

# Moving Beyond Grades:

WHERE MEANING REPLACES MEASUREMENT

Traditional grading often narrows our view of student learning. Whether it's chasing the 4.0, stressing over rubrics, or reducing writing to checklists, grades can overshadow authentic growth. What if we focused less on what "counts" and more on what matters?

Here are 5 starting points for shifting your grading practices while honoring your students, your admin, and your community:

## 1 COMMUNICATE EARLY & OFTEN

- ★ Draft a clear letter at the start of the year to students, parents, and admin explaining your goals.
- ★ Emphasize you're not abandoning accountability, you're shifting toward richer learning conversations.

## 2 USE A CANVAS GRADEBOOK

- ★ Arthur's term "canvas gradebook" refers to a traditional-looking gradebook used as a placeholder. **Example:** Students propose a preliminary grade, and all entries are marked "complete/incomplete."
- ★ This gives you time to gather real learning evidence elsewhere (like portfolios).

## 3 BUILD A FEEDBACK-RICH ENVIRONMENT

- ★ Ditch the numbers. Research shows students improve most when they receive feedback alone.
- ★ Try using comment-based feedback tools like Google Docs, or apps like Seesaw for younger learners.

## 4 CENTER THE LEARNING, NOT THE SCORE

- ★ Let students know: "You shouldn't be earning a 4 in September."
- ★ Shift the mindset from achievement to progress. Normalize not being "exemplary" yet.

## 5 EMBRACE PORTFOLIO PLATFORMS

- ★ Tools like Seesaw, Google Sites, or Notion let students share and reflect on their work.
- ★ Portfolios create a story of learning that grades can't capture - and they build a bridge to family and caregiver involvement.

Grades compress learning into a number, but **growth** is the real goal. Moving beyond grades means expanding what counts as meaningful learning.