



Director of Academic Assessment

## Assessment and Grading

### Assessment Is More than Just Grading

The words "assessment" and "grading" are sometimes used interchangeably, but it is helpful to distinguish between them.

Assessment is something you do every day as you gauge where students are in the learning process. You are assessing your students when you ask them questions, read their homework, and listen to their mathematical conversations. These assessments guide your instructional decisions regarding pacing, teaching strategies, and "where to go from here." Getting as accurate a reading as possible requires that students be observed and assessed in real situations; hence the term authentic assessment.

Assessment should be part of the ongoing educational process and should enhance learning. Unlike the standardized tests, which create a break in learning in order to take a measurement, assessment should be part of the natural flow of the classroom. When the curriculum provides a window into a student's thinking, that is a natural time to assess that student. Such an assessment need not be something you assign a specific grade to--it may be simply for informational purposes, both for you and for the student.

### How Does Grading Fit In?

In a sense, grading is one of the by-products of assessment. As educators, we have the responsibility of assigning each student a grade periodically throughout the year. Somehow, you must determine a grade--usually a single letter or number--to reflect all of a student's performance in one lump sum. Not a simple task! For example, the first step in deciding how to grade your IMP [Interactive Math Program] students is to sit down and decide what you really value in your IMP classroom. Some of the following may come to mind:

- Completion of homework
- Group and class participation
- Progress in the concepts and skills of the unit
- Mathematical communication through written work and oral presentations

These are broad goals; your task is to construct a grading scheme that reflects your priorities.

Whatever system you use, it is vital that your students be informed about the grading process. Students should know where their grade is coming from. They should know what is valued and should have ways to participate in the process.