

No More Fs



Grading a student's work is such an accepted practice, that it's rarely questioned. The grade given might be questioned (especially a "D" or "F"), but not the fact that grades are necessary.

After all, it is human nature to categorize things. Therefore it's not surprising that we have a grading system that labels students on a scale of "brightest" to "dullest."

But is the apparent need to grade students beneficial? It reminds one of the TV game show that seems to have more losers than winners. Is it possible to have every student win or, at least have no student lose? On the surface this may sound like a silly question, but consider for a moment: if a class full of students goes to the museum for a tour, don't they all benefit from it? Some may take away more knowledge than others, but none should be the worse for it.

In ancient Greece, students gathered at different forums to learn about math, art, politics and poetry. If they found the information useful and interesting they stayed on and became familiar with it. But they were never stigmatized with a "D" or "F" for ending off before reaching full knowledge of the subject.

The fact that they were attending the forums in the first place was considered admirable. Teachers didn't grade students the way they do now.

Problems with our grading system have been acknowledged by educators, and alternates have been suggested, including a simple pass/fail system. But, that is not so much the point.

If we are serious about education why are we letting a large percentage of our students fail in the first place?

In the Greek forums, students and teachers worked together to make sure full understanding was reached.

We have many examples of this today. Businesses often hire and train apprentices to make sure such individuals become professional. And, army sergeants would never send a private into combat without ensuring he was fully prepared.

Why can't we deliver this same level of student-support in our schools?

It *is* possible for all students to earn good grades but it *does* require a new attitude on the part of the school: one that insists study is enjoyable and successful.

If you know a student who is worried about failing *any* subject or if school isn't fun any more, you need to find a school that is more supportive.

May your studies be rewarding.

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