There are many different tools and levels of engagement that teachers use to grade students. Often times, a grade is attached to an assignment or test, and that seems to identify that student. They become known as an average, below average, or above average student. However, many teachers would agree that a grade does not truly identify the full academic potential and knowledge base of a student.

Grades are typical in academic settings. It is necessary to monitor and assess what students know. In order to be consistent across grade levels, schools, districts, and states, we have all come to use a standard grading system. This grading system typically consists of A, B, C, D, and U, and it goes from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. I feel that a grade can represent what a child is able to do on a particular assignment or a collection of assignments to show growth. However, I do not feel it measures all of the child’s knowledge. Many children learn differently and may not be able to express themselves creatively through traditional assignments. This is why a traditional grade is not always a true representation of a child’s ability.

Additionally, I feel that every task completed by a child is not meant to be graded. Some assignments should just be used as diagnostic and formative assessments to see where a child is in their learning. When monitoring and tracking a student’s growth, it isn’t always necessary to put a grade on the assignment. Sometimes if a student is still forming their knowledge on a concept and they receive a bad grade it may affect their confidence academically. My cooperating teacher (CT) has discussed this concept in depth many times. She may give the students numerous tasks, but often times it just helps her with planning. She uses the data from the assignment to form small groups and guide instruction. When she feels she has taught a concept, and taught it well, she may give a graded assignment for students to complete. When students get below a 70 on assignments, she reteaches the content in small group until students can get a passing score. My CT is more concerned with how well the students
understand the concepts rather than the number of grades that exist in the grade book. Even though teachers are required to have a certain number of grades in the grade book each semester, I feel I share the same value as my CT. Yes, we have to provide grades for various reasons, but it is important to make sure the students understand concepts. If a student receives a failing grade, it will be my goal to see why they struggled on the assignment and make changes as needed.

When grading, I feel that there are so many factors to take into account. One such factor would be where it was completed. If students complete an assignment for homework I would have to consider how much support they received on the assignment. Often times, this is why students receive no more than a participation grade for homework. It is hard to measure what a student knows if they receive a lot of help from other sources. It is also important to know what the assignment measures. You want to ensure that there are a variety of assignments that address different standards so that if a student was stronger in one area and weaker in another the grade will balance out. When completing report card grades, it is important to take into account the students’ performance the whole semester. Often times this will be reflected in the varying assignments.

It is important to keep in mind the purpose of grading but we shouldn’t get so caught up on always grading everything just for the sake of the practice. Our first priority should be to make sure the students understand what they are being taught. This will ensure the successful completion of assignments and tests and lead to higher grades.