost & Wang, 2013).

Having had such a positive experience presenting on this research after only a year and half of my doctoral studies, I was encouraged to submit another proposal to AERA for the following year. Fortunately, as I had wrapped up the research for my first study, I received commitments from each of the four student teachers to continue our study if they each procured first-year teaching jobs the following year. Each participant did gain employment as a first-year teacher across three cities in two different states. I made road trips to their new schools to conduct a follow up study and presented at AERA again the following year, this time highlighting a longitudinal study looking at these same four teachers, now as first-year teachers, and what their perceptions of daily assessment and grading practices were. I used the same data collection tools, looking at artifacts that supported their grading practice habits, as well as the same interview protocol that I had used during their student teaching. My findings during this second study were that they graded nearly identical to how they had graded during student teaching.

Both of these studies are completely separate from this study in that there is no data used or anything else from the first two studies that connect to this dissertation study. However, it is important to consider how the information learned in these two studies has continued to influence my own ideas about grading practices. Thus, I felt the need to include a brief description of these studies in my *Epoche* because they have contributed to my own feelings and biases on the subject.

Possible anticipated themes that could arise through these multi-layer analyses are, I thought, an affinity to grade/not grade based on how teachers were graded as students; a

realization that they use “hodgepodge” grading practices; and a feeling of unpreparedness for the complexities of grading. These anticipated themes are based on my Epoche and my knowledge of the current literature surrounding current grading practices and grading practice instruction (which usually falls under the larger umbrella of assessment literacy instruction).

For the most part, I do not have anything to add to my Epoche that I have not already written. However, through this process of narrowing the data to the point that I could write the statement of essences, I made a discovery that shocked me a little. Each of the first-year teachers expressed their desire to adopt a new grading system if it would allow them to clearly link grades to student knowledge and the core curriculum. In other words, they are welcoming an opportunity to transition away from traditional grading practices of ABCDF to standards-based grading. Two of the teachers even make reference to this by saying that they think standards-based grading can inspire change and enthusiasm by starting at the grass-roots level.

My connection to this finding is that: It is time. What I mean by this is I have felt like this since coming out of my teacher education program at BYU-Hawaii, as described earlier in my Epoche. However, when I was hired on for my first-year of teaching, the culture at my school did not even understand the concept of standards-based grading. It was a completely foreign idea to them. But now, these first-year teachers are bringing it up and even suggesting the need and willingness to change and adopt this practice. Thus, I think it is time that the change starts happening more aggressively – and not just from a bottom-up grass roots level approach, but also a top-down approach at either school, district, or state levels. It is time to implement this change, and it is time to also provide

more uniform and systematic grading practice instruction in college and university teacher education programs.

The process of writing Chapter 5 and blending the results of Chapters 3 and 4 together with the research discussed in Chapter 2, as well as new research not discussed in the literature review, was very enjoyable because I made many connections to what the results of the study showed and what has already been written about in the literature. Nonetheless, this discovery also made it hard for me to keep my own biases on this subject out of the writing for Chapter 5. This was because there was so much **I wanted to say**, but I knew that I needed to let the results of the study and the literature **say it instead**.

My biggest connection has to do with standards-based grading. Again, ever since my time at BYU-Hawaii as an undergrad student, I have been a huge advocate for standards-based grading. I have already mentioned my frustrations with both myself for grading with “hodgepodge” traditional grading methods instead of standards-based grading practices, and for the culture that created the need for me to use traditional grading methods. However, through the process of this study, I have discovered that the time is now. What I mean by this is that when I started teaching, the overall minds of educators weren’t ready or willing to consider a change to their grading practices. This is different now. The first-year teachers in this study have experienced the necessary paradigm shift in how they consider the purpose of grading and they are enthused with the idea of learning to grade using standards-based grading practices.

As I was writing Chapter 5, I re-immersed myself in the literature to bring me back to what the research is saying about grading and I made what I think is a grand

discovery that I had not addressed in my literature review. This discovery came as I was reading Guskey and Bailey's (2010) book, *Developing Standards-based Report Cards*, which is that the idea of defining standards and clarifying learning goals as being a new and recent development in education is all wrong. I share the three paragraphs from their book as it beautifully illustrates the discovery I made. They point out:

Ralph W. Tyler (1949) stressed that prior to teaching anyone anything, two fundamental questions must be addressed: (1) What do we want students to learn and be able to do? and (2) What evidence would we accept to verify that learning? As Tyler put it,

if an educational program is to be planned and if efforts for continued improvement are to be made, it is necessary to have some conception of the goals being sought. These educational objectives become the criteria by which materials are selected, content is outlined, instructional procedures are developed and tests and examinations are prepared. All aspects of the educational program are really means to accomplish these basic educational purposes.

As self-evident as this may seem, Tyler (1949) also pointed out that most decisions regarding curriculum and instruction in schools are not based on student learning. Instead, they are based on *time*. We tend to worry more about what content should be covered in the time available than about what students learn and acquire. As a result, we cannot say with certainty what the graduates of our schools have learned and are able to do. All we know for sure, argued Tyler, is how much time they spent in the school environment. (pp. 15-16)

This insightfulness that is pointed out by Tyler (1949) (as quoted in Guskey & Bailey, 2010) helped me realize that the idea of standards is not such a new concept, like so many think it is, including myself in my literature review. And, standards-based grading is a solution so many are looking for to bring clarity to what students know and can do, but yet are afraid to fully embrace. Also, it helped me to realize that the “take away” from this phenomenological study is about time. Not the time referred to by Tyler, but rather about the time meaning the here and now. Seeds of thought regarding standards-based grading have been planted – for even longer than many have thought – and, these seeds of thought have also been cultivated now for several years (Brookhart, 2013; DeLuca, Chavez, Bellara, & Chunhua, 2013; Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Reeves, 2004). Now it is time to reap the rewards of the harvest and embrace the changing world that is standards-based grading.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Brandon L. Yost

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EXPERIENCE

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- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| Washington County School District | St. George, UT |
| Title I Site Coordinator, Sunset Elementary School | June 2014 - Present |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Function as vice-principal▪ Coordinate and manage Title I program▪ Manage Pre-school program▪ Organize and oversee After School Intervention (ASI) program▪ Collect data for and send out student-progress reports for ASI program▪ Maintain accurate attendance records▪ Work with parents (including home-visits) of students who had marked attendance issues▪ Attend weekly PLC meetings▪ Chair SIRT meetings for discussion of at-risk students▪ Deal with discipline of students▪ Organize and facilitate faculty-wide learning walks▪ Plan, facilitate, and carry out parent-involvement nights▪ Plan, manage, and maintain balanced Title I budget▪ Write school-wide Title I plan▪ Oversee safety needs for students before school/after school▪ Recruit, train, and manage 25 4th & 5th grade students on school Safety Patrol▪ Complete nomination package for Safety Patroller of the Year (\$1,500 awarded to school)▪ Implement school-wide positive behavior intervention system▪ Provide ABA (Applied-Behavior Analysis) training to faculty▪ Regularly peer coach teachers on behavior management issues in class▪ Serve as LEA for IEP meetings▪ Assist principal in collecting data for evaluations through regular observations▪ Peer coach teachers and staff to assist them in improving professionally▪ Seek out, organize, and facilitate teachers and teams to attend national conferences▪ Train lunch duty workers on responsibilities and do lunch duty as well▪ Assist principal in job interviews of new possible candidates in the school▪ Serve on support team in writing up staff for non-compliance/negligence of duties▪ Member of Community Council | |
| ALS Coordinator, Sunset Elementary School | June 2014 – Present |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Work closely with content teachers of ELs to promote academic success of all ELs▪ Oversee daily ESL instruction▪ Train and supervise ESL paraprofessionals and volunteers▪ Complete all ESL reports and tests in timely, accurate, and confidential manner | |
| Testing Coordinator, Sunset Elementary School | June 2014 – Present |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provide Testing Ethics Training to all Faculty and Staff▪ Create master testing schedule for all SAGE testing | |

- Proctor and monitor SAGE testing sessions

ALS Coordinator and ESL Teacher, Snow Canyon Middle School Aug 2007 – June 2014

- Trained teachers monthly on effective methods of instruction for ELs using SIOP Model
- SAGE Language Arts test item developer & content reviewer
- Attended Language Arts Core Academy in summer
- Worked closely with content teachers of ELs to promote academic success of all ELs
- Facilitated monthly district PLC study groups for other secondary ALS coordinators where we developed district ESL Power Standards, studied the SIOP Model, & integrated state EL proficiency standards with state Language Arts standards
- Planned, organized, and carried out quarterly Multi-Cultural ESL Parent Nights
- Actively participated in weekly TAT (Teacher Assistance Team) meetings to discuss interventions for struggling students, meet with parents, and review data of previous interventions
- Taught ELs English language skills of reading, writing, listening, & speaking
- Integrated CALL into everyday classroom instruction, as well as the use of camcorders and other movie-making technology in which students wrote, edited, and performed their scripts as final projects for ESL classes
- Attended weekly planning/collaboration meetings at both Snow Canyon High and Snow Canyon Middle
- Assisted teachers in providing instructional and assessment accommodations for ELs
- Trained & supervised ESL paraprofessionals
- Completed all ESL reports & testing in timely, accurate, & confidential manner
- Met with Language Arts dept. PLC on regular basis to guide ESL classroom instruction
- Served as department chair for school-wide interventions PLC

Latinos in Action Teacher, Snow Canyon Middle School Apr 2012 – June 2014

- Supervise 60 Latino students tutor elementary children in math and reading/writing twice/week each at Coral Cliffs Elementary, Sunset Elementary, and Arrowhead Elementary
- Help students prepare for college through service, leadership, and literacy
- Teach students how to be student-mentors
- Meet and counsel regularly with class presidency leadership
- Organize and help run LIA Dance Club
- Attend quarterly collaboration/training meeting with other LIA teachers
- Made the Channel 5 News two different times recognizing service projects LIA did

ESL Endorsement Instructor, WCSD & Utah Valley University Aug 2009 – June 2014

- Certified in TELL (Teaching English Language Learners) in June 2009
- Collaborated & created all six courses' syllabi, assignments, and instructional activities
- Prepare weekly lesson plans for four hour class sessions
- Teach as a Utah Valley University adjunct instructor
- Teach EDUC 5360 Multicultural Education for Practitioners
- Teach EDUC 5340 ESL Methods
- Teach EDUC 5350 Theories of Second Language Acquisition for Practitioners
- Teach EDUC 5380 Literacy & Linguistics
- Teach EDUC 5370 Assessment in ESL

- Teach EDUC 5390 Family and Community Involvement
- Attend collaboration meetings with other UVU ESL Endorsement instructors
- Meet regularly with principals in many schools to continually recruit new teachers for the ESL endorsement classes

TAT Member, Snow Canyon Middle School Aug 2009 – June 2014

- Assisted assistant principal in starting up a TAT (Teacher Assistance Team) at Snow Canyon Middle School
- Discussed progress of ESL Monitor students on semi-annual basis
- Met weekly to discuss and review interventions for struggling students
- Participated in and often conducted Parent-Teacher conferences for struggling students
- Analyzed student data and current system of interventions
- Developed pyramid of interventions with three levels, distinguishing between behavior and academic interventions
- Created SCMS Intervention Flowchart to guide discussions and decisions during meetings

Community Council, Snow Canyon Middle School Aug 2010 – May 2011

- Served as web-master; uploaded community council minutes & agendas to internet
- Gave timely insight, advice, and queries to community council task items

Restitution Teacher, Snow Canyon Middle School Aug 2007 – June 2014

- Held restitution on regular basis for students needing to make up restitution points
- Developed online system that is currently used to record documentation of students & hours owed, students attended, hours completed, fees paid, and restoration of grades finished
- Worked closely with assistant principal and finance & attendance secretaries to ensure accurate reporting of students attended, hours completed, and fees paid

Lunch Worker, Snow Canyon Middle School Aug 2007 – June 2014

- Supervised student behavior in lunch lines, cafeteria, and courtyard
- Facilitated payment of student lunch money with lunch clerks

Cooperating Teacher, Snow Canyon Middle School Jan 2012 – Feb 2012

- Mentored Korean Student-Teachers for two months
- Taught professional development class to 11 student teachers
- Used an observation protocol and conducted formal observations with pre and post conferences included

Steering Committee, Snow Canyon Middle School Aug 2008 – May 2010

- Met monthly to discuss school initiatives and assess progress towards achievement of school mission statement and fulfillment of school vision
- Attended PLCs at Work Conference in Phoenix, AZ in Feb 2009

Freshman Football Coach, South Summit High School & Snow Canyon High School Jun 2004 – Nov 2004
Jun 2008 – Oct 2008

- Coached offensive and defensive lines and special teams
- Attended summer camps & work-out sessions with athletes
- Certified as a coach with NFHS

Score Keeper, Snow Canyon High School Aug 2007 – Present

- Kept score for freshmen basketball games, boys & girls
- Participated in chain gang for freshmen, J.V., and varsity football games
- Took tickets & assisted fans and booster club members for J.V. & varsity basketball games

UALPA Test Item Writer, Utah State Office of Education Jan 2009 – Jul 2011

- Wrote test items specific to content and aligned with Utah ELL Proficiency Standards
- Reviewed others' test items to ensure they were aligned to Utah ELL Proficiency Standards
- Analyzed data of test items to see if they measured what they were intended to measure
- Determined cut scores for each proficiency level measured on the assessment

Student Ambassador Adviser, Snow Canyon Middle School Aug 2010 – June 2014

- Mentor student ambassadors in academic activities
- Help plan and facilitate multiple service activities
- Plan and carryout Japanese Exchange Student program
- Conduct Advisory Presentations for Honor Armor program
- Work with local businesses to annually sponsor Honor Armor program
- Serve as chair of Points Committee for Honor Armor program
- Plan and execute formal awards banquet to recognize Honor Armor students

Reading Teacher, Snow Canyon Middle School Aug 2008 – June 2014

- Analyzed student test data with counselors to determine class enrollment needs
- Assisted students in improving reading comprehension & fluency
- Facilitated the classroom use of READ 180, a computer and technology based reading intervention for struggling readers
- Coached students' oral reading abilities through Read Alouds and Reader's Theater activities
- Helped students to set & work towards individual goals aimed at reading on grade level

Remediation Teacher, Snow Canyon Middle School Aug 2008 – May 2010

- Tutored & helped students meet standards in core classes they failed in previous quarters
- Worked closely with core teachers to obtain necessary work students needed to do
- Created system to track progress of students, store work, and report progress to teachers, counselors, & administration
- Trained & supervised advisory paraprofessional who assisted with remediation students

Spanish Teacher, Snow Canyon Middle School Aug 2007 – May 2009

- Taught beginning Spanish language skills of reading, writing, listening, & speaking

Brigham Young University Hawaii
Laie, HI

Student Supervisor and Tutor, Reading & Writing Center Sep 2004 – Dec 2006

- Accumulated 800+ hours of one-on-one tutoring in reading and writing
- Conducted weekly staff meetings
- Certified as Master Tutor of C.R.L.A.
- Created, organized, and implemented various workshops and training sessions

ESL Teacher, Center of Instructional Technology & Outreach (CITO) Jul 2006 – Aug 2006

- Taught ELL summer camps to students from Korea & Japan
- Used TALL (Technology Assisted Language Learning) to supplement instruction
- Created curriculum for course

EDUCATION

University of Nevada, Las Vegas Ph.D., Teacher Education	Las Vegas, NV Dec 2015
Southern Utah University M.Ed., Educational Leadership	Cedar City, UT Apr 2011
Southern Utah University Endorsement, Utah State Basic Reading Endorsement Level 1	Cedar City, UT Jun 2010
Brigham Young University Hawaii TC, Secondary Education	Laie, HI May 2007
Brigham Young University Hawaii BA, TESOL	Laie, HI Apr 2006
Utah Valley University AAS, Drafting Technology	Orem, UT Jun 2004

INTERNSHIPS

Sunset Elementary School School Administrator	St. George, UT Jun 2010 - Dec 2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitated Summer School program to improve K-2 students' reading skills ▪ Improved safety procedures in school for students' walking to/from school ▪ Acted as assistant principal for student behavior issues ▪ Helped to facilitate multiple parent nights, e.g. literacy, ESL, Reflections Awards, etc. ▪ Observed and made comments/recommendations to teachers regarding instructional practices ▪ Participated on school's Community Council ▪ Conducted Curriculum Audit for 5th grade ▪ Assisted teachers in implementation of new literacy program called <i>Treasure's</i> ▪ Shadowed principal for 200 hours during internship 	
Snow Canyon Middle School School Administrator	St. George, UT Aug 2010 - Apr 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instituted new school award program for students called <i>Honor Armor</i> ▪ Assisted administration in dealing with student handbook violations and other discipline problems ▪ Planned and facilitated multiple ESL parent nights ▪ Attended many extra-curricular activities, e.g. band concerts, basketball games, etc. ▪ Conducted curriculum audit for 8th grade ▪ Observed and made comments/recommendations to teachers regarding instructional practices 	

- Participated on school's community council
- Active member of school's TAT team
- Attended weekly planning and collaboration meetings at both middle school and high school
- Created school brochure to advertise the great qualities of our school to the surrounding community
- Analyzed data from past school accreditation conducted in January 2010 and assisted in making plans to implement recommendations made from the accreditation team
- Created Intervention Flow Chart detailing tiered interventions used in the school
- Created tracking sheets and online documents for restitution program and worked closely with secretaries and assistant principal to ensure accurate reporting of restitution data

Waialua High & Intermediate School

Waialua, HI

ESL Teacher

Sep 2006 – May 2007

- Teaching 7th-12th graders
- Using curriculum that meets the State's standards and benchmarks
- Meeting all teacher standard requirements

Hawaii Culture Camp

Taichung, Taiwan

ESL Teacher

Jan 2006

- Taught 1st – 7th graders during Chinese New Year winter break
- Designed curriculum
- Worked closely with parents and program directors

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Las Vegas, NV

Shadow Teacher

Aug 2012 – Dec 2012

- Shadowed Dr. Christine Clark teaching course on Multicultural Education
- Had weekly post-teaching conferences for reflection
- Discussed syllabus components, instructional activities, and variations of assessments
- Co-facilitated numerous instructional activities through the course of the semester

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Enterprise, UT

Instructor for UVU EDUC 5350, Theories of SLA for Practitioners

Jan 2013 – Apr 2013

- Taught course on Second Language Acquisition to cohort of teachers
- Reflected weekly with mentor professor, Dr. Mary Sowder, of Utah Valley University
- Conducted case study through semester on effectiveness of instruction as a professional development tool to measure whether or not teachers implemented new learning in their classrooms each day

GRANTS & AWARDS

AAA Safety Patroller of the Year Honorable Mention

Mar 2015

- Completed Nomination Packet on behalf of Tyler Sunyich; Tyler received the award, including, in part, a \$1,500 donation to Sunset Elementary for future safety initiatives

Latinos in Action 2014 Teacher of the Year

Mar 2014

- Received this award for continued excellence as LIA teacher and adviser at Snow Canyon Middle School, receiving multiple positive KSL Channel 5 News Stories being done about my students and their accomplishments in the community

Honorary Diamond Shield Recipient (aka SCMS Teacher of the Year)

Apr 2013

- Received this award for dedicated hard work in building a positive culture at Snow Canyon Middle School for student recognition awards; for work as Student Ambassador adviser; and for work as LIA teacher

RESEARCH

A Phenomenology Study of First-year Teachers Looking at the Shared Lived Experience of Learning to Grade

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Aug 2014 – Aug 2015

- This was my dissertation research
- Studied the phenomenon of how 1st year teachers learn to grade because they are not taught in teacher education while in college

Student Teacher Perceptions and Initial Habits for Grading Practices through 1st Year of Teaching: A Longitudinal Study

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Aug 2013 – May 2014

- Studied how 1st-Year Teachers develop their grading practices as they relate to their assessment courses and mentorship of their cooperating teachers during student teaching; a longitudinal case study was done following 1st year teachers for two years beginning before their student teaching semesters
- This research study was presented at AERA 2014 in Philadelphia, PA with Dr. Jian Wang

Evaluating Grading Practices: Traditional vs. Standards-Based Grading

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Aug 2012 – May 2013

- Did in depth review of all literature on grading practices published in the last 15 years.
- Analyzed what best practices are for grading, as well as ways to effectively implement standards-based grading at secondary level

Student Teacher Perceptions and Initial Habits for Grading Practices

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Dec 2011 – Apr 2013

- Studied how Student Teachers develop their grading practices as they relate to their assessment courses and mentorship of their cooperating teachers; surveys were conducted, as well as a smaller scale case study where interviews were conducted with both the student teacher and the cooperating teacher
- This research study was presented at AERA 2013 in San Francisco, CA with Dr. Jian Wang

Measured Growth of Korean Student-Teachers During Two Month USA Internship

Gongju National University of Education

Dec 2011 – Mar 2012

- Studied how Student-Teachers from South Korea increased their English proficiency during their two month student-teaching internship; proficiency was measured in six ways: speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary using a pre, mid, and post test

- This research study was presented at ITESOL at U.V.U. in Orem, UT in Oct. 2011 with Dinah Scott and Dr. Yang Hwan Sol

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Alternative Language Services Community Advisory Council Washington County School District	Jan 2015 – Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serve as meeting secretary to take minutes ▪ Discuss ESL services in district and review and revise Title III plan in district 	
Reviewer for Division K - Teaching and Teacher Education/Section 4 American Educational Research Association	Aug 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reviewed and evaluated submissions for 2014 annual AERA conference for Division K – Teaching and Teacher Education/Section 4: Multicultural Education (Including English Language Learners & Special Education) in PK-12 classrooms 	
Reviewer for Division K – Teaching and Teacher Education/Section 3 American Educational Research Association	Aug 2015

SKILLS

Language Skills: fluent in Marshallese; moderate Spanish skills

Professionalism: Member of UAESP, both I-TESOL and TESOL Inc, AERA, IRA, and NCTE

- Attended Learning Leader Academy, WUSD in St. George, UT, 2014-15 school year
- Attended Walter Bracken STEAM Academy, Las Vegas, NV to observe and research a STEAM school, Feb 2015
- Attended West Elementary in Tooele, UT to observe and research a German Dual Immersion School, Feb 2015
- Attended National Title I conference in Feb 2015
- Attended BER Applied Behavior Analysis workshop in Jan 2015
- Attended AERA conference in Apr/May 2013 & Apr 2014
- Presented at AERA conference in Apr/May 2013 & Apr 2014
- Attended GPSA conference in Apr 2013 & Apr 2014
- Presented at GPSA conference in Apr 2013 & Apr 2014
- Attended TESOL, Inc. conference in Mar 2006, Mar 2010, & Mar 2012
- Attended Classroom Instruction that Works for ELLs workshop in Nov 2009
- Presented at ITESOL conference in Oct 2009, Oct 2011, & Oct 2012
- Presented at SUECON conference in Oct 2011 & Nov 2013
- Attended SUECON conference in Oct 2011, Oct 2012, & Nov 2013
- Attended ITESOL conferences in Oct 2008, Oct 2009, Oct 2010, Oct 2011, & Oct 2012
- Participated in ELLIS training in Aug 2009 & Nov 2010
- Attended Kagan 2-day seminar in Jun 2009
- Attended PLCs at Work conference in Feb 2009
- Attended Literacy Strategies for Success with English Language Learners in Nov 2008
- Attended Instructional Practices for Success with English Language Learners in Dec 2008
- Attended SIOP in-service training in Oct & Nov 2007

Certifications: Level 2 Professional Educator License for the State of Utah with Administrative Endorsement, ESL Endorsement, and Reading Endorsement all listed as certifications achieved on the state license; Trained Administrator for ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners); Trained Administrator for UALPA (Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment); Instructor/Facilitator for TELL (Teaching English Language Learners); Master Level tutor by the College Reading & Learning Association (CRLA)

Computer Skills: proficient in AutoCAD and Microsoft office; competent on the Internet, email, and social media; very comfortable using both PC and Mac platforms; also knowledgeable about website design

University GPA: 3.97

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Bishopric 2nd Counselor, Ecclesiastical Leadership	St. George, UT May 2011 – Present
Boy Scouts of America Varsity Team Coach; Chartered Organization Representative	St. George, UT Sep 2010 – Present
Washington County Republican Party Precinct 05-SGE Washington County Delegate	St. George, UT Mar 2008 – Mar 2010
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Elders Quorum President, Men's Organization	St. George, UT Oct 2007 – Sep 2010
Community Service Personal Tutor	Puna'lu'u, HI May 2005 – May 2006
Brigham Young University Hawaii TESOL Society Club President	Laie, HI Aug 2005 – Apr 2006
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Temple Ordinance Worker, Laie Hawaii Temple	Laie, HI Sep 2004 – Jun 2006
Ute Conference Football League 9th Grade Football Coach	Kamas, UT Aug – Nov 2003
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Fulltime Missionary, Micronesia Guam Mission	Marshall Islands Aug 2001 – Aug 2003
Boy Scouts of America Eagle Scout	Kamas, UT Jul 1993 – Mar 1998