# 7. Moving Toward Sanity with Grades

In this *Change Leaders* article, Douglas Reeves acknowledges the need for radical

changes in grading policies and suggests four incremental shifts that might prevent some of the usual tensions between teachers, students, and parents:

• *Make concessions to tradition*. Parents and colleges will still get GPAs based on the traditional scale from 4.0 to zero. Students will still get letter grades.

• *Shift to a 4-3-2-1-0 grading scale*. This gets away from the serious downsides of the 100-point scale, especially when it comes to zeroes, and is easy for students and parents to understand.

• *Insist that teachers give fair warning*. “Any prospective grades of F, D, or C should result in a call, e-mail, or note to parents at least two weeks before the end of the grading period,” says Reeves, “warning parents of the possible grades and specifying what is necessary to improve the results. Teachers don’t want kids to fail, and these conversations are much easier to have before the grades are delivered than afterwards.” Why a warning for a C? We all need to get past the idea that C work is “average,” he says. C work is not okay. It needs serious improvement.

• *Require appropriate consequences for missing or unacceptable student work*. Low grades as punishments have never worked, says Reeves. The best consequence is students having to *do the work*. “Some schools do this during lunch,” he says, “others before and after school, others during prescribed ‘catch-up’ periods. But in every case, appropriate consequences lead to fewer failures, better behavior, and less stress for teachers, parents, and students.”

“Preventing This Year’s Grading Crisis Before It’s Too Late” by Douglas Reeves in *Change* *Leaders*, September 23, 2014, <http://www.changeleaders.com/#!blog/cmgs>; Reeves can be reached at <http://www.changeleaders.com/#!blog/cmgs>.

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