How the Global Pandemic is Altering Teachers’ Thoughts on Grading

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Abstract

As every level of the United States’ education system shifted online in the spring of the 2019-2020 school year, educators and students alike were forced to adapt to new technologies and resources. Along with this shift, the way that educators, at least at the college level, viewed assignments and grading. I set out to examine, through online interviews, if educators at other grade levels had also shifted their views on assignments and grades in the face of virtual learning as it continued through the fall semester of the 2020-2021 school year.

How the Global Pandemic is Altering Teachers’ Thoughts on Grading

The inspiration for choosing to research if grading has changed since teachers have moved to online instruction came during the spring semester of the 2019-2020 school year. During March of 2020, most schools in the United Stated transitioned from in-person classes to teachers instructing students online. During this time, my college professors also decided to alter how they would grade us for the rest of the semester, relying mainly on feedback than letter or numerical grades. I was also inspired by teacher comments on a Facebook post regarding grading where teachers argued that grading systems and curriculum need to be updated to match the current global circumstances. This is also not a new belief, as a quick Google search provides many articles about grading policies and alternatives to grading dating back to 2014 and earlier.

# Review of Relevant Literature

“Grading is one of the most fundamental facets of American education” (Schneider & Hutt, 2014). Because quantifying academic success is crucial to education, it is a constant topic of research as ideas emerge and evolve. Questions educators and stakeholders must ask themselves are: What factors should be measured; is it the quantity or quality of work that matters; how can we truly know what they know? Along with these questions, it is also impossible to divorce the notion of pressure placed on students to succeed academically. Educators must also be conscious of students’ social-emotional development, student mindsets about learning, and what other factors could impact their academic and social development.

## How Do Educators Grade Students?

Having variety in grading practices is not a new concept and is something academic institutions at all levels have struggled with throughout history. Despite the establishment of a standard grading scale in the form of the common A-F, or 100-point based, system, there is still much variability in how teachers think about and assign grades (Schneider & Hutt, 2014). There are many opponents to the typical letter/point based system due to the fact that it is so variable. Rather than grading for learning, Alfie Kohn (The Case Against Grades, 2011) suggests that teachers should “replace letter and number grades with narrative assessments or student-teacher conferences… stop putting letter or number grades on individual assignments and instead offer only qualitative feedback”. One grading style that uses both letter and feedback systems has been growing in popularity is called standards-based grading, and involved grading students “on a clearly defined set of standards rather than on their performance on tests and assignments”; when used in his college classroom, Dr. Michael Scarlett used formative assessments such as homework and classwork to determine if students were learning, but he did not grade these works as it would have “punished students for practice” (Scarlett, 2018). Despite being a topic of conversation and debate for decades, there is no nation-wide criteria for how teachers grade and what should be included in those grades.

## What Is Graded?

In his Critique of Grading Policies and Practices (2018), Lorin Anderson examines the variability in grading practices, finding that most teachers not only factor “single task” assignments into their grading, but also perceived achievement in relation to either set goals or their peers, how much information was learned over time, participation in class, and behavior. This is consistent with the information learned from teacher interviews, where the general consensus was that “A”-level grades mean different things across classrooms even within one school: an “A” in one classroom might mean that the student shows a willingness to “redo assignments over and over until they get it”, while another teacher considers an “A” to mean “[the student] probably turned everything in… a C in my class, that means I was struggling to get any work from you” (Gershenson, 2020). There is no universally accepted method to grading, nor what should and should not factor into a final academic grade.

## Achievement and Growth Mindset

A study examining the effects of fixed versus growth mindsets defined growth mindset as “the belief that one’s basic qualities are things they can cultivate through their efforts”, where a fixed mindset is where personal qualities are unable to change (Keown & Bourke, 2019). This study determined that a growth mindset benefits students’ ability to complete work, especially when a teacher meaningfully instructs students on how effort can impact success when reaching a specified goal (Keown & Bourke, 2019). Another study examining the impact of growth mindset on achievement during an online tutoring program divided students into two groups: one group receiving growth mindset feedback and the other receiving a success/failure message. This study found that the group receiving the success/failure messages produced more hurried work, were less likely to request hints, and were more confused with the material when compared to the group who received feedback with growth mindset themes (Karumbaiah et al., 2017). A study centered in California found that student mindset is a tool that can predicting achievement gains, even when controlling for students’ prior academic experiences; leading to gains that “are equilivent to more than 35 days of learning” (Claro & Loeb, 2019). Although the impact of mindset on achievement is still a developing area of study, I found it important to consider disposition towards learning while reviewing literature about grades.

# Methodology

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how educators think about grading and achievement in the midst of a global pandemic. The procedures used while conducting this study are presented in this section. A description of the research design, procedures, and data analysis are included in this section. The design, procedures, and analysis methodology were specifically chosen to best answer the following research questions:

1. How did teachers think about grading before virtual learning?
2. Have the way teachers thought about grading changed since transitioning to virtual learning?

## Design

The research design involved qualitative methodologies. Results of data analysis were expressed in qualitative and quantitative formats. Participants were identified using the methods described below. This study did not include a preliminary survey, as the research questions did not lend themselves easily to the format of limited-response questions. Instead, this study was completed by conducting brief open-response interviews with four K-12 veteran educators who deliver instruction either entirely online or through hybrid methods during the 2020-2021 school year. Once the data was collected from the interviews, responses were reduced and generalized for the purposes of creating quantitative charts and conclusion drawing, as well as being paired with qualitative measures to expand on the ideas displayed by the charts.

## Participants

The participants for this study included four K-12 educators. First, a cold-call post was published on a teacher forum on a social media platform, Facebook. From the pool of participants who responded to this cold-call post, four veteran teachers were selected who teach this semester via an online-only or hybrid method. These four educators were selected for a brief interview that included demographic questions as well as questions related to grading practices of the current year versus grading practices of previous years. Educators who teach strictly in-building students have been excluded from the interview portion of this study as their grading practices may not show any variation and their current teaching method does not fall under “virtual learning”. Educators who have had less than three years of teaching experience were also excluded from these interviews because they may not have had established grading practices before transitioning to virtual learning.

## Analysis

Participant interviews were transcribed and coded for emergent patterns. Data were collected and analyzed following the three-tiered cyclical model defined by Huberman and Miles (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1988), which includes data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing and verification. I used content analysis as a form of initial data reduction in that individual participant interviews were coded for emergent themes independent of one another. After, a second tier of data analysis was used, and involved conducting cross-case analysis comparing themes across interviews.

Content analysis is the process of “coding and categorizing” patterns in the data (Patton, 1990, p. 381). While analyzing interview data across multiple readings, categories began to emerge. As these categories emerged, they were assigned a category title. Once each interview was coded and the information was reduced, the interview answers were generalized for ease of comparison. The visual displays of this data by category will be included in the appendices. These emergent categories include:

1. The amount of work assigned
2. Late work policies and work quality
3. Beliefs about bonus points and extra credit
4. Difficulties and advantages of teaching online.

## Methods to Ensure Rigor of Study

Throughout this study, numerous measures were taken to ensure rigor of study, including data verification, triangulation, peer debriefing, and the keeping of a personal methodological log. Peer debriefing was beneficial during this study as it ensured “that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics of an educational situation are right” (Eisner, 1998, p. 112). There were a handful of colleagues who agreed to serve as detached observers during this study who assisted with formulating interview questions, data reduction, and reviewing the process of content analysis and categorization.

# Results

## The Quantity of Student Work

Of the four participants, three indicated that the amount of work that they assigned students had lessened since transitioning to virtual or hybrid learning [Figure 1.1]. However, the reduced amount of work was not necessarily teacher-driven. Of the participants who said that they were assigning less work to students, one teacher said that it was a district-driven directive. During a typical semester, teachers in this district were required to record four major grades, such as summative tests and projects, and five minor grades, such as homework and classwork. Since transitioning to virtual learning, these requirements were cut down to three major grades and four minor grades. The sole participant who indicated that she had not altered the amount of work she typically assigned mentioned that she had been teaching online through a virtual school system since 2018, and that they had not noted much change to their program when the big shift to virtual learning started in March of 2020.

## Expectations of Students

All four participants indicated that their expectations of student performance had changed, however three said that they were less particular while one indicated that she was more particular [Figure 1.2]. Of the teachers that said that they were less particular, two interview responses stood out. One of these participants said that she was overall less particular of what she was expecting of students, but that she did clearly define when they should be more explicit and detailed in their work; “Here is your test. And then there’s two questions that you’re going to take a picture of your work and submit it. Or… Here are these three problems, you’re going to do a flipgrid to show me what you were thinking.” Another participant, who teaches multiple grade levels in high school, said that she was less particular with ninth-grade students because “there’s just such a deficit with these kids because they haven’t done anything since March”, but that her expectations of her tenth- and eleventh-grade students have not changed since she has taught them before and knows what they are capable of. The participant who said that she was more particular in her student expectations provided an example of a Socratic seminar they conducted over Canvas, and how she “was ruthless if they did not back up with evidence”. Upon reflection, she commented that while teaching in person she feels as if she can “see” her students understanding a concept, and does not worry about finding physical proof of their understanding as much as she does with students being online.

## Late Work Policies

Participant answers to questions regarding late work policies were varied across the board. Two out of four participants indicated that their schools’ late work policies were less strict than during a typical year; one of four participants said that their school removed late work policies entirely; one of four participants said that her school had implemented a more strict late work policy [Figure 1.3]. The two participants who said that their schools’ late work policies were less strict mentioned that students were able to turn in work late only if they had discussed doing so with their teachers. Out of these two participants, however, one provided more detail, saying that “there is no rule about making up work if they’re in quarantine” but that virtual students did not get that leniency since they are already home all of the time. The teacher that mentioned that her late work policy was stricter said that it was entirely up to teacher discretion for if a student was allowed to turn an assignment in late.

## Extra Credit and Bonus Points

On the topic of bonus points and extra credit assignments, there were also mixed answers. Two of four participants indicated that they did not award bonus points or extra credit at all; one of four participants said that bonus points and extra credit were only provided when built in to already existing assignments; one of four participants said that bonus points and extra credit were awarded on a per-assignment basis for effort [Figure 1.4]. Of the two participants who answered that they do not award bonus points or extra credit at all, one said that she believed that bonus points were not fair and do not grade students on what they are actually doing in class. The other participant echoed this grounding, but also said that in pervious years where she allowed extra credit that she had “gotten so much trouble that it’s been such a hassle with parents”. The participant who said she only awarded bonus points when they were built in to an existing assignment, in the form of an extra content-related question, said that she rarely does so since “the kids who want or need extra credit are the kids who haven’t done their work”.

## Other Findings

During the interviews, there were statements from the participants that stood out but did not fit into any of the above categories. Such statements consist of one participant’s grading practice, camera policies during the online school day, and opinions of instructing online.

The participant who has been instructing online since 2018 decided to use the major shift into virtual learning as an opportunity to alter her grading practice. During previous, typical years, this participant graded each assignment for accuracy and completeness. However, during this school year sha has adopted a standards-based grading system and now assigns two to three assignments under each skill she expects her students to master and records the highest grade that demonstrates their level of mastery. Her only complaint was that it was difficult for Canvas to read the scores as she intended.

Two participants indicated that they do not require students to turn their cameras on during their lessons as they believe that it is a safety and security issue, and that many of their students may not live in an environment that they feel comfortable being on video for. Although they do not ask their students to turn on their cameras during the lesson, the teachers interviewed did notice a lack of vocal participation from the students who did not turn on their cameras. Because of this, the teachers interviewed believed that the students would walk away from their computers during the lesson and not receive proper instruction.

Two teachers shared their overall opinions of virtual learning at the end of their interviews. One participant said that she disliked virtual learning because she noticed that students would rush through completing an assignment on Canvas to view the correct answers at the end before refreshing the assignment and reattempting it once they knew the correct answers. This teacher disliked the way that virtual students are allowed to dishonestly redo assignments. However, the other teacher had the opposite opinion. This teacher stated, “it’s better than regular [in person] teaching… except the kids aren’t getting as much”.

# Conclusions

Through brief interviews with four veteran K-12 teachers, I was able to determine that there has been changes to the amount of work that teachers assign and teachers’ expectations of students since transitioning to virtual learning for the 2020-2021 school year. Overall, of those interviewed, there was a decrease in the amount of work that teachers are assigning to students when compared to previous years of face-to-face instruction. The only outlier for this was the participant who has been teaching students online since 2018, and her school system did not experience much disruption from the pandemic. Across the interviewees, there was also a decrease in the expectations that teachers hold for students, with some reservations based on the assignment type and the teacher’s history with the students in a given classroom. There were mixed responses regarding the acceptance of and policies surrounding late work. However, no participant indicated that their late work policy had remained the same as previous years, indicating that beliefs surrounding late work have altered since transitioning to virtual learning. While the teachers interviewed did discuss their policies surrounding bonus points and extra credit, no teacher indicated that their beliefs had shifted in light of virtual learning. This leads me to believe that this is one area of education that is unlikely to change due to virtual learning during the pandemic. I believe that the fact that educators are shifting their views on grading and limiting the amount of work assigned to students will be beneficial in the coming years. Teachers now more than ever are critically considering their own personal circumstances that prohibit their ability to be productive, as well as the personal circumstances that prohibit their students from being productive in the classroom. I also believe that, through the reduction of the amount of work assigned, teachers are having to consider which assignments, or portions of assignments, are the most beneficial and important for students to complete.

Despite the rigor of my study, there were limitations to my research. Given the change, I recommend that further studies be conducted regarding both teacher and student accountability with the reduction of assignments and grades. I also recommend that this study be repeated with teachers in the elementary setting, as all of the participants for this study taught grades 6-12. I do not know if there would be any variability within the K-5 setting.

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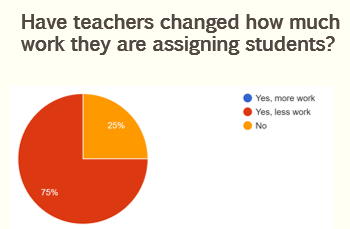
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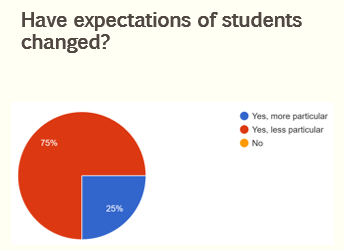
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# Appendix A [Figures]

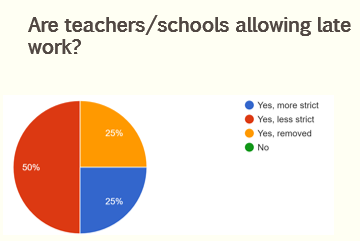
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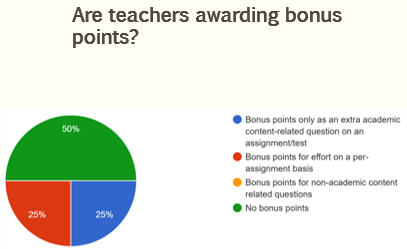
## Figure 1.2



## Figure 1.3



## Figure 1.4



# Appendix B [Interview Responses]

## Interview 1

**Christal Sharbutt**

Okay, so I know it was in the Facebook post about what my topic is. But my senior research is focusing on how COVID is impacted grading. And you have been teaching online since 2018. What caused that switch or what was going on in your district for that to happen?

**Participant**

I switched jobs.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Oh, okay, okay.

**Participant**

I went from -------- which is very urban low income. It was just stressful, so I'd been there, seven, eight years, and just there's just too much, and just my stress level is through the roof. I was job hunting, and I had this interview with -------- virtual school and then like I like you're talking about the grade levels and the subject I want to teach. Anyway, get to do live from home Sign me up, they hired me, and it's a really good fit.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Oh, so like the whole school goes online.

**Participant**

Yeah, so this school has been a virtual school for about 10 years. it's gone through some identity shifts spurted out as a K-12, which is an organization a virtual school organization kind of like Connections Academy is now. But in 2007 I think is when it started. And this is like, like before I got there, yeah.

**Christal Sharbutt**

I know, you're good. It's okay if you don't know the answer to that.

**Participant**

I can kind of piece most of it together because I do have a couple people who have been there from the start. So, they were part of this K 12 organization that didn't end well for them, so they became like part of like an independent school like without the K 12 curriculum and without like the oversight from them. So, it's more of an international independent school. So, it's a public school of choice, it's not a charter. It's not a district school for Greenfield, it's the whole Commonwealth of Massachusetts, any kid in the whole state can sign up, it's open to everybody, it's a lottery system there's an insane waiting list right now much we can talk about like how COVID has changed things that's one of the things. Yeah, but it's been a thing. And before COVID. When I joined it was a lot of kids who had bad experiences in a brick and mortar school. So, kids who have been bullied, kids, a lot of kids with ADHD and autism and anxiety. Also, kids who are pursuing like professions like sports, arts, some actor athletes like that, where they travel, and they come to us and we can kind of accommodate that because they can do their lessons for anywhere. Okay.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Um, has uh virtual learning outside of like the regular semester, uh, altered how much work you assign just to general students or has the workload pretty much stayed the same?

**Participant**

The switch from brick and mortar to virtual was it was the big jump so when I came on board, like, Oh, I need to change how we do work, because the amount of work assigned outside of class it's just not implied. They just don't. engagement is a huge issue and it always has been. Our schools a nice easy place for negligent families to hide. Unfortunately, we have a huge team of family engagement that go into home visits and they weren't prepared. But the amount of work from March on hasn't really changed we barely blinked in March, it was just sort of "be a little bit more flexible with your due dates in your lessons you like tardiness" and stuff like that, for everybody because the kids had parents and siblings who normally weren't there. We teachers had siblings and spouses home normally where our PE teacher had to go completely asynchronous because she had two small children at home, like toddler and baby at home. He just stopped doing live lessons and did asynchronous lessons instead. So, it really depended on like everyone's independent situation. How-- but not how much work was assigned but like what work looks like. So, we tend to do more in class participation, not quite like a flip model but…

**Christal Sharbutt**

Rather than like typical homework.

**Participant**

Right. Okay, so like my math teacher might have a different take on this, but I very rarely give like homework practice like we'll start with practice in class. And then I'll be like, "Okay, if you didn't finish it, get it in". But I grade those for completion. Okay, I'm not reading for accuracy unless it's a test or quiz.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Okay. Um, so, you mentioned how the physical education teacher went asynchronous, are you all synchronous right now?

**Participant**

Crazy this year because we expanded. So, I went from having. Last year I had three hour long live lessons every day, Monday through Thursday. With all my classes so I have two sections of sixth grade and one section of last year. But 30 Kids each, and Friday was like study hall, small group help kind of stuff. This year, I've got four sections. All seventh grade on there 45, minutes each Monday through Friday, packed schedule feels way more like a brick and mortar kind of schedule. Just to accommodate the sheer number of kids we have this year. So, the live lessons are absolutely required, except for. We have attendance contracts for some kids. So, kids who we have we have a partnership because that's not… It's not official but there's like an arrangement with an Arabic school in Waltham, and which is close to Boston. Okay. They attend so the middle schoolers there attend. Arabic classes, nine to one, and then they come to our class says one to four but it's, they really don't come up very much. Yeah, never to come back with the school that like they can miss the lessons and not being docked attendance points. If they do the work. We also have for sixth grade up something called flex which is asynchronous classes. So, for six to eight. Most of those are like all or nothing. Either you're all flex or you're all live.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Okay.

**Participant**

And then nine through 12, they pick and choose based on the courses. Most kids take at least one flex course, something that they're usually stronger in. Yeah, so they can just sort of fly through it. Like a sort of dual enrollment like with a community college or something. This gives them a little bit more flexibility to go to those courses like that. But we're mostly like my job is live. I am doing basically this with a different meeting platform, most of the day.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Yeah, okay. You mentioned earlier about, um, how you're grading for completion for things outside of tests and quizzes. Um, have. Can you say more about that and like just, I don't want to say grading the quality of student work, but that's the way that I had it brightest on my paper.

**Participant**

Yeah, I agree it's, I can extend my whole grade practice with you. Okay. I agreed. 75% of my grade is demonstrated proficiency, and we talked about what that means. It means you're showing what you know and what you can do. So, 75% is exit tickets, quizzes, tests that I'm reading on a scale for standards based grading. Yes, well look at that and it's this is me like this is all my own initiative the rest of my colleagues like don't bother with this right now. But I took it on myself.

**Christal Sharbutt**

And you said you made that switch this semester, I guess.

**Participant**

I read about it. It was horrible. So, I saw a teacher on tik tok okay…

**Christal Sharbutt**

No, we're all we all come from the same Facebook group. It's okay.

**Participant**

I saw a teacher on tik tok who is standards based, and she's like super intuitive like that makes a lot of sense. She recommended standards based grading in the classroom. And like, that’s brilliant so I read that. And I started like making scales. How about proficiency makes so much sense. And so I started so that I just started, because like the rest of it, like I've been teaching this stuff I know the content, but like if I can actually get a snapshot of what students can actually do really great. I've done this or two units right now. And I'm loving, it's a major headache for Canvas to grade.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Yeah. How does that work with putting the standards base grade into the typical gradebook format?

**Participant**

It’s been a dumpster fire. Oh no, that's, that's honestly one of my projects this weekend, is to figure out how to make Canvas, read a three out of four as an 85 instead of a 75. How do I make it read a two as a 75 instead of 50? So that's like my next project after I get all my grad work done for this weekend. That's the next thing. Yeah. And so, I have some ideas with the grading scheme with Canvas been asked me around and just, like, oh yeah, we have this whole big elaborate workaround. Why, why can't this be easy. So luckily, I only have.... I have one to four assignments that I need to kind of enter the data into. into. So, I'm going to write in like five instead of three. And then I'm going to have to either change the grading scheme, so it displaces three, or like train the kids to recognize what it means. Yeah. It's ridiculous. But I like the philosophy of it so I'm trying to make the practicality of it work so I'm like this is something like I'm a data geek, I can do this to figure it out now. I only have four things to correct it on instead of like a whole quarter’s worth. Yeah.

**Christal Sharbutt**

I can imagine the trying to fit everything in. Last semester our professors when we went virtual decided to try out the un-grading method where it's more feedback based, I didn't understand it completely, but I've been reading up on it a little bit since then. But that was interesting trying to get the feedback into the gradebook because we didn't get number of points or anything assigned. It was very interesting.

**Participant**

I kind of grew up on un-grading because... it's not quite true... my aunt teaches elementary school kindergarten, I think, integrated day program in Connecticut. And that's been around since when I was a kid. And it's, they don't give grades, it's, you get a progress report and narrative, two or three times a year, with your conference and it's like, it's not it's not standards based it's not grades, traditional grades, it's pretty much funny mean the word that is un-grading but back then like the 80s. The 90s like this is, this is what they did they wrote reports they didn't. Yeah. Have report cards in this in this program, it was just the, the things just called the report is put in the child's folder, like their permanent record folder, and you know the portfolio, sort of moves up so they've got all these very detailed observational reports about students and their work and their work samples from kindergarten really yeah the way up until the program in like eighth grade, but no grades until at least fourth grade I know it was still no grades I don't know about the middle schools. But while I was growing up, it was reports.

**Christal Sharbutt**

I'm trying to look and see what other like I had a couple of big questions that I wanted to ask everyone in general. But I think just during conversation we've talked about a lot of them so I'm just trying to look over. Um, I'm. So, this isn't, this was more of a demographic question that I had more so than an actual question, but I'm very interested in it, to know. So, you said that your colleagues were using like the normal grading style and that you were moving to standard spaced. So does your does the school system that you're in, let you pick your own grading policy for the classroom as long as it's converted into what they use for the system, or?

**Participant**

Okay, as a, as a middle school team. We sort of decide what we want to be and kind of think of like actual admin had any say in that whatsoever. I don't know I don't know if like this 20% attendance and participation part we have is that just something that we all like or that's like a mandate, but we like it. So, it's there. So, ours. We've always had that I can remember this little method here. We've always had 20% is attendance and participation. Don't know that admin had any other say in it besides that I just know that we're traditional grades I think PE five might be standards based and I don't know how long they've been or what their workload looks like, Okay.

**Christal Sharbutt**

I think I have one more question and then I can let you get back to whatever you were doing for your grad work. I know you're virtual and that you're teaching, you're grading through standards based, how has either being online, since 2018, or being online since 2020, changed your position or thoughts about extra credit or bonus points?

**Participant**

Um, I like, I kind of like the idea of bonus points but I rarely use them only because engagement is such a big issue that the kids. Invariably, the kids who want or need extra credit or the kids who haven't done their work. Open I have some extra credits it's the last day of the quarter. And I'm like you didn't do any of your other work so no. If I have a student who's asking for extra credit. It would be along the lines of okay you've done everything else. This has been a policy regardless of which, reading policy, I've had forever. I guess you don't get extra credit until the regular credit work is alternative. Okay, like you're not even eligible, with the exception of maybe there's a bonus point on a test somewhere like no 10 to the test itself. Yeah, yeah, bonus at the end like if we talked about something like last like this past week we were talking about population maps and came up with like language maps about like you know which part of the country calls it soda versus pop for scope. That's… We're looking at those and so I might put in a bonus point in there about like if you were in Chicago, how would you order, you know, a spray, something like that. Just for fun. But it would still reflect back on what we're doing in class. Some professors put in stuff that's completely unrelated to their course content and I'm like, how is that helping their grade.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Yeah, that's just like fun to know like fun fact what is this?

**Participant**

Yeah, yeah, like he's talking about like we talked about among us. They had like a bonus point you know who's the killer.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Yeah.

**Participant**

You know, so I don't want to add stuff like that entrepreneur grade like ever. but I try to reward effort by completion and attendance and not the huge part of their grade.

## Interview 2

**Christal Sharbutt**

What grade levels do you teach?

**Participant**

i teach seventh and eighth graders

**Christal Sharbutt**

okay and is that entirely online or are your hybrid?

**Participant**

I have three of them are hybrid where it's um Face to Face to face three days virtual and then one of my classes is completely virtual

**Christal Sharbutt**

And uh are your grading practices directed from like the school system, principle, or can you all kind of direct your own grading practices?

**Participant**

Yes. So, the weight of the different categories of the grade is district wide. Um and then um so the weight of each thing is preset um, I guess I have a little I have I have like the specifics the details, but that also has to be... we calibrate it like I just calibrated today actually, my... So, like the weight of each type of greatest set, and then within the gradebook, like for individual assignments I calibrated, it gets calibrated with the people who teach the same subject. So today, we went in and looked at all of the math teachers grade books, to see if it was similar or different and to see... make sure that we were grading things similarly across grades.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Ya, um, has Virtual Learning like altered the amount of work you assign just in general?

**Participant**

Yeah, um, so I work at a rural low income district. I'm working title one school, so I have never assigned. I've never assigned homework was always only if you didn't finish working class. Um, and so then you know, from there, there's been a big shift in the total amount that I've put in for, that I've assigned, especially on days where students for me having Even with my virtual kids, they still have days that they check in and days, and they don't. Um, and so there's been a really big shift for me, for what I assign on those at home days, compared to what I would have regularly given in a five day week. Just because I call it like sphere of influence. For me, like, I can control what they work on those two days that they're in school, or those two days that they're supposed to be Google in a in a meet with me a virtual meet, and then those days that they're not with me, you know, I have, I have very little control over what they do. Um, so I want to make sure I assign less now than I would have during a five day week for sure. Just because I want to make sure that I'm, what they're doing at home is feasible and not overwhelming and doesn't have kids shutting down because there's nobody there to help them.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Um, on that note, actually, we'd be saying that the kids will like, shut down if they don't have anyone there to help. Um, when it comes to like, the quality or accuracy kid showing their work? Are you more? Have you found that you're more lenient? During virtual learning with kids turning in work late or? Yeah, not having it completely accurate.

**Participant**

Yeah, um, so I wouldn't say that I'm more lenient with that as much as I am more specific with when they're doing it. So normally, if I were giving a test, I, they would be showing work, especially for math for probably over half of the test. Now, with all of our tests having to be given in a virtual setting. That's really hard. And so, I'm more now. Okay, here's your test. And then here's two questions that you're going to take a picture of your work and submit it. Um, or, okay, so there are these three problems that we're going to do, I don't know if you've heard of flip grid or not, but that you're going to do a flip grid out, and you're going to show me what you were thinking. So I wouldn't say necessarily, I, I wouldn't say that I am more lenient with accuracy, as much as I am just more specific on when they need to do that, to make sure that I can use my time effectively, because before with papers and turning things in and seeing them every day, it was really easy for me to scan through stuff. That is not the case anymore. And then with late work, our district actually went in the opposite direction, usually the stricter late work policy now. where, you know, if it's, if it's late, a teacher doesn't have to grade it. And it's up to the discretion of the teacher. Um, I have never so far this year, I have not turned down a single student that has asked me to do late work. But before it was kind of a student turned something in the policy was that you accepted it. this year, they now actually, the expectation is that they're asking ahead of time and checking in that they can turn something in late. So, we are actually my district went the opposite way with late work, especially I think, for formative grades, because the whole point of a formative grade is, it's where you are in that moment. What's your level of understanding if your level of understanding and where you are in that moment was that you couldn't be bothered to do it on time? Then that's where you are. And we I guess what it was how it was explained to us is wanting to make sure that teachers feel like their time is valued, and that we're holding students accountable.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Okay, that makes a lot of sense and I hadn't thought about it that way. Especially for a semester, like this one, it's a lot of people would assume that Oh, you have all the time in the world now to do assignments. Um, what's been the most difficult part of like delivering instruction through hybrid or for your kids who are all online? What's the most difficult part then? Yeah.

**Participant**

For all online kids, it's definitely been that I can't walk around and observe their work. You know, we're taking notes. They have a math workbook with a specific curriculum, that's been great, but I have no way to check to make sure they're actually taking those notes. I know. A lot of districts went live a very strict camera policy. Our district was the office. But I don't require any of my students to have their cameras on. And that's more of a safety and security issue. We have a lot of kids who live in mobile homes or who may or may not be experiencing homelessness, who don't have access to surroundings that they feel comfortable being on video for. Um, and then the flipside of that is that I'm not willing to have them take pictures and email me are submitted every day because I love them. And I don't have time for that. There's just no way that I could go through everybody's work. so, on that end, that's probably for me been the hardest part is that I can't collect that observing data of is this student doing this? Are they taking the notes down? Can I point out something Can I see Oh, so and so's we're doing square root. And they're trying to divide that kind of stuff. With my hybrid group, it's really been a lot of trial and error to hold them accountable on those days that they're at home. Um, so finding different platforms, like flip grids, and like edpuzzle, where it's all virtual, and I can see, did you actually go in and watch this? are you answering the questions? How long did you spend on this? And something where it tracks that data for me rather than me really having to spend a lot of time on it? Because that's at least for middle schoolers, in particular, that accountability and then knowing like, Oh, yeah, Miss Alexa is gonna go in and check if I actually spent some time or if she's gonna see if I open this up and then close out of it in less than a minute. I'm doing that has probably been the most challenging and trial and error and just being patient with my kids and knowing that sometimes I have them do an assignment, and then it I look, I open up the first floor, and I'm like, Alright, well, we're just gonna give everybody a check on this assignment, and then we're gonna move on, because that didn't work the way I thought it was. And then also the students having patience with that has also been huge.

**Christal Sharbutt**

this isn't a question I'd originally thought about asking, but have you ever, like, taught an online class before this semester? Because I had one teacher that I interviewed who's been on my 2018. And that blew my mind.

**Participant**

Yeah, that was nice. Um, no, I've never, I've never taught online before, um, at all, I would say and it's interesting. Um, you know when I was a, so I am a math teacher. Now, I was a science teacher two years ago. And I felt like two years ago, as a science teacher, I really did a lot with our students and our students, our one to one district. So, every student has a Chromebook. And I really, like capitalize on it a lot. And then, when I got to math, when I switched to teaching math, we went the I went full on 180 we don't we rarely used our Chromebooks, everything was paper pencil. Um, so I did feel like, back when I was doing stuff with science that was more virtual that did help prepare me. But I never fully taught a virtual class before. Um, I've been thinking about trying to switch to a more flipped, set up. Because for me, I'm in a really unique situation. I actually have seventh and eighth graders, normally not this year, but normally, I have seven eighth graders in the same class together. So, I am teaching two curriculums simultaneously in the same room. Um, and so this kind of jump started that process.

**Christal Sharbutt**

we've talked about all the like, downsides, and difficulties that there's been teaching online. Um, what advantages Have you found that you didn't think you would?

**Participant**

so one thing that's been a big advantage for me is that as a as a middle school teacher, um, you know, I personally only taught two lessons a week as is so hybrid where kids only come in two days a week wasn't was no different for me from what I was doing before. Um, I think the only the struggle there was that on kids’ independent work. They were now independently working away from me rather than with me. But it's been really, I feel like it's given me a huge wealth of resources to be able to manage students independent work more. Because I feel like a lot of times in the past, I would have independent work time, and then I would spend a lot of time managing behavior during that independent work time. And now, during that independent work time, you're somebody else's problem here at home. Um, if you get bored, you can take a break. If you need to get up and move or switch locations, or go get a snack, you can do any of that. And so that's been really cool. And that has actually transferred over to the classroom, I feel like kids are more focused those two days that they are there. Because, Oh, I know, tomorrow, I can be on my phone as much as I want. Or tomorrow, I can eat my takis all day, for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And nobody's gonna fuss at me or I can wear my hood at home tomorrow. So, I feel like my classroom management issues have gone down, because you know, for that hour that they're here, we really hit the ground running, and we use our entire class time. And then for independent practice, I'm not the one who's having to manage if you go over or finish early or get bored. So that's been really cool. Um, and then also just, there's been so many resources that have popped up, that when you're face to face and you're in the thick of it, you just don't really think about how advantageous they could be like we edpuzzle has been such a cool thing because you record a video, you embed questions, you send it out, you can see if the kids watched the whole thing or not. You can they can answer questions as they go, you can input feedback and reminders. And so rather than having to teach the exact same lesson, four times, I can teach at once really well on a recording, send that out to kids, and then the ones who struggle with that recording, I can just pull them. Rather than having to spend a whole class period during the lesson then taking notes doing an exit slip that grades it for me, I've learned so much about faster ways to grade. Um, I don't feel like my grading is going any faster, but faster ways to grade and things that will grade for me, which grading has always been one of my most irritating parts of the teaching profession. So there's definitely been a lot of things that I just feel like will continue to transfer over and carry over even after we no longer we can go for me when we can go back to four or five days a week face to face full time.

**Christal Sharbutt**

I think I have one last question. And then our time is up. I'm trying to figure out how to phrase it. It's not a bad question. I just it was coming to me when all you were talking. with-- I know your or your midterm right now. Like...

**Participant**

we're coming up on the end of first quarter. Yeah.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Okay. So... Since you're like coming up on the end of first quarter. Can you tell an improvement or deficit? That's not the word I'm looking for. But an improvement or a deficit in the quality of the grades also not what I'm looking for. And student’s ability on the standards or in the classroom?

**Participant**

to answer and then you're going to tell me if I'm actually answering the question that you want. If that work, yeah, so this year, specifically because we went to hybrid learning, and my district had already been working on it. Um, but this year because of my timer lining, I switched to standards based grading. So, there are no individual assignments in my gradebook. Every single grade is a skill. And so the reason that I did that was because I wasn't seeing kids every single day and didn't feel like I could hold them as accountable to doing every single assignment as well, nor did I want to spend my time Personal effort trying to get kids to do every single assignment. As much as a teacher, I feel like everything I assign is important and valuable. Like, I don't have time to fight with 100 middle schoolers about whether or not I'm going to do math that one day. Um, and so, for me, what I can really see is that there is a very clear delineation for the students who are taking accountability and ownership of that learning with being at home all the time. And the students who are not, and it's not necessarily like all of my kids who take ownership have hundreds and all of my kids who don't, are failing. But you it's very easy to see from my grade book, oh, Susie is really thriving in this environment where she works from home, she emails me when she needs me. And she checks in, she asks for additional help. And she can do that independently, versus the kids who are still just trying to figure out and suck it up, or the kids who want to get an assignment and type, I don't understand this and submit that assignment. So, they still submitted it. But then I rather than me helping them ahead of time to turn it in, I'm having to, when I grade it, then be like, Whoa, cool. Johnny didn't get this. Now I have to email him and try to figure out what I want to do. So that's what I would say is probably like the easiest thing to see, because of the standards based grading. Like if you did it once, I'll offer you two or three different ways to show your mastery and only take one of those grades. And then it becomes very clear to see if you couldn't have three times, I offered it to you get one of those grades that you would actually want reflected in your grade book. Then it's definitely not me. Like because I'm giving you multiple opportunities and multiple chances and multiple ways to show me that you've learned this and none of those works for you. Probably not because none of them worked, but probably because you didn't do them.

**Christal Sharbutt**

yeah, no, that was exactly what my question was asking. I just don't know how I was trying to phrase it. Thank you so much.

## Interview 3

**Christal Sharbutt**

What grade levels, do you teach currently?

**Participant**

ninth, 10th and 11th.

**Christal Sharbutt**

are you completely virtual or are you doing hybrid?

**Participant**

Um, it's not hybrid in the sense of I don't teach in class, like on a video and they're watching me at home. We have students at home doing online. And then I have students face to face, but they're all doing the same program, it's just some are at home and some are here.

**Christal Sharbutt**

For your school system or your school building, in particular, who directs your grading policies like can you as a teacher, like, decide how you assign weight to grades or is that through your district or school system,

**Participant**

the school system.

**Christal Sharbutt**

and can you go into a little more like what the current policy is just.

**Participant**

Okay, um, well, let me bring it up here, but they changed it a little bit. I want to say it's 60% what they call major grades, which are like test projects, things like that. And then 40% minor grade, which classwork practices. There is no percentage for homework, this year because of the situation, there's not really homework. Yeah, it's all online so it's 60/40.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Okay. Um, now you're going into like the weighted... how much each thing is worth in the grade. How has how much of each of those categories changed since going virtual like do you assign more classwork type material, or do you do more tests or less tests or?

**Participant**

um, the thing that has changed is not necessarily the assigning the work. The state, and then our county purchased the program in our county union is called gold PLP all the lessons are online, all the tests all the quizzes. So as a county. We were told as the teacher. If something is called in the program an assess-it. It's a minor grade. If something called a mastery assessment. It's a major drain. And there's a limited number of those in the program. Some of us have been adding things because it's not enough for the kids. We also have a minimum number of grades per grading term, we have to meet. Um, and some of the grades in the system don't like ninth grade doesn't have enough of one thing so I have to add more as a teacher. Um, so we have been adding personally I've been adding more of the minor grades.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Okay. Um, can you say more about y'all, having like a minimum number of grades, per year.

**Participant**

So, if that 6040 ideas a majority of. Well, okay, so let me, let me look up. I'm gonna look up the, I can say exactly right. colleague of mine just sent it to me the other day. Okay, so 60% is what they call major. And those are major projects test writing and 40% is minor. Those are practices and things like that, zero percent homework. We have to have this year, we have to have seven, maybe. Yeah, we have to have seven. I'm great. Her nine me. Okay. Um, three have to be major. And for minor. Okay, this is per the county. This is what that's what changes you're used to be nine grades. And it was four major and five minors.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Since its online is the program grading it, or is it sent to you guys and you guys grade it.

**Participant**

Um, if its multiple choice is graded automatically, especially for English like if it adds a short answer or anything like that. It sets me to grade those questions and the multiple choice is already graded.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Okay, and with what you are grading like the open ended response or questions like that. Um, how lenient... is the wrong word to use but it is the best word I could think to fit my question. Right, how lenient or you when grading like the quality of those answers.

**Participant**

Um, it's very different for different classes because of who I teach and what I teach. I have standard ninth grade, I have advanced ninth grade, I have advanced 10th grade and I have advanced 11th. The 11th graders, I have taught all of them for two years already. So personally, for me. I haven't changed what I expect at all, because they know me, and I know what they're capable of. The 10th graders pretty much the same way I taught, almost all of them last year. And it's considered advanced. So, again, higher expectations higher standard for ninth graders, that are advanced, a little bit more lenient sometimes I'll make more comments and give more feedback and let them try it again since they're still new at this. I try to keep in mind also since we stopped school technically in March of last year, my ninth graders are still eighth graders. And so, I struggle with that because I'm very you know like you're a student, just kind of thing so I have to remind myself. Um, you know we've been reminding each other to, you know, have some grace. Okay. So, with the advanced ninth graders I gave a little bit more feedback, and maybe like okay try this one more time. Now that you understand this. Standard ninth graders. I don't have any virtual, they're all in front of me, although some of them did go virtual after they met me. Um, I am a lot more... I want to say lenient like you said, but I do a lot more hand holding with the standard freshman. They are very, very weak reading level wise. And there's just there's such a deficit with the kids because they haven't done anything. March. Yeah, the basic terminology that I expect them to know is not there. They can't read well comprehension one, but there's a lot of adjusting and handling and scaffolding. For example today in the program we did a lesson on oxymoron, which is my favorite thing in the world, and the practice that they had was to use from Shakespeare which why you would have freshmen reading Shakespeare by themselves... So it was just a little bit from Romeo and Juliet, with the what the wonderful like 10 lines that has seven oxymorons in it it's one of the ones who always point out the instructions work with them to pull one out and write about it. I am happy, they can just find them. You know I changed it and created a separate kind of practice for them where I copied the passage, and said, there are seven in here, highlight them. And it's all digital so it's in their Google Docs and things like that. I think the document or just the usual highlighter tool, let's be fun let's be fancy, whatever color you want. Find them. This is after we look at examples and we talked about them, and I gave them one in there, out on stage, um, they did not do well. Yeah. Yeah, like constantly reiterating you know it's two words, minimum, two things, right so it's not going to be one word, and they're highlighting one word. They struggle a lot. I'm a lot more maternal freshmen, the standard freshmen than with the other classes.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Yeah, like it's I blame it’s the wrong word to use for that because you're still like rigorous You're right. The best word that I could yeah succinctly explain. kind of in along that same vein what's been the most difficult part outside of, you know, the students having that deficit.

**Participant**

Um, I think I think for every teacher in the building, if not the country. The virtual students not doing any. Really, they're doing nothing, the majority not the majority, it feels like the majority some days. I'm trying to email them and track them down and I'm, they're not they're not working at all. In most of their classes. And then as a teacher, the paperwork, you have to do for students that are failings and colleague of mine. We have to do like you know, a contact documentation to show that you contact with their parent or guardian if they're failing. You had to do 63 of them,

**Christal Sharbutt**

because y'all just finished the first nine or so weeks.

**Participant**

Well, we started late. Oh yeah okay yeah. Number eight, so we're kind of at like week five. So, we do that at midterms if you had to do 63. Failure contacts. they're not they're not they're not logging on; they're not doing the work. Um, teachers are emailing deadlines and they're not meeting deadlines and every teacher in the building is that that's the big struggle. Um, the biggest one is, they're just the kids aren't are not doing it.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Um, I was interviewing another teacher. Last week, and they said that they were told by administrators that they couldn't fail students.

**Participant**

We have not been told that.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Okay. I didn't know what that was coming from or…

**Participant**

no that was, that's not... what we have to be we definitely have to document if the student will fail. the documentation is a lot to show that you tried to reach out to their parent or guardian said you've given them every student, every assignment that they do for grading this program that we're using, they get two chances at it, unless you take it off. And so, if you don't adjust the settings, they can see all the correct answers. After the first attempt. Before they do it again. Hmm, so there's no reason not to have 100 on everything, unless you change the settings, and they're not doing that. Yeah, so nobody's telling us they can't get ABS because we're spoon much. But our school has always been... the administration has always supported the teachers in the sense of. We understand that you're going to have students that are not going to do. And we're not going to ask them how they feel.

**Christal Sharbutt**

hmm. I'm trying to phrase, what. Another question I have, because I don't really, I have questions written down. But sometimes, some questions come to me I forget to write them down. What do you, what is your policy or the district's policy currently with late work and taking grades off for late work or bonus points and how those are given? Yeah,

**Participant**

pretty much. Bonus points aren't a thing. Okay. You can't give you can't give points for nonacademic thing. Okay. So, bonus points or anything. Um, I personally don't do extra credit because the time that I have attempted it. I've gotten so much trouble that it's been such a hassle with parents. That, you know, and no I don't do it anymore. You don't get it for credit because you should do the credit, asking about late work. Um, so again that's where the kind of grace comes in, for example, um, Friday last week. I teach my advanced freshman classes 22, and one student tested positive before school on Friday. So, by the time that class showed up at 11 o'clock. I was down to 10, 12 had been sent home. before the end of the day, a second student in that class, whose sister tested positive at the middle school, tested positive as well. Monday. Yeah, Monday, I thought I five in that classroom. So, what I'm doing with those students is, I'm still like they're aware, they have Chromebooks, our County's been $60,000 everybody's got a device. Yeah. We understand that some may not have internet access. That's why they didn't sign up to virtual that's why they came. I'm still currently. Like, they had a grade due whatever day was this week Thursday Wednesday whatever the two kids at home who are quarantined didn't do it. I put it a zero. Mm hmm. I emailed twice to remember this do remember to do. I didn't hear anything back from them. I'm struggling and need help so i put a zero. And then I closed the assignment in the program so they can't do it. If, then we have, I mean, I prefer to have any conversation, ahead of time. Yeah, so I know it's, um, I take. Oftentimes, if I don't accept late work on a normal year. You don't do it. And the freshmen realized that a few weeks ago with something they all tried to turn it in after the fact. But I gave it to you. We gave it to a day late, so it doesn't count. This again with that greatest idea if something was due three weeks ago, the grace period is. There's not really a thing is there's not a grace period here. the superintendent is like a typical policy is three days for like classwork, and you have five days to make every day. This year they're like let them make it up. So, you know, it's a case by case basis. I've got one student who isn't doing anything, and you know constant emails and then every time I email this do I get a yes ma'am. Thank you. And then we don't do it. And then grandma emails me that there's all these health issues in the house not even related to COVID. Um, and you know I said okay great you can have more time. So that was a week. And then nothing, and stuff from like three weeks ago. So, I emailed them again and said okay, these four things I need by Friday. Yeah, you don't have zeros. At the event to the four, so that's good. So, no not taking points off because I did like you had a 40, I'm trying for you not to have a 14. Yeah. So, it's a case by case. But this year, there is no rule about making up work in it they're quarantine. They make up the virtual kids is different because they're home all the time. There, they don't get extra time, I'm not as me. Yeah. So, these two kids in quarantine if they come back and they're like I got it. I can adjust. Mm hmm.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Um. Now this is just like a for fun question because I did not expect this question to be needed to be needed to be asked. But, um, have you ever taught an online class before.

**Participant**

Um, I've never taught one, I was an access facilitator once access online education program that they already have that students use for credit advancement, more if your school doesn't offer a class like our school is a really small school, we don't have enough teachers to teach things so you can take it on. we only have Spanish so if you wanted to take Latin or German and you had to take it on. I was an access facilitator, teacher. So, I taught the creative writing class through this Access Program. Those are the two, I was the teacher. And that was the same created the whole thing and it's very similar to what I'm doing now where I would say like, Alright, you know you need to make sure that environment, do the same, and then I create it and give it back. It wasn't a, we never met face to face or anything like that just strictly online, the students working in their school with like a monitor. Yeah. And then, so I've done it that way before.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Mm hmm. And is it any different from what you're doing online with your strictly online students.

**Participant**

not really. We wondered why we didn't use the program they already had because they already had the program. And we didn't know why they spent all the money to buy a new program, which we are less than impressed with as far as the content. Yeah. So, I mean it's very similar, it's me. We've decided we feel less like teachers this year and more like a facilitator. Yeah, we are your monitors of progress, we are not educators, and it's a struggle. Yeah.

**Christal Sharbutt**

I can completely understand that. But no, I hadn't heard about access before and that was interesting too.

**Participant**

Yeah, it's great for especially for kids that want to get ahead my older son. He took a few classes on access when he was in high school, so he could do what he wanted to do in the building, you know, senior year he took a science class. That was the whole year, but because of my kid, he finished in three days. And then he got to do. He has an extra PE so okay I was our agreement. So, it works for kids that are motivated, just like any other online. If you're motivated and you're determined and put the time into it, you'll get it done. Yeah.

## Interview 4

**Christal Sharbutt**

What grade levels do you currently teach?

**Participant**

I teach sixth grade

**Christal Sharbutt**

And you said you are completely online for those? And that you're moving to hybrid, in a few weeks.

**Participant**

Yes. And last year I taught fifth grade at a school that did full Hybrid during the pandemic. But I started the year with them, and they were in person, so I switched back to the other district because I didn't want to do in person. During the pandemic with the stuff. they had some procedures in place that I was uncomfortable with so I'm okay to go back hybrid in a few weeks.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Um, what is your school's socio economic status.

**Participant**

Um, you know, I am sort of new to the school. I'm gonna say it has a healthy percentage of free and reduced lunch children, I don't, I don't know if it's title one, I could probably look it up. Um, but it's in a wealthier area but a lot of those parents, pull their kids into charters, so the kids that are left, like I've got. I've got almost 50% English as a second language children. That's not always that's not always a sign of socio economics, like the kids are in a little bit of a wealthier silver but these, but I would say that these kids are not typical of the amount of money that that suburb banks. Yes, ma'am. Well, I don't know, I'd have to look it up. it's a pretty middle class, or some of them are poor. A few of them are displaced living with grandparents because their parents lost their jobs, I'm definitely not seeing Well, okay, I would say like, I've probably got three or four kids that would look at upper middle class.

**Christal Sharbutt**

And who directs grading policies for your classroom.

**Participant**

I'm in a huge district our district direct side, we want to be like the giant districts. Okay.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Now to the questions where it's not just a quick answer... has Virtual Learning changed the amount of work you assign to students in like a given day. Yes,

**Participant**

yes, absolutely, absolutely, at least halved it.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Mm hmm. Can you talk about more like what kind of assignments you assign?

**Participant**

I, I am trying to do more auto graded assignments through Canvas we have to use Canvas in our district which is fine. I'm comfortable with Ted, but I'm trying to use auto grading because everything is so completely overwhelming and like the kids don't have to turn on their cameras which is also fine because I understand that it's a weird invasion of privacy. But I barely know who's there they cut out, like the kids cut out, like when they cut out accidentally but they also cut out on purpose because they don't want to be there and their parents are working and they're just like it's too much. And so, um, it's like, I like the audit grated stuff, because it's helping me kind of even notice who actually did the work on, because they might be in the class and just not do it or they might I might, they might join the class just for attendance and then leave so I need it. Um, and that's that. So yeah, it's definitely types of assignments. Um, I tried to do things that are interesting, we don't. We can't wrestle for too long. Although I'm starting to realize that that might not be true that like they can wrestle with things for an extended amount of time. If I just sit there and shut up and let them do it quietly. While I wait around and if they have questions they can ask. So I'm learning that, but I feel like my, my instinct is no, I need to sort of entertain them or else or just kind of quit, like, so I feel a lot of my assignments are a little bit more. There's not a lot of extended focus, it's more just like, let's try to do things that are going to keep you from leaving. Yeah.

**Christal Sharbutt**

You are you saying that you're using more auto grading things, assignments, um, for assignments that you do have to spend more time grading yourself, Has Virtual Learning altered how lenient, you are when grading. Yeah, maybe not the word I want to use but

**Participant**

yeah no okay I can speak to this so a lot of times in live class, I would actually be more lenient with some grading because I'm like, I know they listened to it I was watching them listen to it. I could tell in their face that they were hearing it. So, I'm good. But now I don't have any of those indicate nonverbal clues. And so, I tend to be actually stricter, and we did do. I did a Socratic seminar on canvas. And I was like, ruthless like if they did not back up with evidence, I was not having it and I was pissy and I was like wow, but then I looked in that's like the one grade that I think really reflects how they did like I have a lot of bad grades for that but I'm like, I can't read you if you don't frickin, tell me a thing that shows me that you understand what I'm what we're talking about. Yeah. And so, I feel really good about how rigorous, I was with the Socratic seminar. Um, but that took a lot of time I don't know that I do that sort of assessment, all the time on campus. Um, but yes so that by zoom I feel like was absolutely as rigorous as any other, and in general when I'm in class, I tend to be a little bit more like, Oh, I think they all got it I was watching them all get it. I'm not gonna worry too much about finding some physical proof of that. And now I'm more worried about physical proof.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Yeah, do you think that's going to change when you go hybrid, or do you think that you being as rigorous as you are now will stay the same.

**Participant**

I think it's going to stay the same, because when we're hybrid. I'm still going to have to use Canvas because we're still going to have the kids at home too. So, I think I'm gonna, I think. Yeah, you know, and so maybe it's not even that more rigorous now, it's just that, because I would be that demanding face to face in a Socratic seminar as well. I mean, that's one area where I feel pretty strongly about. I get you can't fake it. You can write stuff that doesn't say anything, it's really hard to speak a sentence that says nothing and fake it. When you don't when you haven't read it. Um, so I guess I'm not rigorous with grading in person to look for seminars, but with other stuff with other stuff I think I'm almost easier in person. Okay, except for the summer.

**Christal Sharbutt**

What's been the most difficult part of delivering instruction over canvas or zoom or anything like that

**Participant**

so far for me not being able to see the kids. Um, I have a core, a small for kids that are comfortable to turn their cameras on the kids who don't, it's hard like I just have no idea, am I talking to the void, or not. And, and it's easy to discount those kids and kind of just speak to the kids that are engaging and the kids, it's, it's pretty rare that it's either camera on and they're engaged or camera off and they're not even really contributing verbally, I do have a few, I would say in each class maybe two or three that are camera off that they're still totally there with me, and they're talking to me and the other ones I'm just like I don't even know if you're there, so that that's really hard, and I'll, I'll ask a direct question they may or may not answer and then I'm like okay is it a language thing did they step away from the thing. Do they understand what I'm saying, and then teachers, kind of talk to each other and some people are like oh, they understand they understand everything. And I'm like, I don't know if they understand like I just met them and I've never talked to them and I've never seen them I've never even visually, put my eyes on them.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Yeah. Are there any of your students who keep their cameras on that do not talk in class?

**Participant**

So, I had that much more with fifth grade than with sixth grade. This grade, I would have them, turn on their cameras and play a video game while I'm watching them play a video game. Yeah, my girl okay that's ballsy. So, I like I sixth grade doesn't really do that as much that I'm aware of. Now I will see sometimes I'll see them on their cameras on and I'll see them texting or something like I'm okay. I'm like that doesn't stress me out too much because I mean I text when I'm in a class sometimes you know it's like okay you're, you're, it's only like if they wander when one time a girl, I thought she was like, I was like this is really weird but she's shaking her butt into the camera, and I'm like this is very weird among Victoria, turn off your camera, because we. I was like, it's not inappropriate but it's distracting. And then she's like oh I was taking care of my cat, so like her cat was doing something wrong. And she was like turning around. It was like oh my god, so I was like not just your camera, it's okay you can have it all, take care of it to take care. Yeah. So,

**Christal Sharbutt**

Yeah, um, have there been any advantages, while teaching online?

**Participant**

Absolutely. I hated online learning all last year from March till June. I felt like it was the worst thing in the world. I started this year in person at the other school, and I loved the kids, but I hated the restrictions, and I hated the fact that some of the restrictions were not being followed. And so anyway, that was hard, so I was like you know what, I'm just going to go back to my old district. So, went back to the old district. And I, it was hard it was super-duper hard to first of all take over from a teacher who had quit and but I'm very fortunate that I was able to get a job. And then, um, and then I am now like I kind of love it because if they are being distracting, I can just mute them. If they need to go to the bathroom. I don't have to keep an eye of like are they going to come back, um, that's not ideal. They're, they're safe, they're safe at home, they can go in the bathroom and it's not my deal and they can go whenever they want they don't have to ask me, they asked me and I'm like, Please don't ask me to go to the bathroom you make go whenever you want to go, and if you miss something important when you get back we'll tell you what you missed, somebody will tell you, so don't even worry about it. Just go. And so, like I love that. I'd love not. No, I don't have to. The only behaviors that I ever have to deal with a dedicated person a breakout room, no big deal I wrote his mom and I just didn't let him in breakout room, and then for us a punishment. And then the third time I was like, Can I trust you and he said yes and then it was great. So, like, I loved it so that the, the classroom management is so much easier. The kids, I would do this like if I were able to teach remote full time. Forever I would do this, I love it. I used to hate it, and now I love it. I thought it would hate it, I told my husband even because I thought about like doing that kind of like online learning as a job you know and I could stay at home would that be great. Yeah and I told her I told my husband; this is not for me because for me I'm all about relationships and I'm all about like getting that visual input from kids and that physical reading the room. So, I definitely was at a handicap. But what happened was somehow I don't know how I tell you what I think the secret was. I think the secret was having a really big really nice monitor that can fit 40 images on a screen, even though they don't all turn our cameras on. I can read the room. So it's like some, like, some of them have their head down basically by having their camera on, but I can still read the room, because I can tell, I don't know somehow it's like I learned how to do that. And now that I know how to do that. It's better than regular teaching in my opinion. Except, except the kids aren't getting as much. Yeah, the kids aren't getting as much content, and that's in the kids, I can sort of get as much out of them, but in terms of like the enjoyable pneus of those times with them. It's just, you know, it's like 15 minutes of lovely happy sunshine, like the kids are happy I'm happy we're doing fun things. Yeah.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Um, I have a question about bonus points and extra credit.

**Participant**

That would be illegal in my district anyway. I would never do that. Yeah, that's not fair. I like to grade them and what they're actually doing. Although in the pandemic. Yeah, there have been times that I've been like, okay, the turn it you know what I'm doing is like they turn in a link. But, like, not the right link and I'm like, I'm just going to give him credit because I know that they don't know how to do this. They're only subscribing. Yeah, but, but, but they're probably some of them are faking in some of them were turning in the link knowing darn well but they didn't do anything so they're like no you turn it in wrong this is not the right link but I'm just like, whatever. So in that way I'm not grading them on exactly what I've seen because sometimes, like my grades are due today it's a kid turned in a link I'm like I'm just going to give them credit because I can't wait for them to clear, clear lane. But yeah, we don't do that in my district.

**Christal Sharbutt**

Um What about wait work policies, like you said, when students turning in late work.

**Participant**

Um, our district has removed labor policies they can turn it in. Whenever as well they should be able to cause like even, even the most together families I've got a bunch of, like, I've got a bunch of moms who are teachers themselves and they're like on top of their kids and everything, and they still their kids still don't do jack because the Wi Fi is bad or the mom is trying to teach with the Wi Fi while the kids trying to go to school with the Wi Fi or the dad got COVID or. Yeah, no, no, we don't do any late work penalties.