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ABSTRACT

The traditional A-B-C-D-F grading system utilized by most colleges and universities to indicate student achievement has been a major focus of student and faculty dissatisfaction for decades. Further, when connected (consciously or unconsciously) to a norm-referenced approach to testing and a curve-based marking practice, the system can and does work serious injustices, requiring that some students "fail" and others be scored "average" in spite of their remarkable achievements and the fact that they have learned the material. These problems have not gone unnoticed. Beginning in the 1940's, increasing numbers of institutions at all levels of higher education began to experiment with innovative grading systems. This bibliography is not the first survey of the field of literature relating to innovative grading practices. Rather, the purpose of the present bibliography has been to update foregoing efforts and tap research sources that appear to have been neglected. It focuses on grading innovations at all levels of undergraduate higher education: universities, colleges, and community/junior colleges. Some valuable insights from secondary school studies have occasionally been included. A total of fifty-one reports, documents, and dissertations are included in this annotated bibliography. (Author/JDS)

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INNOVATIVE GRADING PRACTICES
AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Introduction

The traditional A-B-C-D-F grading system utilized by most colleges and universities to indicate student achievement has been a major focus of student and faculty dissatisfaction literally for decades. Further, when connected (consciously or unconsciously) to a norm-referenced approach to testing and a curve based marking practice, the system can and does work serious injustices, requiring that some students "fail" and others be scored "average" in spite of their remarkable achievements and the fact that they have learned the material. The irony in the utilization of the 'bell-shaped' curve -- that statistical reflection of random distribution due to random activity -- is harsh in an era when higher education is under attack to prove its productivity, for curve based grading practices at worst suggest education to be random activity reflected in a random distribution of achievement scores, or at best a rather cruel, archaic, and ineffective people sorting system (Hoyt, 1966) -- one which appears to be extraordinarily expensive in terms of both wasted money and wasted human potential.

Clearly, these problems have not gone unnoticed or untouched. Starting in the meritocractically oriented 1940s and 1950s, and gaining momentum under the egalitarian outlook and campus unrest of the 1960s, increasing numbers of institutions at all levels of higher education began to experiment (some timidly, others radically) with innovative grading systems. This trend shows little sign of abating in the late 1970s, receiving new emphasis by the demand on higher education to substantiate its claims, to be accountable for student learning, and to move in the direction of competency based performance oriented education.

With such a significant growth in experimentation with grading systems, it is not surprising that the literature describing such efforts has expanded with extraordinary rapidity. Thus, the present bibliography is not the first survey of the field. Caldwell (1973) has done an annotated review of research on grading systems of possible significance to junior colleges, while Quann (1970) and Collins and Nickel (1974) have reported major surveys of grading practices and trends at institutions of higher education. Moreover, specific marking systems which appear to be particularly popular, like pass-fail grading and computer grading, have received major bibliographic attention (Davidovicz, 1972; Pedrini and Pedrini, 1972; Levy and Fritz, 1972).

The purpose of the present bibliography has been to update foregoing efforts and tap research sources they appear to have neglected. It focused on grading innovations at all levels of undergraduate higher education: universities, colleges, and community-junior colleges. However, unusually valuable insights from secondary school studies have occasionally been included, especially when they have ventured into new areas as yet untried by those in higher education, or when such work was deemed

corroborative of similar experiments in colleges and universities. Further, a definite attempt was made to avoid duplicating the efforts of those bibliographies mentioned above. The aim here was to update their efforts and supplement them, the latter by tapping research document sources which the foregoing compilers have seriously neglected, sources of valuable but low visibility studies. Thus, dissertations and ERIC documents have of necessity received a disproportionate amount of attention in the present work.

Writing in Dateline '79: Heretical Concepts for the Community College, Arthur M. Cohen (1969, pp. 129-130) predicted that in the community college of 1979 there would be no grading-marking and no norm-referenced tests. When a student demonstrated his achievement of course objectives, he would be certified as competent, as able to perform the tasks for which the curriculum trained him. Obviously, competency-based performance-oriented grading systems have not swept through the community college movement like wild-fire (let alone the rest of higher education) and will not by 1979. Such fundamental changes in higher education rarely come so quickly. However, if a new trend is discernable in the extensive literature now available on grading innovations, it is that over the last five years institutions have begun in increasing numbers to move away from rather superficial attempts to solve the grading dilemma (e.g., pass-fail, credit-no credit) and to move towards in depth experiments. Those in depth experiments are ones of vital significance for they attack the core of the problem, the questions with which generations of students and faculty have wrestled: What are the purposes of grades? Do they support or hinder an educational institution's attempt to achieve its goals? What do grades mean in terms of learning, of student performance and competency? How well do they measure that learning? With the growth of significant efforts to answer these questions, the trend will most likely shift increasingly toward criterion-referenced competency-based performance-oriented marking systems. While Cohen's vision of grading in 1979 may be slower in coming than he surmised, its outlines are beginning to take shape in reality.

Terry H. Smith Wallace
10 August 1976

INNOVATIVE GRADING PRACTICES
AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

ERIC DOCUMENT (ED) numbers and University Microfilm order numbers are presented, whenever possible, to expedite the retrieval of information, especially of items not easily obtainable from other sources.

The AACRAO Survey of Grading Policies in Member Institutions. Washington, D. C.: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, 1971.

Proposed to delineate the nature and extent of changes from the traditional grading system, practices in accepting transfer credits from colleges with innovative grading systems, the rate and recency of change and the anticipated nature of systems in the near future. Many institutions indicated they are mixing innovative with traditional grading systems. However, responses to the survey suggested major changes in systems were accelerating.

Barthlow, R. L. Grade Point Average and Academic Probation in the Two-Year College. (ED 095 967)

Suggests a change from the fixed GPA standard used at many community colleges when determining academic standing to a developmental GPA standard for determining probation and dismissal. Claims such a system would allow the non-traditional student time to build himself up academically and that the technique would be in line with the open-door policy of community colleges. Gives no data to support system.

Bils, J. A. "The Relationship of Particular Secondary School Grading Systems to the Nature of the Organizational Systems and the presence of Individualization of Instruction." Doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1973. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 73-30,538)

Investigated 2 questions: Are certain grading systems associated with more "open" or "closed" organizational systems? And, do certain grading systems facilitate or retard individualized instruction? Grading systems with high differentiation and little personalized information were considered school-centered, while systems with the opposite characteristics were classified as student-centered. Discovered that student-centered grading systems are associated with energetic, open organizational systems which, in turn, correlated to greater individualization of instruction.

Burns, R. W. "The Practical Educational Technologist: Measuring Objectives and Grading." Educational Technology (September 30, 1968): 13-14.

Discusses the necessity (because instructors are expected to assign grades) of differentiating between the A, B, C, D and F levels of achievement when writing instructional objectives. Gives examples of multiple forms of the same objective written at different levels of achievement.

Caldwell, J. H. Current Research on Grading Systems of Possible Significance to Junior Colleges. (An Annotated Bibliography). Los Angeles: ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior College Information, 1973. (ED 071 650)

A first section presents the annotated bibliography; a second describes grading policies being utilized by 9 different community colleges.

Collins, J. R. and K. N. Nickel. A Study of Grading Practices in Institutions of Higher Education, 1974. (ED 097 846)

Provides information on the current grading, recording, and averaging practices of 544 institutions of higher education. Findings suggest: (1) institutions are experimenting with a wide variety of practices, (2) the grading systems studied were very diverse in nature, (3) most colleges use one or two types of non-traditional grades, (4) the trend is toward less punitive grading in higher education, and (5) as competency-based education grows, the traditional transcript GPA will lose its historical meaning.

Conary, F. M. Possible Causes of Student Failure: Lincroft, N. J.: Research Advisory, Brookdale Community College, No. 14, [n.d.]. Mimeographed

Attempts a comprehensive compilation of factors that could cause a student to fail in a given endeavor. Reviews factors in the areas of basic academic skills, work habits, career decisions, special skills, school, home, community, and peer group. Does so in hopes that educational program planners will consider these factors and attempt to avoid program elements that may lead to, or enhance them.

Davidovicz, H. M. Pass-Fail Grading - A Review. Hempstead, N. Y.: Hofstra University, Center for the Study of Higher Education, July 1972. (ED 068 049)

Reviews a 1968-1971 literature sample and finds that (1) student performance declines both in pass-fail courses and traditionally

evaluated courses once the student has taken the former, (2) students take pass-fail courses in order to ease their course work, (3) first-year students suffer most from pass-fail grading, (4) the elimination of failing grades from transcripts is increasing, (5) most institutions avoid problems with pass-fail by limiting the option, (6) students graded on pass-fail are less likely to get into the graduate school of their choice.

Diederich, P. B. Measuring Growth in English. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974. (ED 097 702)

Monograph presents a complete program outline to help departments institute logical, fair procedures for grading student essays. Sample of some of contents: "Factors in Judgment of Writing Ability," "The Effects of Bias," "Measuring Improvement in Writing," "Computing the Reliability of Essay Grades," and more.

Dugan, T. F. "The Effect of Two Community College Grading Systems Upon Selected Student Characteristics." Doctoral dissertation, The University of Arizona, 1974. Ann Arbor, Mich.; University Microfilm (Order No. 74-21,155).

Investigated the effects of a nonpunitive A-B-C grading system and a traditional A-B-C-D-F system on student anxiety, student grading preference, and academic preference. Found (1) neither system had a relationship to student anxiety or vice versa; (2) when given a choice, students were inclined to prefer the grading system they were most familiar with--they did not necessarily prefer a non-punitive over a traditional one; and (3) the non-punitive system did not increase academic performance.

Ebersole, J. F. A Study of the "In-Progress" Grade. Ed. D. Practicum, Nova University, March 1975. (ED 104 452)

Examines the use of the "In-Progress" (Y) Grade as added to the generally traditional grading policy of Harrisburg Area Community College (PA) in November 1971. The "Y" grade gives the student the option of repeating a course, not successfully completed the first time around, to obtain a passing grade. The study reviews the use of the "Y" grade over 3 1/2 years and whether students have benefited from its use. Reports the device as moderately successful.

Elsner, P. A. and C. W. Brydon. Nonpunitive Grading Practices and Policies. Oakland, California: Peralta Community College System, Office of Educational Services, January 1974. (ED 088 549)

Reviews the historical backgrounds of traditional and non-punitive grading, the national trends toward non-punitive grading innovations, the legal background of the grading issue (including local California regulations), and an analysis of the grading standards and practices of the 5 Peralta colleges.

Erickson, S. C. and B. Z. Bluestone. "Grading Evaluation." Memo to the Faculty (Center for Research Learning and Teaching). No. 46. October, 1971.

Discusses the variety of grading approaches, norm referenced and criterion referenced systems, the not always clear relationship between grades and learning, the problems involved in determining grades and the advantages and disadvantages of pass-fail and non-punitive systems. Suggests the grading dilemma will not be quickly solved.

Ford, B. W. "The Effects of Peer Editing/Grading on the Grammar-Usage and Theme-Composition Ability of College Freshmen." Doctoral dissertation, the University of Oklahoma, 1973. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 73-15,321)

Findings suggest "that the system of having Freshman students..... grade/edit each other's themes in English Composition.....can cause significantly greater gains in their grammar-usage ability as well as their theme composition ability than students whose themes were graded/edited by the course instructor."

Fotti, V. P. "The Use of a Sensitivity Training Program as an Approach to Modifying College Instructors' Grading Practices." Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Albany, 1973. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 73-31, 179).

Attempted to measure the use of an encounter tape experience (from the theoretical base of Rogers' [1969] support of the encounter experience) with college instructors with regard to grading practices. Discovered all members of the experimental group showed an increase in the grades they assigned. Results were considered beneficial and the program easily implemented at orientation sessions at the beginning of the year.

Glass, A. F. "A Comparison of the Traditional and Pass/Fail Grading Systems in Selected University Physical Education Activity Courses." Doctoral dissertation, Middle Tennessee State University, 1973. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 73-20,232).

Concluded that pass/fail grading does not increase student achievement, enhance attitude, or reduce anxiety.

Gold, R. M. and others. "Academic Achievement Declines Under Pass-Fail Grading." The Journal of Experimental Education Vol. 39 (Spring 1971): 17-21.

Describes an experiment (at SUNY, Cortland) to determine whether or not academic achievement is enhanced under pass-fail grading. Found the achievement of first-year students who took all of their courses on a pass-fail basis significantly lower than for controls who wanted but were denied pass-fail grading. Upper classmen allowed to take one course so graded were also significantly lower in achievement than controls who were denied the option. Further, "there was no compensatory improvement in the grades received in non-pass-fail courses."

Gottlieb, L. G. "An Experimental Study Using the Traditional Grading System with a Non-Fail Insurance Factor as a Motivating Device for Students with a Low Achievement Background." Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1975. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 75-28,276).

Reports on an experiment with low achieving eleventh and twelfth graders in which students completing all assignments were insured against failing grades. Discovered that students in the Treatment group finished more homework assignments and had less than half the failures of the Control group. Found students who were offered no-fail insurance achieved at a higher level than the control group on three post-tests, homework, classwork, notebook, extra credit work, attendance, and motivation.

"Grades." Newsletter of the Office of Instructional Development (Western Michigan University). 15 November 1974.

Discusses the spiraling GPA, traditional grading and alternatives, an honors/credit/no record option, and competency-based evaluation.

Harvey, J. M. "Student Self-Evaluation as an Alternative to Traditional Grading." Doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University, 1975. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 76-865).

Examined student self-evaluation by collecting, compiling and examining the philosophies motivating, and the results of, the various programs utilizing it. Found (1) evaluation of high achievers more closely matched teacher judgments than those of lower achievers; (2) evaluation was ineffective when

competition was emphasized, but more effective when cooperation was stressed; (3) a general trend for students to show higher achievement under self-evaluation than under teacher evaluation; (4) the acceptance of student evaluation by those who 'consume' school evaluations appeared to be a major obstacle to its acceptance as an alternative to the traditional system.

Head, James C. "A Study of the Effectiveness of an Individualized Instruction-Contract Grading Program in a College Algebra Class." Doctoral dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1974. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 75-12,445).

Compared "an individualized instruction-contract grading program with a lecture-discussion section in a College Algebra and Trigonometry class with respect to achievement and attitude." Found no significant difference between the two groups in either achievement or attitude. The work also analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of the individualized instruction - contract grading program.

Hensley, W. E. and P. W. Batty. A Comparison of Instructor and Peer Evaluations of Student Speeches in a Public Speaking Course. Paper presented at the Conference of the Directors of the Basic Speech Communication Course of Midwestern Universities, Feb., 1974. (ED 089 384)

Proposed "to examine the relationship of students' and instructors' evaluations, to discover which elements of evaluation seem to best predict the grade awarded by each group, and to compare the dimensions of evaluative judgments for students and instructors." Found both constituencies appear to come to very similar conclusions on speeches, but for different reasons.

Howell, D. L. "A Study of the Effects of Two Evaluation Reward Grading Systems on Cognitive Performance in College Biology." Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, 1971. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 72-10,619).

Sought "to determine if a qualitative and/or quantitative difference in cognitive performance proficiencies results from evaluating and rewarding college students as autonomous learners as compared to evaluating and rewarding them as intradependent team members." Found that (1) evaluation of students as intradependent team members does not significantly affect their achievement at various cognitive levels; (2) students prefer stated objectives to direct their study; (3) students will spend more time, working independently within a traditional evaluation system, than within the same system as intradependent team members; (4) most students consider grading of students as members of an intradependent team to be unfair.

Hoyt, Donald P. "College Grades and Adult Accomplishment. A Review of Research." Educational Record (Winter 1966): 70-75.

Suggests "that college grades have no more than a very modest correlation with adult success, no matter how defined" and discusses 3 major implications of this finding. First, it recommends that the true meaning of grades be clearly established--that researchers delineate what they do measure. Second, it suggests major alterations in the evaluation system to encourage instructors to grade on a variety of considerations, not only knowledge, and to replace the traditional grade transcript with a more comprehensive profile of student development. Finally, it notes that the primary use of grades as a criteria to admission for professional training is indefensible, and that better indicators of professional potential should be sought.

Johnson, J. T. "Evaluate Program, Not Grading." College and University Business, September 1970, pp. 77-78.

Summarizes policies that normally govern pass-fail grading at most colleges and universities, and notes some tentative conclusions on student use of, and student achievement under the option. Suggests pass-fail be utilized chiefly for grading general education courses.

Kropp, R. P. "An Evaluation of the Undergraduate Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory Grading Option at the Florida State University, 1969-1970.' Doctoral dissertation, The Florida State University, 1971. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 72-9209).

Found low utilization of the Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory (S-U) grading option. Discovered students usually used S-U system to avoid worry about a grade or to protect their GPA. Students reported more positive than negative aspects of the S-U option.

Leuba, R. J. Individualized Instruction and the Letter Grade System. Paper presented at the National Conference on Behavior Research and Technology in Higher Education, Nov. 1974. (ED 100 308)

Suggests traditional forms of grading are incompatible with individualized instruction and that, in place of frequent feedback mechanisms and traditional grading, a testing service be established "that would occasionally examine, rank, and report on students' academic ability." Feels concept is particularly well suited to individualized instruction.

Levy, L. B. and K. V. Fritz. Status Report on The Computer Grading of Essays. Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin University, Counseling Center, June 1972. (ED 069 759)

Reviews literature on computer utilization to grade English compositions. Discusses attempts to grade content as well as style.

Maxwell, James. A Study of the Results of the Implementation of a Non-Punitive Grading Practice at Mattatuck Community College. Ed. D. Practicum, Nova University, Oct. 1974. (ED 101 781)

Reports on elimination of plus and minus grades, the abolition of the "F" grade, and the liberalization of course withdrawal. Using "before" and "after" reform samples, the study found the new system had no significant effect in changing GPAs or the proportion of penalty and withdrawal grades to non-penalty grades. A significant difference was found in the persistence in college rate: the non-punitive grading system adversely affecting student registration for the second term (However, author reports threats to internal validity of study which call into question this last conclusion)..

Maynard, C. D. "A Study of the Pass-Fail Grading System, 1971-72 and 1972-73, at the University of West Florida." Doctoral dissertation, The University of Mississippi, 1975. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 76-459).

Found no significant difference between the mean GPA of pass-fail enrollees and a representative sample of regular enrollees. The pass/fail system seemed to be motivating students to take courses they would not otherwise have taken, but only a minority suggested it encouraged them to work harder.

Meisenholder, R. E. "An Assessment of Student Reaction to the Pass/Fail Grading Option at the University of Denver." Doctoral dissertation, University of Denver, 1971. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 71-21,910).

Found that students view their pass/fail courses less seriously than their other courses, that their achievement levels tend to decline in pass/fail courses. Student reasons for selecting the pass/fail option were those commonly noted as its purposes and objectives.

Morishima, J. K. and others. Acceptability of Non-Traditional Grading: Views of College and University Admission Officers and Prospective Employees. Seattle: Washington University, Office of Institutional Educational Research, Dec. 1972. (ED 077 364)

Respondents noted relative acceptance of various systems. Also describes kinds of supplementary information desired by some, and how academic records are treated. Returns were seriously deficient

from graduate departments and employees surveyed, thus damaging validity of some of the conclusions.

McDonald, W. V. What Do We Do When We Do What We Do - And Should We? Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, April 1974. (ED 090 565)

Grading alone in composition can be misleading. Suggests that a written statement about the student's writing ability -- both strengths and weaknesses -- should be included in assigning a grade.

Newcomb, L. H. "The Effects of Contract Grading on Student Performance." Doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1973. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 73-26,880).

Investigated the effect of contract grading on student performance (final course grades, attitudes toward course, amount of time devoted to course, readings completed, and student perceptions of how much course fulfilled their needs). Discovered no significant differences on any of the foregoing measures of performance (except final course grades, and those only in a second semester replication).

Otto, D. J. A Study of the Pass/Fail Grading System. Edmonton, Alberta: Alberta University, Office of Institutional Research and Planning, 1972. (ED 077 472)

Alberta's experience and pass/fail literature indicate the system does not appear to motivate learning, does not seem to motivate exploration outside of student's major, does seem to encourage laxness in performance.

Pascal, C. E. and G. L. Geis. An Outline of Methods of Grading Student Performance. Montreal: McGill University, Center for Learning and Development, March 1974. (ED 100 967)

Summarizes some of the issues raised by supporters and by critics of traditional grading, pass-fail grading, and a mastery learning model of grading. Suggests principles to which any system should adhere.

Pedrini, B. C. and D. T. Pedrini. Pass-Fail Grading: Summary and Tentative Conclusions. 1972. (ED 080 073)

Available data references are reported concerning pass-fail techniques.

Quann, C. J. "Survey Shows Variations in Grading Trends." College and University Business, XLIX (September 1970), pp. 78-79.

Summarizes a survey of grading options at selected 4-year colleges and universities, considering pass/fail, pass/no pass, satisfactory/unsatisfactory, credit/no credit, honors/pass/fail, pass/D or F, and 'other.' Pass/fail appeared the more prominent trend in new grading approaches, but the credit/no credit option--eliminating the idea of failure--seemed to be an emerging pattern, one to be watched.

Reid, W. L. "A Comparison of the Effects of Pass-Fail Grading Versus the Effects of ABCDF Grading on Achievement, Attitudes and Values." Doctoral dissertation, The University of Iowa, 1970. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 71-5810).

The investigation involved 85 students divided into two comparable college courses (Educational Psychology) taught by the same instructor. Found no significant differences in achievement, attitudes, and values when a pass-fail system was substituted for a traditional ABCDF grading system.

Scully, M. G. "No Grades, No Credits, But 40 'Competency Units.'" The Chronicle of Higher Education, 3 February 1975, p. 5.

Describes the competency-based Liberal Arts program Alverno College (Wisconsin) developed in 1973. Liberal Arts competencies are defined in terms of processes the student can master and the college can measure. Students amass competency-level units indicating how well they can perform the tasks the college believes every graduate must possess.

Smith, L. G. Non-Punitive Grading in California Junior Colleges. 1969. (ED 035 409)

Briefly reports on a survey of Presidents and/or Deans of 94 California community colleges on what percentage of their faculty utilized a non-punitive A, B, C, W (withdrawal) grading system. Discovered growing interest in the system and increasing use. Discusses pros and cons of non-punitive grading.

Taylor, F. A. Student Evaluation System. Texas City, Texas: College of the Mainland, August 1969.

Describes the A, B, C, I, WP, WI performance based grading system adopted by College of the Mainland. Gives the history of the system and its philosophical rationale. Explains how course planning and instructional objectives are integrated with the system and its implementation.

Taylor, G. O. "Making the Grade Without D's and F's: Some Effects of Non-punitive Grading at Selected Colleges." Doctoral dissertation, Montana State University, 1974. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 74-23-482).

Describes some of the effects of the elimination of D and F grades at Flathead Valley Community College (Montana), University of Oregon and Grinnell College (Iowa). Discovered that (1) academic standards were neither weakened or strengthened by the change; (2) students preferred the non-punitive system, while faculty ranked the ABCDF system over it; (3) most respondents attributed no appreciable academic changes to non-punitive grading; (4) the contention that it was easier to earn C's with D's and F's eliminated was not supported by grade distribution; (5) though graduate school admissions chances were not negatively affected by the change to a non-punitive system, students were sometimes required to submit additional records at about 25% of the reporting institutions.

Taylor, H. "Student Reaction to the Grade Contract." Journal of Educational Research. Vol. 64 (March 1971): 311-314.

Describes an effort at Washington State University in 1968 "to assess student opinion in a senior educational measurement and evaluation course." Students viewed the contract system as a fairer one for assigning grades than conventional techniques. However, no significant differences were discovered between the treatment and control groups on the validity of the course examination, knowledge of the course objectives, or the quality of course standards.

Vivo, F. M. "An Investigation of the Credit-No Credit Grading Option Used by Undergraduates at Michigan State University." Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 1974. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 75-14,855).

Suggests few students use the option in their major study area, but many use it to satisfy 'outside college' requirements. Mean GPAs among credit-no credit users were consistently higher than the means of non-users in each class (except for freshmen). Suggests the option should be limited to upper-classmen and that efforts should be made to make it policy-wise a more attractive grading option.

Wagner, E. N. "The Impact of Composition Grading on the Attitudes and Writing Performance of Freshman English Students." Doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 1975. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 76-614).

Experiment with two treatment groups: one receiving letter grades for its composition and one receiving none. Both received identical treatment in other ways, including the use of positive comments on all papers. Found that in the presence of positive comments, the presence or absence of letter grades does not significantly affect change in attitude or writing performance as measured by study.

Warren, J. R. College Grading Practices: An Overview. Report 9. Washington, D. C.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, March 1971.

A major summary of literature up to 1971. Attempts a comprehensive review of the literature examining grading practices, uses of grades and their influence on the students, faculty and administration. Suggests that, in 1971, the liveliest issues in the debate were not the fundamental ones of what do grades represent? What are the purposes of grades? Are they meeting those purposes? Are there better ways to meet them? The concerns in 1971 were more superficial, oriented toward the number of grade categories, grade prediction, etc.

Welcker, M. B. "A Study of the Undergraduate Credit/No-Credit Grading Option at the University of Utah." Doctoral dissertation, University of Utah, 1973. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 73-29,391).

Analyzes the conditions of use of the credit/no-credit grading option. Found that student reasons for selecting the option were not significantly different from the basic objectives officially established for its use. However, mean grades achieved by students in credit/no-credit courses were significantly below the mean grades of those being traditionally graded in the same courses. Further, the option did not appear to be motivating students to take heavier course loads.

Wirth, S. K. "A Paraphrasing Strategy in the Content Grading of Essay Examinations by Computer." Doctoral dissertation, The University of Connecticut, 1972. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 72-32,195).

Studied a method for reducing the problem of scoring essay exams for subject matter by providing a computer with a scoring key developed from expert information. Attempted to ascertain which method would enable computer to examine content as competently as a human judge. Found that "intercorrelations of human judges with the computer were lower than those among human judges" -- in effect the human grader was better.

Yarber, W. L. "A Comparison of the Relationship of the Grade Contract and Traditional Grading Methods to Changes in Knowledge and Attitude during a Venereal Disease Instructional Unit." Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1973. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms (Order No. 73-21,061).

Study done at the Madison Consolidated Junior High School in 1972 found neither grading system fostered significantly greater learning, more positive learning, nor greater retention of knowledge learned. Concluded that the grade contract method is as effective as the traditional.

Zimmerman, R. R. and T. D. Halbert. Individualization of Instruction: Evaluation--A Roadblock. Education Monograph No. 5. Missoula, Montana: Montana University, Division of Educational Research and Services, August 1970. (ED 083 163)

Questions use of grading as an evaluation of student performance. Suggests an alternative approach (Complete-Incomplete) to meet what authors believe are the proper criteria for evaluation: (1) facilitation of self-evaluation, learning, and teaching, (2) utilization of instructional objectives, (3) provision for feedback on problems of curriculum development and educational policy, (4) production of appropriate records.

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