

School Practices/Policies That May Contribute to School Failure for Selected Students

1. Grading/school policies have been based primarily on a SORTING and SELECTING model of education. A huge paradigm shift is needed. (See handout on this topic.) Use of COMPUTERS has MADE the grading PROBLEM WORSE!
2. Historically schools were organized and operated on the ASSUMPTION that STUDENTS HAD A SUPPORT SYSTEM AT HOME; it is easier for students born on 3rd base to reach home plate (achieve school success) than for those born on 1st base or for some not even born in the ball field!
3. Historically, we have operated schools on the assumption that IF STUDENTS HAD TO HAVE SUPPORT (e.g. extra time to complete a course, re-take tests, re-do papers, etc.), then THERE HAD TO BE A PENALTY, such as averaging their low grade with the new grade. This assumption was based on the belief that “fairness is equated with sameness” and schools were responsible for preparing students for the “real” world. One might ask: Is the primary purpose of middle and high schools to be the gatekeeper for future employers? If so, how should school personnel best perform this task and report results?
4. We have built grading policies and practices primarily on the THEORY that “FEAR OF FAILURE” WILL MOTIVATE students.
5. Often we use a “DEFICIT MODEL” OF EVALUATION – that is, we focus more on what students did not do than what they did; for example, consider grading scales with a range of zero to 70 for failing and a 30-point range for passing.
6. TO GAIN ADDITIONAL LEARNING TIME, historically students have HAD TO FAIL FIRST. Essentially we institutionalized a “take class, fail class, repeat class” model of instruction.