

A Word about FOIP within the Context of Peer Feedback and Self-reflection

Grading: Whose job is it?

In Alberta, grading and reporting on student achievement and performance are the responsibility of certificated teachers. Principals have a duty to ensure that evaluation is fair. Teachers and leaders also have a responsibility to ensure that the privacy of students is respected. Individual student achievement needs to be clearly communicated to the student and to their parents or legal guardians, but not to other students or parents. Issues can arise when privacy is not adequately respected or the intent of the assessment practice is not clearly communicated.

In recent years, a substantial research base has emerged supporting the value of formative assessment, or assessment for learning. Within formative assessment contexts, students can provide feedback to each other and students can reflect on their own work; however, peer feedback and student self-reflection should not be combined with summative assessment marks for the purposes of grading and reporting.

What rights do students have to privacy related to their marks and grades?

Teachers and schools have a legal responsibility to ensure that respectful grading practices include respecting students' right to privacy. The rights are part of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP Act). The Service Alberta website includes a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section related to FOIP.

<http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/foip/documents/fag-school-jurisdictions.pdf>

Two questions and answers quoted from this source relate directly to grading practices and student privacy issues.

43. Can students' grades and detentions be posted in the hallway or classroom?

- Posting students' grades or detentions may be a breach of privacy. The educational benefits need to be taken into consideration. In a Grade 1 class, a poster with student names and stickers for each book read by a student is entirely appropriate. By contrast, posting Math 30 exam results with the students' names in the hallway has no educational benefit, and so would be an unauthorized disclosure of personal information.

47. Can students mark each other's tests?

- Personal information of students is disclosed when students mark each other's tests.
- This disclosure is permitted when it is done for an educational purpose. Group learning activities may be used in the classroom, and students can learn from critiquing the work of other students.
- Schools should consider the merits of this practice in the classroom and use it at the discretion of teachers.
- If this method of marking is convenient, but not educational, it should not be used.

What makes peer feedback a useful learning strategy?

Students can access more frequent, timely feedback when peers are part of the feedback process, as they have access to more sources of feedback. With support from teachers, students can learn to provide specific feedback that will help peers to improve their work.

Research shows that feedback has the greatest impact on learning when it is not graded but consists of specific verbal or written feedback. One way to avoid privacy issues related to peer feedback is to ensure that feedback is structured as specific verbal or written comments with no grades attached, and to remove numeric headings when rubrics are used for peer feedback.

Providing feedback to peers also develops students' skills in self-reflection, which is a highly effective learning strategy.

What makes student self –reflection a useful learning strategy?

Effective self-reflection practices in classrooms enhance learning prior to summative assessment, or provide support for goal setting for future learning after summative assessment. Simple tasks and quizzes designed to provide a student with feedback about progress towards their learning goals can be useful self-reflection opportunities; there is no learning benefit in having other students know the results.

Self-reflection is fundamental to developing intrinsic motivation for learning, supports lifelong learning, and is itself a learning tool (sometimes called metacognition). Teachers' support, including providing exemplars of student work, can help students identify strengths, areas to work on, and personal learning strategies. Sharing this process with others; including peers, parents and teachers, further supports learning. Student led conferences are an example of an excellent learning practice that includes student self-reflection and goal setting.

How can teachers combine effective learning strategies with respectful grading practices?

It is important for students and their parents or guardians to know that the teacher is responsible for grading and reporting of student progress towards learning goals. They need to be confident that this information is kept confidential and used by school staff to enhance future learning. At the same time, effective research-based strategies such as peer feedback and self-reflection can be effectively implemented in all classrooms to support student learning.

Teachers and leaders can consider the following two questions when planning to use peer-feedback and student self-reflection.

- How is this practice enhancing student learning?
- How have I ensured reasonable privacy for students?

Clear communication to students and their parents based on these two questions can prevent misunderstanding, and ensure that effective learning practices such as peer assessment and self- reflection are more likely to be supported by the entire learning community.

References

O'Connor, K.(2012). *Fifteen fixes for broken grades: A repair kit*. Toronto, ON: Pearson.

William, D.(2011). *Embedded formative assessment*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Alberta Education Documents

Guide to Education

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3653320/guide-to-education-2017-2018.pdf>

School Act

http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=s03.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779801459

Teaching Quality Standard (2018)

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3739620/standardsdoc-tqs- fa-web-2018-01-17.pdf>

Leadership Quality Standard (2018)

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3739621/standardsdoc-lgs- fa-web-2018-01-17.pdf>