



California Acceleration Project

Supporting California's 114 Community Colleges

To Transform Remediation to Increase Student Completion and Equity

www.AccelerationProject.org

Growth-Oriented Grading Practices

Prior to AB 705, we let a highly filtered population of students into our transfer-level classes: the small number allowed direct access by our placement tests and the few survivors of the basic skills sequence. AB 705 broadens access to transfer-level courses, allowing students who would have previously been placed in multiple semesters of remedial courses to enter directly into transfer-level classes. Research tells us that these students *can* succeed in our transfer-level classes, but this requires that we create a supportive, growth-oriented environment that cultivates success for all students, not just those who walk in the door already performing as college-level writers. The area that arguably creates the most fear and (sometimes) discouragement for our students is the feedback they receive from their instructors. Below, we have listed growth-oriented grading strategies that support students' growth as writers and provide encouragement for them to keep working toward their goal of passing the class.

- 1. Think about your grading priorities:** *What do you prioritize in the classroom? For most of us, we prioritize students' ability to read, think critically, and write source-based papers. Sometimes, our policies make it seem like we value other things more (ex: strict adherence to deadlines, compliance with formatting requirements). Make sure your grading policies and feedback align with your most important classroom values.*
- 2. Allow for full-credit revision:** *When students get off track, they need a chance to try again. Revision policies that allow (or sometimes require) students to rework assignments and still receive full credit provide an opportunity for growth and remove the finality of grades.*
- 3. Provide current, accurate information about where students stand:** *It's often hard for students to understand how weighted grading works, and capable students can end up dropping the class from a mistaken belief that they can't pass it. Consider using a point system or post accurate, up-to-date grades online for students to easily access (ex: on Blackboard, Canvas).*
- 4. Be especially thoughtful with early assignments:** *Students often report the most fear about assignments early in the term. Use these assignments to show students they have the capacity to succeed and to build trust so that they can feel comfortable receiving feedback about areas for growth (ex: only provide positive feedback on the first assignment, emphasize their strengths, provide full credit for turning in the first assignment).*
- 5. Consider grading low-stakes assignments for thoughtful completion:** *Assignments like reading activities, drafts, and even early essay assignments can be graded for thoughtful completion rather than for quality, allowing students to build skills without the stress of evaluation and giving students points early on, helping them feel like they are on the right track.*
- 6. Address English-learner surface error strategically:** *English learners will not benefit from having every grammar or word choice error corrected or marked. Select a few prevalent error patterns that impede clarity, and combine the identification of those errors in students' work with instruction focused on improving control of those structures. In grading, consider rewarding improvement in the use of target structures rather than penalizing students who haven't yet mastered them.*