Elementary School Teachers' Perspectives on Report Card Grading

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Abstract

Elementary School Teachers' Perspectives on Report Card Grading

Jessica Greiss

Report card grading in the Quebec education system is an inevitable process that all teachers must endure. This study explored ten elementary teachers' perspectives on their grading and report card systems through semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire. The two main research questions were: 1) How do elementary school teachers formulate their report card grades? and 2) What do teachers believe these grades are intended to communicate? Through analyzing the teachers' responses, the inaccuracy of report card grades came to light, as it has for decades prior. It is evident that teachers are trying to use report card grades to represent the whole child's experience in the classroom, while including a multitude of factors in their grades, also known as 'hodgepodge grading' (Brookhart, 1991). This type of grading makes it difficult for parents and students to understand what the grade symbolizes in relation to the children's learning. Furthermore, teachers do not agree on what report card grades should be representing – thus creating more confusion for parents and a greater gap amongst teachers' perspectives. This study complements the research that explores the reliability and validity of report card grades based on the 100 percent scale.

Keywords: reliability, validity, hodgepodge grading, academic achievement, report cards

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To all of my students, past, present and future: I thank you for trusting me with your academic year. I hope that I can be open and honest with you about your learning in my classroom while being able to highlight all of your progress, efforts and successes alongside your struggles. I pray for bright futures, for each and every one of you, in a world that knows that you are worth more than a percentage grade could ever possibly explain. You are the light of all my days and I will never stop trying to make school a better place for you.

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but you held on with unwavering support. You have played the biggest part in my academic

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biggest cheerleaders.

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Introduction

Personal narrative of grading experiences

During my first year teaching, I learned to cope with teaching multiple grade levels and varying class assignments to meet individual needs and interests. The smiles and 'ah-ha' moments children demonstrated were undeniably the most cherished moments that this experience brought me. All the things I had been taught in my Bachelor's Degree in Education came into play as I navigated my new position with motivation and utter joy. I had been given the amazing opportunity of working at an elementary school with Grades one, two, four and six all within the same week. Given that I taught four different grade levels out of seven, and different subjects to each of them, you can imagine what my lesson planning consisted of: a lot of trial and error, patience, lack of patience, messiness, laminating, game-making, improvising, and self-teaching of countless topics. All of that was part of the fun though. I was young, new to the profession, and full of ideas and energy with immense desire to grow and learn. What could go wrong?

As my first term was coming to an end, and administrators were giving us our deadline for report card grades, I suddenly experienced a weight so heavy that no Education program could prepare you for it. *Grades*. I thought about assessment during the first term, of course, but I was terrified that I did not have enough grades, enough evidence to prove each child's grade, or accurate evidence of learning. I was scared to do it wrong. By wrong, I mean not giving my students a fair grade for all the hard work and learning that had taken place within our weeks together. I did not even know all the names of the students in each of my classes yet, so how could I be in charge of something so important when I felt so unprepared? Nobody will tell you how many assignments or tests you need to have per term. Nobody will teach you how to grade

that interesting, project-based assignment that took the students all term to complete. Nobody visits your classroom to tell you that progress or product should be the main focus of your students' grades. Nobody walks around with a whistle and demands that you test children on every subject you teach. The truth is that grading is complex and dependent on a large array of factors. There is no magic answer and most individuals have different opinions about grades. Feeling desperate and terrified to carry the responsibility of each child's fragile self-esteem, motivation, parental approval/disapproval, general feelings about school, and resiliency in my shaky hands, I did what I could in the short amount of time I had. I asked teachers what they thought the best grading approach was.

I was both disappointed and relieved with what I found. I was disappointed because as a teacher, I found that we were collectively doing more harm than good with our current grading practices. I was relieved because I realized I could not possibly be approaching my report cards the "wrong" way, since I discovered that there was no one way. I was only doing the best that I knew at the time, with hopes of improving for the better. I truly believe that most teachers are doing the best they can.

I had teachers who provided me with the advice that for the first term report card, I should base my grades on what the students "earned" the previous year. *Well, that's easy, I thought. I'll just copy all their grades from the previous report card.* The problem with that is four months had passed since then, and children grow and develop at expeditious rates. Never mind the fact that with each new grade level comes several new, more difficult concepts to learn that most certainly do not warrant the same grade as the year before. It was not something I was about to do as I do not think that learning and knowledge are stable across years of education. I continued on my quest for an answer I could agree with.

I had teachers who taught my students previously tell me that a student whom I graded with a 70% in one subject needed to be boosted higher because "they are smarter than that." Similarly, a child whom I graded with a 90% in one subject needed to be lowered because "he struggles more than that normally." *Well, that's convenient, I thought. Let's just make up grades because we feel a child deserves something different than what their work is demonstrating.* However, this child did or did not meet the expectations of this particular assignment, regardless of what their conjectured general intelligence across the curriculum is. So wait a minute, does that mean teachers are supposed to make up grades based on how smart a child normally is? What does that even mean? If a child is, on average, an 80% student in math, that means they should receive 80% across all math content, every report card, every time?

I had teachers tell me that I could not give out 100% on the report cards because then the student would have nothing to work towards for the rest of the year. *Well, that's helpful, I thought. It gives me one less percentage to worry about.* The problem is that some children may very well understand 100% of the material for a given topic. *Isn't that the point? I wondered.* When I brought that up as a response, I got replies such as "Well, then you have to leave them at a 100% for the rest of the year. Parents and administrators will wonder why they have suddenly decreased on the next term report card. You will have about 5% leeway." What this implies is that teachers not only look to previous year report cards for suggested grades for term one, they should also have the impression that learning is fixed for the duration of their teaching year. I could not understand this line of reasoning. It quite literally added to the weight I was already carrying for these report cards. This technically means that whatever grade a child gets in grade one sets the tone for the rest of their academic life in elementary school? A first grade child, at the age of six or seven years, would receive grades that would impact them for the rest of their

learning experience. Clearly, grades are not always representative of what students have learned.

One last example to add to this new teacher revelation is this: in my grade four class, there is a wonderful little girl who, despite her learning difficulties, strives to be like her peers in every way. With her adapted Individual Education Plan (IEP), she is granted access to a computer for written work instead of writing it by hand because hand-writing makes her very tired and she has difficulty with spelling. I had given the class an assignment that involved a craft and a writing piece and told them we would be hanging them outside the class on the walls. She begged me to let her write it by hand so that it would look like everyone else's on the wall. Of course, I let her and reminded her that she was more than welcome to use the computer at any point if it became too much for her. This girl tried so hard that she even went beyond the one page requirement. Two pages later, tired eyes and a beautiful craft attached, I was told by another teacher that I had to fail her because her work was not at a grade four level. I disagreed, of course, as even though her writing was amateur for her age, it was above her normal ability and I thought this should be recognized. She also completed a page more than her peers, because of her high engagement and motivation for this assignment. We do not count spelling in English, which is a big concern for her normally. Her words were legible, she used inventive spelling in an accurate way that allowed for understanding of her writing, and her ideas were clearly indicated. Based on the rubric that I created for the entire class, she would have lost most marks in the category of sentence complexity, as her sentences were simple (3-4 words in each). But she would not have failed. *Well, that's devastating, I thought. Fail children without being convinced that they deserve a failing grade.* In addition, I was told that in order for her to receive a modified IEP and the curriculum modifications she needs, she first needed to fail and I needed to "turn off" my emotions and get on with it. So we give children a failing grade that tells them

their progress does not matter despite their struggles, all in our efforts to *help them?* Once again, I did not understand. This was one of the more impactful experiences I had with grades because it was this conversation that really led me to think about what a grade actually *represents*, and how it is interpreted by its audience. I do not know what the "right" answer is, but I do know that someone needs to figure it out. There has to be a more effective, more accurate and more positive way to let students know what they are mastering and what they are struggling with.

To a large degree, teachers are given much freedom in the type of style they use when teaching their students. Some prefer a more traditional approach, where students sit in rows at their individual desks and learn from the teacher. Others take on a more progressive approach, where students work in groups and collaborate with the teacher during their learning. Every teacher is given the opportunity to explore and choose a style that fits them best, and that helps them be the best teachers they can be. Teachers also appear to be given much freedom in the type of assessment they use when grading their students. As seen through my interactions, teachers grade students in a variety of different ways while taking into account a variety of different factors. Throughout the year, summative and formative assessments are in the hands of the teacher. Some people would argue that this is for the better, and that report card grades based on these assessments and evaluations create a trustworthy image of what each child is learning throughout their education experiences. I am here to tell you that I disagree strongly. Based on my recent experiences, it is clear that grades do not always communicate actual learning.

In order to situate my project within the research on teacher evaluation practices, I present a literature review on studies aimed at: a) unraveling what a grade represents to teachers and students, b) understanding teachers' grading practices and c) examining the possible consequences of grades and student impacts.

Literature Review

Grading as an assessment practice

What is a grade supposed to represent?

Brookhart (1993) explored teachers' grading practices in relation to what grades were intended to communicate, and the consequences of this communication. When a teacher is going through the process of assigning a grade, they are reflecting on the type of communication that is sent out through grades. Grades represent different levels of student knowledge and learning experiences according to research. Brookhart (2011) discusses how school administrators and teachers should start talking about grades and what they mean to each school. She identifies the struggles of this topic for teachers and administrators alike, but warns against letting the conversation get side-tracked by the overwhelming questions of rubrics versus no rubrics, percentages versus letter grades, tests versus project based learning, etc. Brookhart (2011), Guskey and Bailey (2010) and Cox and Olsen (2009) agree that the most important component of this conversation is identifying what a grade is intended to represent, and to which audience it is intended for. Until this part of the conversation has been teased apart and faculty members are on the same page, progress in the domain of grading and assessment cannot occur. There needs to be a consensus from all individuals involved in the assessment of students so that everyone can be following the same criteria.

According to several studies including, but not limited to, McMillan and Nash (2000), Cross and Frary (1999), Frary, Cross and Weber (1993), and Brookhart (1993), each teacher has their own idea of what a grade is supposed to represent and they demonstrate these differences by including varying factors in their distribution of grades. This practice is also known as "hodgepodge grading" (Brookhart, 1991), and it causes issues in validity and reliability of grades

due to the discrepancies amongst school boards and individual schools. At the root of the issue are the inconsistent ideas of what grades should represent.

Teachers: Non-achievement and achievement factors within grades

According to these various studies, teachers were found to consider many factors when assigning final grades to students. Randall and Engelhard (2009) define classroom achievement as academic performance based on evaluations of tests, projects and assignments that are directly related to specific objectives in relation to mastery of content. Some teachers believe that the only thing that should be assessed and accounted for in a grade is a student's performance and level of proficiency in a specific skill or subject (Randall & Engelhard, 2009). This would fall under "achievement" factors.

Some studies found that teachers were considering the quality and completion of tasks unrelated to actual achievement. Factors such as homework, punctuality, notebook organization, and participation were granted a fair weight of their students' final grade (McMillan & Nash, 2000; Fledman, Alibrandi & Kropf, 1998; Bursuck et al., 1996; Stiggins, Frisbie & Griswold, 1989). This would fall under "non-achievement" factors. Still, some teachers were found to take this a step further, and believed that even prosocial or disruptive behavior should be part of a student's final grades (Cizek, Robert & Fitzgerald, 1995; Frary et al., 1993). The study conducted by Frary et al. (1993) indicated that 31% of teachers believed in having a behavior component contribute to final grades. Teachers were also found to take a student's attitude into account, especially when it came to borderline pass/fail scenarios (Stiggins et al., 1989). Other teachers think that grades should reflect progress and growth throughout the year. Improvement and personal growth are seen as the goals with this mindset, whereas final products are deemed less significant (Tomlinson, 2001).

Despite suggested research that states students should be graded based on the achievement factors alone, teachers from various studies have perceived this recommended practice as irrelevant to their needs (Brookhart, 1991; Manke & Loyd, 1990; Stiggins et al., 1989). Some teachers believe that a grade is multifaceted, whereby academic achievement is only one side of it and that effort, including following rules and trying hard despite adversity, is the other side (Brookhart, 1994). Based on the literature review Brookhart (1994) completed, it was found that elementary teachers were more likely to include effort and progression when assigning grades, based on observations and conversations with their students, but some high school teachers were also found to do the same (Frary et al., 1993; Stiggins et al., 1989).

According to measurement theorists, a reasonable compromise for this type of grading practice would be to offer two separate grades on report cards: one that measures solely achievement, and the other that measures effort (Brookhart, 1994). It was found that achievement grades were deemed to be more impactful than effort grades when it came to factors such as honor roll, higher education admissions, parental approval and extra curriculum activities (Brookhart, 1994). If research recommends only including achievement factors for grades (see Manke & Loyd, 1990; Stiggins et al., 1989), and feedback from parents seems to be in favor of achievement grades, why do teachers include effort and work habits in their overall grades at all? And how do they represent them within a report card final grade? We know that report card grades are an averaged percentage based on numerous assessments. When students and parents see one percentage for each subject on their report card, they cannot possible know which part of that grade stands for achievement, and which part stands for non-achievement components.

Validity and reliability of grades

This leads us to the question of how reliable and valid grades are in our education system.

According to Airasian (2005) and Cizek (2009), validity of grading practices refers to the extent to which grades are relevant and accurate in drawing conclusions about a student's level of proficiency. Reliability, in the same light, refers to the stability and consistency of information that depicts student knowledge (Airasian, 2005). Smith (2003) suggested teachers ask the question: do I have enough information about what my students know in this particular subject in order to make a fair conclusion? In line with this suggestion, Airasian (2005) and Cizek (2009) mention that teachers should consider many different forms of evidence when providing grades, and not rely solely on one single assessment. With this in mind, it is critical that we examine the effectiveness of our traditional percentage report cards today as *percentage* grades play a large part in these issues of reliability and validity.

According to Guskey (2015), assessment in percentage grades is directly linked to the quality of teaching provided to each student. When students are taught thoroughly and are offered plenty of opportunity to practice new skills while demonstrating their knowledge, tests and assessments are more likely to be easier to master. In contrast, students may be taught poorly and have less opportunity to practice and explore deeply. Therefore tests and assessments may be more difficult to master. Students who score a 90% might have had an easier time achieving this grade due to good teaching practice, compared to a student who scores 70% due to poor-quality teaching. Many factors can impact the relationship of skills mastered or level of proficiency and assessment outcomes. Teachers cannot necessarily observe or judge these factors. The point is that some of these factors are not in the student's control, thus rendering grades even less telling of achievement and mastery of skills (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). We cannot assume a direct relationship, then, between percentage score on a test and the level of content learned because of this ambiguity, yet we do. Furthermore, we attempt at averaging multiple meaningless

percentage scores and deliver a foreign amount onto a report card, in the name of demonstrating just how much students have learned.

Percentage grades pose more issues in that the 100 point scale system is built in a way that puts almost two-thirds of its scale at a failing level (Guskey, 2013). By creating the minimum passing grade of 60%, 60 of the 100 point scale is working against students. On top of this, it is very difficult, and very subjective, to place students on one of these varying levels of success or failure. Back in 1912, when percentage grades made their initial appearance in the field of educational assessment, Starch and Elliot explored the accuracy of percentages. 147 English teachers evaluated identical student papers and the results were a clear demonstration of how inaccurate percentage grades and grading strategies are amongst teachers. Percentage grades ranged from 50-97% for one paper, and 64-98% for a second paper (Starch & Elliot, 1912). The reason for these large discrepancies has remained the same over decades, that is, hodgepodge grading (Brookhart, 1991). Teachers were found to be assessing the papers based on their own criteria for "success", such as delivering a clear message to the reader, proper punctuation, grammar and spelling, neatness of work, and writing style, all to various degrees (Starch & Elliot, 1912). One might think that these studies were done long ago, and much has changed in education today. More recently, Brimi (2011) replicated the study done by Starch and Elliot (1912) except this time, the teachers received training in assessment to see if it would have an impact. It did not. 73 teachers participated in the study, and grades for a student's writing assignment ranged from 50%-96%. This finding suggests that training in assessment methods is less important than a teacher's personal beliefs about assessment. Even teachers who receive training in assessment experience difficulty with reaching validity and reliability across large samples (Guskey, 2013).

It is only natural that, with 100 levels of proficiency available, it becomes increasingly difficult to pinpoint where each student best places (Guskey, 2013). Teachers have defended this point with the counterclaim that a majority of them do not even use 0%-60%. Well, the big question then is, what is the point of this system if 60% of the levels are going to be ignored anyway? The point is, it creates this illusion of precision, when in reality it is not any more precise than a 1-4 integer scale, or a "proficient, above average, average, below average" scale (Guskey, 2013). As a matter of fact, it is more reliable to identify students on a scale from 1-4 than it is to place them on a percentage scale. The reason for this is because in order to be as precise as the percentage system intends to be, each of the 100 levels of proficiency would have to be based on specific predetermined criteria. Who decides what differentiates a 69% grade from a 73% grade? What is each percentage actually representative of?

On another note, if a student is generally an above average student, but has a bad day and fails one test, chances are he will still be considered an above average student, once all of the evidence is considered. On the contrary, when using percentages, a failed test could be detrimental to the success of a student. Due to the nature of a percentage grading system, averaging of grades is not uncommon. Rather, it is mandatory in a system like this. One atypically low score can skew a student's average grade so drastically that they may not be able to recover from it. Since grades are *supposed* to communicate level of achievement and mastery of content (Brookhart, 1991), our grading system should not paint our students at their worst and most atypical level of proficiency based on punitive measures such as grade averaging in a percentage scale system. It creates discrepancies in validity and reliability of students' knowledge and mastery of content in cases like these. It is a faulty system.

Teachers' experiences and concerns about grading

Discrepancies in grading practices

According to McMillan et al., (2002), there is much research on secondary level teachers' beliefs on grading practices and how they combine achievement and non-achievement factors as a basis for final grades. Less has been studied on elementary teachers and how they weigh these factors for report card grades. Therefore, they researched assessment practices across 900 teachers within elementary schools (grades 3-5). The famous "hodgepodge" grading phenomenon was present in their study, although they found that at the elementary school level, teachers were less likely to penalize students with disruptive behavior and were less likely to compare their grades to grades from other teachers at the same level. The most interesting finding, for the purpose of this paper, was that there was a larger variance amongst teachers working in the same school compared to between-school variance. This means that even within the same school building, teachers' opinions and beliefs of assessment varied on a large scale. Cizek, Fitzgerald and Rachor (1995a) and McMillan and Nash (2000) also found this great within-school variance from their studies. These findings suggest that teachers are in fact granted much freedom in how they choose to grade their students, and they take this opportunity to assess students based on their personal beliefs about what they think is important in school. When one considers the factors that come into effect when deciding how to grade students, one must think about teaching style, students, and curriculum mandates as well. It is no wonder then that there is such a high variability amongst teachers when it comes to grading. It can be argued that it also should not be seen as an issue in this case; teachers should be able to choose the assessment technique that best suits their individual teaching style. The issue here is that grades are being distributed inaccurately.

How teachers' emotions impact grading

According to Brackett, Floman, Ashton-James, Cherkasskiy and Salovey (2013), a teacher's day is spent experiencing a whirlwind of emotions. Moments of the day may range from stressful to extremely pleasant. There is much pressure placed on teachers' grading practices, as students' grades are used as a vehicle for future opportunities (Greene & Foster, 2003). Since teachers experience so much pressure and so many emotions throughout their job, Brackett et al. (2013) wanted to examine how emotions impacted student grading. They compared teachers' grading in two different groups. The first group was a positive emotion condition, and the second was a negative emotion condition. The researchers elicited positive or negative emotions by having the participants describe either positive memories or negative memories right before evaluating a piece of work. They found that teachers who were experiencing positive emotions during the corrections of a narrative essay graded higher compared to the teachers who were experiencing negative emotions. Like anyone, emotions play a large part in a teacher's daily decision making. Teachers' emotional states therefore play an active role on students' academic and social outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). These findings add to the notion that grading is highly subjective, and cannot be taken for face value.

Consequences of grading on students

Unfair experiences of grading

Some students have negative feelings towards being graded and what those grades represent. Alm and Colnerud (2015) studied how teachers experienced unfair assessment when they themselves were students. 355 responses were provided by the participants, in regards to their experiences of unfair grading. Alm and Colnerud (2015) describe some of the themes that emerged from the study. One major theme was "inadequate application systems" in relation to grades (p. 138), which was described as unfair due to teachers interpreting grading systems

incorrectly. This means that teachers were following grading systems from, for example, their school boards, that they misunderstood. The bell curve grade distribution is a system that can be easily misunderstood and render unfair assessments. By misinterpreting grading systems in place, teachers were found to not give students the grades they deserved. An example of this was when a teacher recounted her student experience in which she could not receive the highest grade because the majority of students had to fit on the normal curve within the 1-5 step scale, even though she deserved it. A similar example of inadequate application systems was when a student described how some teachers were applying grading systems based on their own personal rules. This was evident when teachers insisted that they could only increase grades throughout the year, and not decrease. Therefore, they would start students off at a lower grade to allow space for later increases, even when the students deserved a higher grade to start off (Alm & Colnerud, 2015).

Other findings suggest that some students experienced grades that were representative of one piece of assessment that was weighted very heavily. Students claimed that the unfairness in this type of grading derives from teachers making unreasonable inferences of their knowledge based largely on one piece of data. Similarly, students also claimed grading unfair when teachers weighted particular questions on tests or assignments too heavily, and therefore created a "make it or break it" scenario where one mistake on a question would put their average down by several percentage marks (Alm & Colnerud, 2015). Lastly, Alm and Colnerud (2015) found that students perceived grading to be unfair when they were being graded on factors unrelated to their performance. A student shared an experience where a teacher had taught her older brother before her, and since he was a more difficult student, she was penalized with lower grades than she deserved based solely on the teacher's bias against her brother. Another student felt that the

teacher was awarding high grades when they were not earned because the student participated often and was an active member of the class. Therefore, it was found that even when students were benefiting from the inaccuracy of their grades, they still considered it to be unfair to the rest of the class (Alm & Colnerud, 2015).

All of this is to say that students do not find grading fair when it is not consistent and representative of their knowledge. As mentioned earlier, Cizek (2009), Airasian (2005) and Smith (2003) all state that teachers need to base grades on relevant and representative information in order to increase validity and reliability of grades. Therefore students who have perceived grades as being unfair have, in essence, experienced unreliable and invalid grading practices. Some students are aware of biases and know when their grades do not add up; other students take these grades for face value and start defining themselves by these inaccurate percentages. The latter is problematic for students, as self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation to learn suffer, all in the name of bad grading practice.

Grades as student feedback

According to Brookhart, Walsh and Zientarski (2006), educational measurement has lasting impact on students and the types of learners they become. Teachers use grades as their method of feedback to students and parents. Although including non-achievement factors into grading seems well intended, and may play an important role in reinforcing specific character traits, work ethic, and the global development of a student, a grade that encompasses all of these factors is providing inaccurate feedback for a student who perceives a grade as telling of their level of knowledge (Bookhart, 1993). For example, if a student who really only academically masters 60% of the content on their tests, yet their final report card grade includes rewarded percentages for effort, participation, homework and punctuality, the student may receive an

averaged grade of 75%. Therefore, students and parents are receiving feedback that the student is

in fact demonstrating an average level of knowledge and skills (McMillan, Myran & Workman,

2000). If this continues to happen over time, the child may not learn to have an accurate picture

of his or her mastery of a topic. In line with this research, Pintrich (2002) discusses student

metacognitive knowledge and how their understanding of the way they learn best will impact

how they choose certain strategies over others, depending on the complexity of task. Therefore,

students may be assuming that certain learning strategies and study strategies are effective when

really they are being reinforced from "hodgepodge" grades that are not actually telling of their

proficiency in a skill or topic (Brookhart, 1991; Cross & Frary, 1999; McMillan et al., 2000).

This may also result in students of the same abilities receiving different grades based on non-

achievement factors, which sends messages to students about the type of learner and student they

are in comparison to their ability-matched peers; this may cause confusion and lack of trust in

their teachers as noted by Alm & Colnerud (2015) and Brookhart et al. (2006).

Self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation

Whether percentage grades, letter grades, or a combination of the many scales is what a

school is using, they may be used in inconsistent ways. It is not necessarily whether one way is

better than another, although they do have pros and cons as discussed in this paper; it is simply

that they can be inconsistent and poorly agreed upon. Regardless of their lack of reliability and

validity as mentioned above, student motivation and self-efficacy come into play in the

classroom assessment environment (Brookhart et al., 2006). The use of consistent and regular

assessment – interestingly found to be *more* harsh than a dramatic-one-time "high stakes" test

due to the impact test grades have on students (Brookhart et al., 2006) – promotes the

development of specific types of learning behaviors. Students enter a new classroom every year,

with a new teacher, new assessment culture, and new rules to follow. Every grade, test, oral presentation, or formal evaluation is interrelated with multiple factors (Brookhart et al., 2006), and everything a student submits for grade or feedback contributes to the type of learner they become. For example, if a student has constantly failed spelling tests, they will self-identify as poor spellers, and may be less motivated to do tasks related to spelling. Similarly, if a student has constantly been provided good grades for oral presentations, they may be more motivated to do presentations (Bookhart, et al., 2006). Motivational factors, in turn, have a strong impact on student achievement (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997; Brookhart et al., 2006).

In direct line with this research is Deci and Ryan's (1990) self-determination theory, highlighting how grades can be related to intrinsic motivation. It is not new information that all people, adults and students included, have three basic psychological needs for: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1990). Grades are directly related to the need for competence because they provide feedback for students' levels of competence. When students receive failing grades for an assignment, they are actually receiving the message that they are not competent in this task, thus lowering their level of intrinsic motivation to do similar tasks again. This poses issues when, as we just mentioned, grades are not valid or reliable sources of information about how competent a student actually is.

Brookhart et al. (2006) similarly aimed at investigating how assessment within the class setting impacted motivation and effort for students. They found that students' perceived self-efficacy, perceived task importance, and mastery goal orientation played a large role in levels of motivation (Brookhart et al., 2006). When children are told, time after time, that they are a 60% student, a 70% student, or a 90% student in a given skill or subject, they start to believe that is what they are capable of (self-efficacy). Since grades are not always accurately representative of

student knowledge or proficiency, a student's perception of their self-efficacy is being falsely created. This can have serious repercussions on their level of motivation to learn in upcoming opportunities (Brookhart et al., 2006).

Being known as a 60% student can become so immutable that is almost seems impossible to change or overcome. According to Brookhart et al., (2006), self-efficacy is not simply a question of "how well I think I can do this task," rather, it has a direct link to how much effort students put in a task, how persistent they are in completing it, and their overall performance throughout. Furthermore, students are constantly judging their ability to complete tasks based on their previous successes and failures (Schunk, 1994). Students judge their self-efficacy by weighing out the difficulty of the task, the effort needed to complete the task, and their access to helpful resources in their environment. Once they have weighed these characteristics against their past experiences, they will either put in the effort or give up (Brookhart et al., 2006). I see this far too often as a teacher myself: students who arrive to Grade 6 with no desire to do any work, have a negative attitude about assignments, and do not bother studying for tests. I refuse to believe this is simply because of laziness or lack of respect. This has more to do with being in a system for seven years that has repetitively told them that they are unable to complete tasks accordingly, while labeling them as a percentage grade.

Extrinsic motivation and compliance

Studies have been conducted in order to help answer the question of why teachers may be including effort and other factors unrelated to achievement in their grading practices. These non-achievement factors were found to be helpful in terms of classroom management, in that they ensure that students are behaving in a controlled fashion. In other words, they earn grades unrelated to their achievement through participating in positive ways, completing class work, etc.

These grades work as external motivation to have students comply in their classrooms, instead of students being engaged through intrinsic motivation and genuine curiosity for a subject matter (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997; Doyle, 1986). If it is a way to help the flow of learning and control behaviors in a positive way, one may wonder what the problem is.

According to Eisner (2002) schools teach three different curricula to its people: implicit, explicit, and null. Schools are explicitly teaching the stated curriculum, such as grammar, arithmetic, fractions, spelling and reading. It is what they are implicitly teaching (indirectly), or worse, *not* teaching (null) that is relevant to this paper. Eisner (2002) explains how using external rewards, such as grades, in order to foster compliance from students is doing the opposite of what schools set out to achieve. One of the biggest critiques of schooling is that students learn very early on in their education that they need to produce whatever product the teacher is asking for, rather than to take initiative and be creative in their learning (Vallance, 1973). Students quickly pick up on how they need to behave and what they need to do in order to earn an A, B, or C grade depending on their teacher and classroom environment (Guskey, 2015; Thomas & Oldfather, 1997). Grades hold much more power than the eye can see. The implicit curriculum not only teaches children that if they comply with their teacher's requests, they will be better off; it also forces students to adapt to every different teacher they have. Instead of students learning how to be effective learners in a variety of situations and learning environments based on their abilities and needs, grades teach students how to be compliant learners in which the teacher is the boss, and students follow (Vallance, 1973). Schools implicitly teach students that learning has stopped once they have earned a grade (Guskey, 2015).

The null curriculum, on the other hand, is what school is failing to teach students. An example of this is initiative, as seen by Eisner (2002). Schools are not teaching students how to

take control of their learning and how to be creative in their learning processes (Eisner, 2002; Spencer & Juliani, 2017). By not teaching students how to learn in unique and creative ways, schools are sending the message that students should comply with class order and teacher rules. Students may be afraid to take risks in their learning because they may not fall under the pre-determined expectations of the teacher, therefore risking the chance of receiving bad grades. This type of "null curriculum" is not helpful for students who we assume will eventually transfer such learning to society at large. Today, places of employment require workers who can take initiative, innovate, problem solve and think for themselves (Spencer & Juliani, 2017). A percentage grade system does not promote these skills.

Through the use of grades – and all other external rewards, such as check marks for books read, or prizes for the most cooperative group – schools are forcing children to behave in ways that are pre-determined by the teacher, with little opportunity to develop intrinsic meaning for such tasks (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997). Even more, when students learn to expect a reward (grades) for participating and completing a task through repeated exposure, it is only natural that they will be less likely to participate in the same or similar type of activity without the external motivation of rewards (grades) (Brookhart et al., 2006; Vallance, 1973). As a teacher, I see this all the time. Students constantly ask "does this count for a grade?" or "how much does this count for?" in order to weigh out the pros and cons of maximizing their effort. I always respond with a variation of "you should try just as hard, regardless of if it counts towards your final grade – everything counts towards your *learning*." This idea seems foreign to students in our education system today. They are so focused on the external reward of grades that they will not participate or take work seriously if it is not worth a grade (Brookhart, 1994). Regardless of whether the "hodgepodge" grading style is good or bad, I think we can all agree that grades should not be

representative of how compliant a student is.

Grading in Quebec

Context: Quebec guidelines for reporting assessments

In Quebec the learning progression is based on a two year cycle. There are three cycles: cycle one encompassing grades one and two, cycle two covering grades three and four, and cycle three being grades five and six. Each of these grade levels have certain skills that should be worked on with teacher guidance, and eventually mastered independently. The document "Progression of Learning" delineates which skills need to be mastered by the end of each year or cycle. This covers all subjects including Math, Science, English, French, Social Studies, Arts Education and Personal Development. According to the Quebec Education Act, teachers are entitled "to select the means of evaluating the progress of students so as to examine and assess continually and periodically the needs and achievement of objectives of every student entrusted to his care" (1988/2020). This means that teachers can decide how to formatively evaluate their students throughout the cycles.

In Quebec, there are three mandatory summative report cards per year that go out to parents at the end of each term (see Appendix C). Percentage grades are provided for each subject, as well as for class averages. The report card is divided by competencies per subject. For example, the math competencies are a) "to solve a situational problem" and b) "to reason using mathematical concepts and processes" all the while "communicating by using mathematical language." The two competencies are separate for the report card and require an individual grade for each. Then an averaged grade is created for their term mark. This is similar for all subjects. Since this system works in cycles, most skills are to be mastered by the end of the cycle, that is, at the end of two years. For example, in Mathematics, students in grade one need to "construct

knowledge with teacher guidance" about counting forward from a given number. This competency only needs to be mastered by the end of grade two. So it may become difficult for teachers to identify what a first grade student should know for this skill in November, for example. Having to complete report cards in November, March and June for skills that only need to be acquired at *the end* of the following year is a difficult task. There appears to be a disconnect between the progression of learning and reporting of competency-based knowledge on the report cards. This further demonstrates how report card grades can be ambiguous or misleading.

Current Study

The literature review on grading practices and the factors that make up the teacher perspective and the student perspective, along with my own experiences, have led me to two beliefs. Firstly, due to the fact that teachers from grade to grade are inconsistently weighing grades and therefore grading differently, I believe that grades are arbitrary. There is no way for a student or a parent to understand the real value of the student's grades on a report card, or what they have actually learned. Secondly, there is not enough discussion about grading practices and what grades represent to all stakeholders. These conversations are vital to solving issues with reliability and validity of grades in the future. Percentage grades as they have been for over 100 years have proven to be unreliable and invalid measures of student learning. There are too many factors that remain inconsistent. Grades have a large array of consequences on students and teachers alike. The large variance amongst teachers' perspectives on "success" versus "failure" and the illusion of precision by a percentage scale has convinced me further on how skewed our system is. As a teacher, I have seen what goes on in schools today. I have witnessed firsthand how inaccurate grades are and how little they tell about a student's story. Students are more than

just an averaged percentage score on a report card, and we need to stop acting like this is the case.

Research questions

Having situated my position and conducted a theoretical review on the topic, the purpose of this study is to explore how elementary school teachers feel about grading. Specifically, I will explore how teachers formulate grades for their students, including the factors that impact report card grades, and what teachers believe about their current grading systems, including the messages they are sending to students and parents through grades. I will also take into account teachers' perspectives, and critiques about grading and measurement practices in relation to their classroom cultures. My two main research questions are:

1. How do elementary school teachers formulate report card grades?

2. What do teachers believe about their current grading system, specifically in the Quebec context?

The teachers' responses will be used to develop our understanding of grading practices in elementary school.

Methodology

Design

This study was a qualitative research project revolving around interviews with teachers and a short questionnaire. Both methods were used as a form of data triangulation to enhance the credibility of the study. The questionnaire was also used as a method to prepare the participants for the topics and vocabulary that was to come in the interviews, to ensure everyone had the same information. The teachers were interviewed individually through a semi-structured interview lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed

to ensure that the data were accurate and reliable. Prior to the interviews, the participants filled out a questionnaire related to how they view grading, which took 15 minutes to complete (see Appendix A).

Participants

Ten public, elementary school teachers were interviewed. This sample was not restricted in terms of years of experience, school, language of teaching instruction, or Elementary grade level. All teachers at various levels of their career were welcome to participate to promote diverse data and be representative of the population of public schools across the city of Montreal. The only factor that was taken into account was each teacher's grading practices. It was expected that participating teachers use or have used the percentage grade method for report card grading, as the traditional percentage system is at the heart of this study. In order to recruit participants, I used word-of-mouth recruitment asking co-workers and other teachers I have worked with in the past. Once participants agreed, they were asked to sign a consent form.

Procedures

Individual interviews were set up at the most convenient location and time for the participants. The interviews took place in person, either in the participants' homes, public coffee shops, or in their school setting as per their request. The entire interview process and questionnaire took no longer than one hour depending on each participants' willingness to speak. The questionnaire was done in person, in paper/pencil format. They completed the questionnaire before we started the interview.

Interviews were semi-structured in order to follow each participant's lines of thought and experiences. Sample interview questions to elicit discussion included:

1. What do you think about grading?

2. How do you formulate report card grades for your students?

3. What do you believe these grades communicate? To whom?

4. In your professional opinion, what does a grade represent to students?

5. What does a grade represent to you?

6. What makes a "good" student versus a "poor" student?

7. What do you recall in terms of your own experiences being graded as a student?

8. How might these recollections compare with how you approach your grading practices today?

9. What are some of the main issues/benefits you see in current grading practices?

10. What would you say the ultimate goal of education is?

11. What recommendations do you have for new teachers learning to grade students?

Data Analysis

In order to interpret the data from the interviews, I transcribed all of the interviews on an excel sheet. I went through each interview, sentence by sentence, using an emergent coding scheme. Once I transcribed each word from the recordings, I then created a new document with the condensed version of each transcript. I shortened the sentences by taking out unnecessary words like "um," and any other words unrelated to the main point of each sentence, while keeping their statements intact. From this data, I formulated categories on the right hand side of participant quotations. For example, "time management," or "teacher methods" were categories that came up in most participant transcripts. Once each transcript was coded and set into categories, I compared the categories between each participant and then created major themes that could encompass the categories. For example, "personal grading systems" was a theme that encompassed the categories "teacher methods," "grading by subject," "quantity of assignments,"

and "evaluation." This then led me to organize my paper according to the major themes and how they fit into to my research questions. Some categories were dropped as they were unrelated to my research questions or did not yield enough information across participants. For example, "childhood memories of being graded" was a category that did not make it into the final analysis due to a lack of connection between memories of being graded as a student and how teachers choose to grade as adults.

Validity and reliability

In addition to transcribing the interviews verbatim to provide detailed and accurate data, I used two methods of data collection: interviews and questionnaires. In order to minimize researcher bias during interviews, I used an open-ended, scripted set of questions. Inter-coder reliability conducted with a peer for one set of participant interviews was .74, which met the acceptable ratio of agreement of .70 established by Miles and Huberman (1994, see Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 308).

Results and Discussion

The data for this thesis is comprised of the teachers' questionnaire responses (see Appendix A) and the teachers' individual interviews (see Appendix B for samples of coded interviews). Following demographic and general information about participants, the results and discussion will be presented in two sections: Part 1. How elementary teachers formulate their report card grades and Part 2. What teachers believe about our grading system.

Demographic and general information about participants
Table 1

Participant Information

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Pierre
	Brittany
	Melissa
	Anita
	Jennifer
	Chrystal
	Ken
	Leila
	Ruby
	Parker
Current level currently taught	Kindergarten to grade 6
Years of experience in teaching	4-43 years
Current school program	French Immersion, Bilingual, Francais Plus
Subjects taught and graded	English, Dance and Drama, Music, Physical Education, French, Resource, Math, Science, Ethics and Religion, History, Art

There were a total of ten teachers who participated in this study. Through the use of a questionnaire, participants provided information about their current and past work experiences. All ten participants work in the Montreal area and follow the same Quebec curriculum and report card system. Similarly, they are all a part of the same school board. In Quebec, there are three French language programs offered in English schools: a French Immersion program offers French instruction in Kindergarten until grade two, and then grades three to six are approximately 50% English and 50% French; a Francais Plus program at a French Immersion school where students receive French instruction from Kindergarten until grade 4, and then they receive approximately 50% French instruction and 50% English instruction for grades five and

six; and a Bilingual school program which ensures that students receive 50% French and 50% English instruction from Kindergarten until grade 6. The type of school program impacts the subjects that are taught and therefore impacts the subjects that teachers are responsible for grading.

Pierre teaches grade four currently as an English Generalist. He works at a French immersion school. Pierre has 20 years of experience as a teacher.

Brittany teaches grade three as an English Generalist as well. She works at a bilingual school. Brittany has 21 years of experience as a teacher.

Melissa is currently teaching French to grade one students at a bilingual school. Melissa has 22 years of experience as a teacher.

Similarly, *Anita* has 21 years of teaching experience and currently teaches English in grade six at a Francais plus school.

Jennifer teaches French to Kindergarten students at a Francais plus school and has been a teacher for 17 years.

Chrystal is an English Generalist who teaches Dance and Drama to children in kindergarten through grade six. She works in a Francais plus school and has been a teacher for 16 years.

Ken is the Physical Education teacher at a Francais plus school where he teaches Kindergarten to grade six. He has been a teacher for 16 years.

Leila is also an English generalist who teaches grade five and six at a Francais Plus school. She has 11 years of teaching experience.

Ruby is the Resource teacher and provides support to students with learning and behavior difficulties. She currently works at a Francais Plus elementary school and works with all grade

levels from Kindergarten to grade six. She has 43 years of experience as a teacher.

Lastly, *Parker* teaches Music at a Francais Plus school to all students from kindergarten to grade six. He has 4 years of teaching experience.

Part 1. How elementary teachers formulate report card grades (RQ#1)

This section will report on the different student factors that the interviewed teachers considered when assessing student learning and creating report card grades, and how teachers rank those factors in terms of importance. External factors that may impact the grading process, such as pressure from parents or administration, will also be discussed. Each teacher has their own philosophy when it comes to learning and grading, therefore this section will highlight the participants' personal grading systems and beliefs.

Collecting evidence of student learning

A multiple choice questionnaire was filled out at the beginning of the interview process by each participant (see Appendix A). The first question was "*In your opinion, what is the most accurate way to collect evidence of student learning?*" The bar graph below provides the participant responses. It should be noted that teachers were able to choose more than one response.

Figure 1.

The Most Accurate Way to Collect Evidence of Student Learning
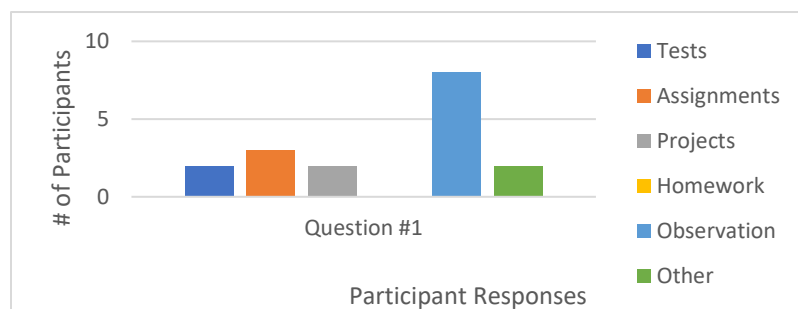
Note. Participant responses to questionnaire #1: student learning

According to Randall and Engelhard (2009), evaluations of tests, projects and assignments based on learned content are deemed "achievement" factors, whereas homework, participation, punctuality and organization are considered "non-achievement" factors. These non-achievement factors often still take weight in final grades that teachers assign (McMillan & Nash, 2000). Based on this bar graph, it is evident that *observation* plays a key role in understanding and monitoring student learning throughout the year, across subjects and grade levels (8/10). *Assignments* were found to be the second most accurate way of collecting evidence of student learning, whereas *projects* and *tests* were found to be the third most accurate way of doing this. Two teachers included "other": one identified *classroom activities/group discussions* and the other identified *educational games* as being accurate ways to identify student learning. Both include observing students in these moments, which could possibly be labelled as "participation." Interestingly, homework was considered irrelevant by all participants when it came to collecting evidence of student learning. This is an important piece of data as we will see in the next table. The reason I chose these five factors specifically with the option of "other" was to see how much of a final grade was being accounted for by achievement factors and non-achievement factors, according to Randall and Engelhard's (2009) and McMillan and Nash's (2000) definitions. It is clear that teachers are considering a combination of both factors when collecting evidence of student learning.

Factors that impact report card grades

Figure 2.

Student Factors That Impact Report Card Grades
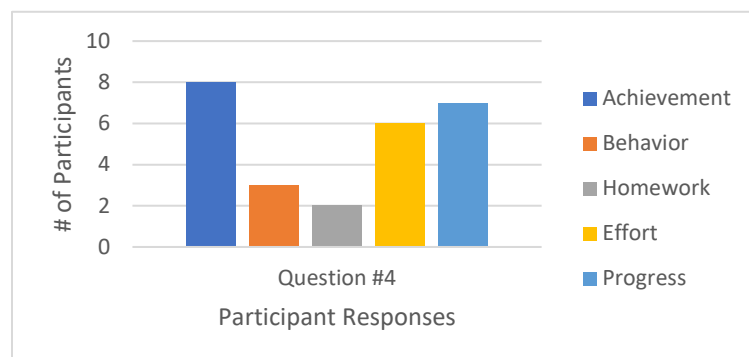
Note. Participant responses to questionnaire #4

      In response to the question "*which student factors impact the way you develop report card grades?*", it is evident that student factors such as achievement, effort and progress are factored in when most of these teachers formulate their report cards. Achievement was described as actual student knowledge demonstrated in a specific subject or content area (Randall and Engelhard, 2009). If the answers to the first question were true for the teachers, one can conclude that most of these teachers measure this achievement through observations. Progress and effort were also considered by many participants, which is in line with Brookhart (1994) who found that teachers believe in a grade as being multifaceted and must include both achievement alongside effort and progress.

      What is interesting here is that two participants chose homework completion as a factor that contributed to the development of report card grades, yet no teachers selected homework as an accurate way to select evidence of student learning in the first question. The way students behave in class was also a factor that three teachers accounted for when formulating student report cards, although none of them included "behaviors" as evidence of student learning in the

first question. This falls in line with the study conducted by Frary et al. (1993), who found that 31% of teachers allocated some weight of the final grade to behavior. How they allocate these non-achievement factors within the single achievement grade is still unknown. Brookhart (1994) recommended including two grades on the report card, one for achievement and one for effort, although that is not a decision any teacher can make without their school boards and government changing their policies.

All in all, this demonstrates that some teachers are using report card grades to communicate homework, effort, progress and other student behaviors in their grades. There seems to be a discrepancy between what teachers believe are accurate ways of evaluating student learning, and which factors they actually account for in their report card grading. Perhaps it is safe to say then, that most teachers are not using the report card grades to communicate student achievement alone. Furthermore, there seems to be inconsistencies in how these student factors are ranked from most important to least important, as seen in the next table.

Table 2

Participant Responses to Questionnaire #5: Ranking Student Factors

By grade and subject	Student factors: 1 (most important) and 5 (least important)				
Jennifer-Kindergarten	1.Progress	2.Behavior	3.Effort	4.Achievement	5.Homework
Melissa- Grade 1/2	1.Achievement	2.Progress	3.Effort	4.Behavior	5.Homework
Brittany – Grade 3	1.Progress	2.Achievement	3.Effort	4.Behavior	5.Homework
Pierre – Grade 4	1.Effort	2.Progress	3.Achievement	4.Behavior	5.Homework
Leila – Grade 5/6	1.Achievement	2.Progress	3.Effort	4.Homework	5.Behavior
Anita – Grade 6	1.Achievement	2.Progress	3.Effort	4.Homework	5.Behavior
Chrystal – Dance and Drama	1.Achievement	2.Progress	3.Effort	4.Behavior	5.Homework
Ken – Phys. Ed	1.Effort	2.Progress	3.Achievement	4.Behavior	5.Homework
Parker – Music (4-6)	1.Homework	2.Achievement	3.Effort	4.Progress	5.Behavior
Parker – Music (K-3)	1.Effort	2.Behavior	3.Progress	4.Achievement	5.Homework
Ruby - Resource	1.Progress	2.Effort	3.Achievement	4.Behavior	5.Homework

The fifth question involved teachers ordering student factors from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important) when they are developing report card grades. In this table, the majority of

teachers demonstrate some consensus amongst the rankings in categories of progress, effort, behavior and homework. Although there appears to be the most consensus amongst teachers about what is least important (homework) in formulating report card grades, what is most important seems to be inconsistent. There was less than 50% agreement on what is deemed to be the most important student factor. Progress was found, overall, to be chosen as first or second in ranking of most important for report card grading by majority of the participants (9/10).

Achievement was not as consistent across participants, as it was chosen all throughout rankings 1-4. Consequently, it can be said that although 8/10 participants chose "achievement" as being a student factor that impacted the way they develop report card grades in the questionnaire (Q#4), they all rank its importance differently. This matters greatly in terms of what report cards are communicating about student learning. One can assume that teachers may place a higher or lower weight on the factors they find more or less important. According to McMillan et al. (2002), teachers placed the greatest weight on achievement and effort, but much less weight on homework, for example. It is clear that this varies for each teacher, based on what they deem to be more or less significant.

One of the participants, Parker, chose homework as being the most important when it came to older students as they would have more homework assignments during the year. Yet for the younger students, this same participant ranked homework as the least important factor whereas "effort" was the most important. This differentiation might be deemed significant across grade levels taught, as the other two participants who did not choose "homework" as the least important factor, also taught grades five and six. It appears that the higher the grade level, the more emphasis is placed on work done at home. This may have something to do with preparing the older students for high school independence and increased responsibility.

Aside from the fact that these participants all ranked student factors quite differently which causes issues for consistency across teacher's grades, the findings that progress and effort were ranked as fairly important by all of the participants raises the question of *how* they include these two factors in a grade.

Lack of standardization

Lack of standardization in grading methodologies was a theme that came up in terms of teachers having their own personal grading systems, how they weigh different academic tasks and which factors they choose to focus on when evaluating students. The first question that comes to mind is: how does this freedom impact the accuracy of what teachers communicate?

Pierre discussed how "there is absolutely no standard" for grading procedures across Quebec (P1, line 2). Similarly, Parker talks about a lack of standardization for what specialists need to teach, and how they need to assess. He adds that teachers grade based on their own interpretation and, like Pierre, that there is no standard when it comes to grading (P10, line 83 & 87). Parker provides an example of how easy it is for two teachers to disagree on a grade for the same child because of this lack of standardization (P10, line 88). This opinion is in line with Starch and Elliot (1912) and more recently, Brimi (2011): teachers were asked to evaluate the same paper and the percentage grades ranged from 50%-97%. These findings, repeated a century apart, demonstrate how teachers rely heavily on their personal beliefs about what it means to be successful. Despite being trained in assessment methods in the recent study, teachers still had a huge variance in the way they graded the same paper (Brimi, 2011). These studies illustrate how a lack of standardization results in large discrepancies across teachers and schools. Brittany also states that although the report card is a standard form that all teachers use in Quebec, the methods teacher use to grade are all different (P2, lines 44, 47 & 52). Anita and Brittany both

talk about a child at one school getting a certain grade, yet when they switch to another school, they could be getting something completely different (P2, line 45; P4, lines 43-44). Brittany believes that your child's grades should not depend on what school they attend (P2, lines 46, 47, 48).

Due to the lack of standard within grading, it is no wonder that teachers must create their own personal grading system. Table 5 below demonstrates just how common it is for teachers to do so. These findings add to the pre-existing research that reveals how teachers use their own grading systems and how this causes some confusion and inconsistencies. All of the participants chose different external factors that impact the way they assign their grades.

External factors that impact report card grades

Figure 3.

External Factors That Impact the Development Report Card Grades
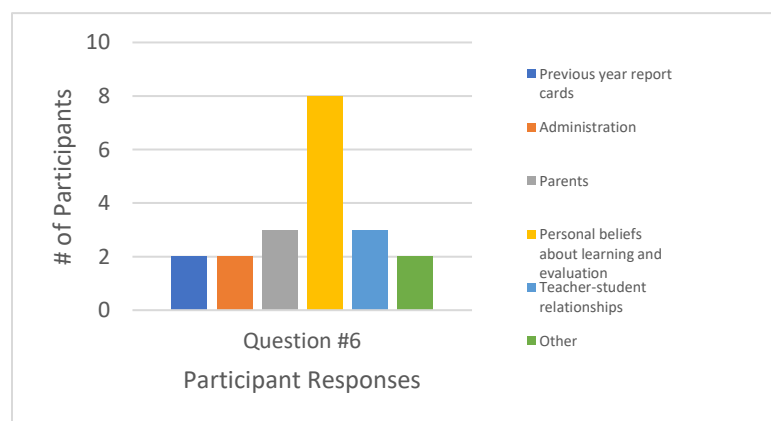
Note. Participant responses to question #6: external factors

In the questionnaire, the sixth question spoke to any other external factors that may impact the way teachers develop their report card grades, with a choice to include "other." A majority of the participants chose "personal beliefs about learning and evaluation," when asked which external factors were considered in the development of their report card grades. This is a

large factor that differentiates what report cards mean to each teacher and impacts what each teacher is communicating through their report cards.

Personal grading systems

Each participant discussed what their grading system looked like. Pierre explained how he uses what he calls "learner profiles" based on 10% increments that entail specific criteria for each level of learner. So he goes over rubrics with students and explains what the different levels look like and how they can achieve the grade they want (P1, line 31, 32 & 37). Pierre goes on to state that even for his high achievers, he will still start them off a bit lower, and slowly bring the grade up by the end of the year if there is consistent improvement (P1, line 34 & 35). Similarly for his low achievers, Pierre rarely goes below a 40% grade as he believes that as long as he is communicating a fail, he does not need to go lower than that (P1, line 36). This notion of starting high-achievers off with a lower grade is not unknown to assessment research. Alm and Colnerud (2015) found that this is a common practice across teachers, and often rated as being "unfair" by students themselves. Some teachers would argue that showing progress throughout the year is equally as important as showing high achievement in one term.

Brittany stated that she uses a board-wide criteria scale based on "limited expectations, meets expectations or surpasses expectations" when assigning grades to her report cards (P2, lines 11 & 14). Each of these categories have a range of percentages linked to them and therefore she can convert the criteria to a grade at the end of each term. She also takes into consideration how the students work in class, how they participate, and what they produce in terms of tests or work assignments (P2, lines 12 & 13). Melissa claimed to use a similar grid that helps convert the criteria to percentages. Since she teaches younger children, her method of evaluation is mostly based on observations and playing games with the students. She states that she does not

use tests in her class, rather she may give "unprepared" spelling tests based on sounds to see where the students are at (P3, lines 12, 14, 15 & 17). Melissa does not believe that paper and pencil testing is the best way to find out what her students know.

Anita and Leila talked about their grading system as being based on a certain amount of assignments or tests assigned per term, per subject (P4, line 13; P8, line 38 & 39). But they both included information on their methods of evaluation that was unique compared to the other participants. Anita said that she offers opportunities for re-doing a test or a question on a test with a more elaborate explanation so that the students could get part marks instead of a 0. Leila provides a no-risk pop quiz a day or two before the real test, meets with students to discuss the topics that were misunderstood, and clarifies anything that they got wrong. She believes that this encourages children to study before the real test and helps them be more prepared (P8, lines 65-71). This type of philosophy allows the students to learn from their mistakes in a risk-free situation.

In kindergarten, Jennifer explained that her grading system and methods of evaluation are much different than the rest of the grade level teachers. Her grading system is actually the only one that is mandated by the Ministry. Each letter grade is associated with a set criteria: "A is exceeds expectations, B meets expectations, C with support and D not even a little bit" (P5, line 13). She states that she never gives out D's, and withholds assigning A's at the beginning of the year as she prefers to offer space for students to work towards it (P5, lines 12 & 16). She also added that if a student does get an A one term, it is not automatic that they will get an A again the following term. It really depends on how the term goes and the progress the student makes.

Chrystal's grading system is similar to Pierre, Brittany and Melissa in that she creates her own criteria and converts it to a percentage system. So she uses a 1-5 system based on specific

criteria, where 5 is 100% (P6, lines 10). Chrystal explained that she would not give 100% even if the student received a 5 on everything, but she will give high 90s. She added that her students usually get in between 80-90% because there are always times where they are not being great audience members or not wanting to participate in every activity (P6, lines 11 & 12).

Ken, a physical education teacher, started his response by clearly stating that he does not just look at his students and decide from the top of his head what grade they are going to receive which, according to him, is not uncommon for specialists to do (P7, line 1). Ken follows a similar 1-5 rating scale as Chrystal, based on the physical education competencies and subcategories: 5 being the best grade they can get, and 1 being the lowest. These have a parallel percentage range on top of the rubrics, for example a 4 or 4+ would be 81-87% and so on (P7, lines 18 & 19). So he grades the students based on the average score once he has evaluated each task in his class (P7, line 5). He explained that he has three competencies to assess: 1) to perform movement skills in different physical activity settings, 2) to interact with others in different physical activity settings, and 3) to adopt a healthy, active lifestyle. Ken stated that he weighs the first two heavier than the third as the third is more difficult to assess accurately (P7, lines 43, 44 & 47).

If Ruby could have it her way, she would write anecdotal feedback for all of her students, keep track of samples of their work and talk to them about their thinking. That would be her ideal method of evaluation, although she acknowledges that we're stuck with percentage grades so we "have to play the game" (P9, line 54). She stated that descriptive rubrics with words on it to describe the varying levels would be the best method to come up with a percentage range.

Parker briefly explained his grading system and methods of evaluation. He stated that instead of using the 0-100 percent range, he sticks to a 70-100% system. The reason he does this

is because he does not believe he can fail a student in music on the basis that they were "bad at music"; rather they showed up and they learned something, so 70% becomes the lowest grade (P10, lines 58-62). He added that his method of evaluation includes assignments, homework and in-class quizzes, but that these factors count for less than the student's behaviors in class (P10, lines 22-24).

It is clear here that teachers are creating their own systems and rules in regards to their grading practices. Some teachers believe that students cannot receive the highest grade at the beginning of the year as they want to leave space for improvement. Others believe in giving re-tests and pre-tests to help set their students up for success. Some have created their own unique grading range to exclude any failing percentages. Still, others have made room for failing grades, but have limited it to a 40% instead of a 0%. A few teachers have created their own 1-5 ranking system with their own criteria based on the subjects they teach. There are many variations amongst teachers and it has a lot to do with their teaching philosophies and values.

Communicating to parents and students about what your grading system is and what your grades represent is essential. The only way grading can be minimally meaningful is if everyone interprets the grades through the same lens and with the same information (Kenney & Perry, 1994). In line with this idea, Pierre discussed how grading differently across teachers and schools is not necessarily the problem (P1, line 71). Rather, the problem occurs when parents do not understand the way your grading system works. He used the analogy of speaking a different language: "I can speak Japanese to you, if you speak Japanese. Next year the teacher can talk Chinese, as long as parents learn Chinese that year" (P1, line 72). Pierre goes on to state that it is important that teachers clearly communicate to parents what these symbols mean on the report card (P1, line 73). Jennifer discussed how parents may need reminders about what it is that the

report card focuses on in Kindergarten. She stated that some parents are focused on the academic piece, but she uses the report card to show how they behave in class so behaviours impact the marks they get (P5, lines 7 & 8). Jennifer also explained that the criteria for each letter grade is given to the parents in advance, so they can better understand what each letter means.

Grades having an impact on relationships

In Table 5, teachers expressed that external factors, such as possible impacts on the teacher-student relationships and parental pressure, can be taken into consideration when grading. This is particularly interesting because it is clear that grades have an indirect effect on relationships. Leila expressed concern in her interview, stating that in her experience, grade five and six students can at times be "invested emotionally" in their grades, and it can "destroy them" when getting an imperfect score (P8, lines 80 & 84). She finds that this can be problematic as some students internalize their grades as being a reflection of who they are (P8, line 45). Therefore, students start identifying themselves as good or bad students strictly based on the grades they receive, without necessarily understanding what they mean. It is obvious why this may impact the grades that teachers assign to their students, if they believe grades to be harming the student-teacher relationship.

Parent communication was mentioned by nearly every participant. Every teacher at this school board "has to meet with parents in the first term" (P1, line 16). It is then that they explain their first term report card and answer questions that parents may have. In Pierre's experience, the first question parents often ask him at parent-teacher interviews is "how is my child doing?" (P1, line 11). For him, this demonstrates that report card grades "are not capturing the goal of what they're meaning to do," which is to communicate to parents about how their child is performing (P1, line 12). Students and parents should not be surprised when the report card

comes. Pierre goes on to explain that if the student is finding out information for the first time on the report card, it means that as a teacher, "you aren't talking to them enough in class" (P1, line 24). If a child is struggling, it is up to the teacher to advise parents ahead of the report card so that things can be done to help (P8, line 23; P9 line 25). When this is not done, it creates parent-teacher conflicts, and it puts the students at a disadvantage for catching up.

Other participants elaborated on how conflicts surrounding grades with parents are stressful and to be avoided. Based on the teachers' perspectives, grade five parents were found to care the most about report card grades as this is the report used for high school admissions (P7, line 8; P10, line 29 & 30). Anita experienced a situation where a parent did not want to know how their child was doing, if that meant they were doing lower than desired. This parent refused to sign a test or assignment that was graded lower than 85% (P4, line 21). This negatively impacted the student as he would start hiding his tests, not get them signed, and then the parent had no idea what was going on in school. More importantly, the student was not receiving any extra help at home in regards to the difficulties (P4, line 22). This potential conflict can have an impact on how teachers go about assigning grades as well. More so, this type of reaction from parents renders report card communication completely useless if all parties are not willing to work together in collaboration for the student's success.

It is clear from these anecdotes that grading practices result in miscommunication and can cause conflict amongst the parent-teacher and teacher-student relationships, which makes everyone's work difficult. Both parent and student are now at more of a disadvantage when it comes to understanding how the child is doing in the school setting. Brittany stated that parents get "insulted" if their child is working below class average (P2, line 18). Leila mentioned that in her experience, parents can also perceive grades as being a direct reflection of who their children

are as students. She has heard statements such as "my kid is an 80% student, they will always be in the 80s or better" (P8, lines 47, 52, 53). This causes issues when students receive grades lower than what parents expect, and parents are left wondering why when they are supposed to be "an 80 student" across school years and subjects (P8, line 53).

Furthermore, Brittany and Ken shared that they sometimes have to choose their comments wisely based on which parent is receiving it in order to avoid conflict (P2, lines 3-4; P7, line 26). In contrast, Pierre would argue that we should not shy away from failing grades, that we need to "get to the truth with parents" and if "your child dropped the ball, you need to pick it up and we need to work together" (P1, lines 28 & 62). According to Pierre, parent communication should be honest, genuine and on-going throughout the year, not just at meetings (P1, lines 60, 61, 62 & 63). Some teachers believe they should be 100% transparent when it comes to explaining how students are doing, whereas some teachers feel they need to tip toe around certain parents as to not create conflict. Consequently, a problem with comprehension on the part of the parents arises due to the lack of consistency. Parents can never fully know which type of teacher their child will have one year to the next. Similarly, teachers can never fully know which type of parents they will have on the receiving end of their grades and feedback.

Fear of challenging the "status-quo" of a school or an individual student

Administration and previous year report cards were selected from two participants in having an impact on report card grades. One of the participants chose 'other' and stated that the students' grades in other classes may impact the way they grade students in their class. The second participant who chose 'other' wrote that discussions with their teaching partners might impact their grading processes. This provides evidence that teachers want to grade consistently with other teachers who work with their students, and that they want to assign grades that reach a

certain standard of "acceptable". This could be due to the stress teachers feel when parents or administrators question their grades, or ask for evidence that supports the grades they give. If a child performs at an 80% or 60% across all subjects, parents and administrators may be less likely to ask questions compared to a student who is an 80% student across subjects except in your class, where they are performing as a 60% student. It is not uncommon for teachers to believe that term report card grades are a "good indication of how they will end off the year" (P3, line 7). Melissa explained that a child who receives a 65% will most likely be a 65% student "all throughout their school life" (P3, line 8). If this is a predominant perception of grades, then it is no wonder why teachers are afraid to increase or decrease report card grades, or in this case, "challenge the status-quo." Therefore, teachers may consider the previous year report cards as to also not give anyone reason to question what grade they assign in the current term for the same reason. The 'status-quo' may feel like the safer bet in terms of potential issues that could arise after a report card is sent home.

Pierre shared that he has witnessed some teachers chat amongst their partners, deciding what grades to give their students just by brief conversation (P1, line 4). For Pierre, this indicates that no class work goes towards choosing a grade if this is what teachers are doing (P1, line 5). Allal (2013) touches upon the notion that teachers engage in regular activities of social moderation. This includes meetings with other teachers, where they discuss and negotiate their grades and evaluation methods, particularly when students are borderline or stuck in between two grade ranges such as B+ and A-. These meetings include conferencing about student grades while providing anecdotes to help provide a clear picture of the student's learning, and even reviewing student work together (Allal, 2013). This does not refer to a simple conversation with a co-worker across the hall, as Pierre has observed.

There appears to be many external factors that come into play when teachers are assigning a report card grade for their students. It is unlikely that these factors have anything to do with student learning in individual classrooms. These types of responses from teachers are not uncommon and can be harmful. It appears though, that personal beliefs about learning and evaluation seems to cause the biggest discrepancy. This freedom to grade not only impacts the reliability and validity of the report cards, it also has the power to confuse parents and students as they do not always understand the teacher's grading system. This is problematic for many reasons, but primarily because parents and students may not always be getting a clear picture of how well students are *actually* doing in school from teacher to teacher, year to year. I believe if teachers communicated their grading systems more effectively and more often to parents and administrators, there would be less confusion and conflicts that arise in regards to fluctuating grades from term to term and year to year.

Synthesis of Part 1

To summarize the part of the study that addressed how teachers formulate their report card grades, it is clear that teachers use a combination of a variety of factors. Furthermore, they are inconsistently weighing these factors based on their own personal beliefs about grading and student learning. Despite the majority of participants claiming that observation is the most effective way of evaluating student learning, most of them are accounting for many other factors unrelated or indirectly related to student achievement. Achievement, effort and progress seem to be the three most important factors when it comes to formulating report card grades, but not the only ones. Behaviour and homework completion are also factors taken into account when assigning overall grades to students. Teacher freedom to grade how they best see fit is not the problem in this case; the problem is this freedom is not often talked about in schools. Teachers in

the same building can be doing things completely differently, therefore leaving parents and students constantly confused about what a grade means.

Part 2. What teachers believe about our current grading system (RQ#2)

This next section will explore how teachers' beliefs about grading in general, and identify what teachers believe to be the most effective ways to provide feedback to both students and parents alike. As Brookhart (2011), Guskey and Bailey (2010) and Cox and Olsen (2009) state, the most important component of evaluation is identifying what a grade is intended to represent, and to which audience it is intended for. This section also unpacks what teachers think report card grades are actually communicating, and to whom.

Feelings towards grading

Elementary teachers' feelings towards grading was a prominent topic that came up throughout the interviews. The teachers discussed how they felt about report cards and grading in general and if they had a method that they preferred using. Here teachers also discussed the challenges in grading different subjects, such as Math and English, and the time it takes to grade effectively.

Brittany shared that she "hates doing report cards," and that it is "the three times a year where parents judge what goes on in the classroom" (P2, lines 2 & 3). Melissa stated that she also does not "like the format we are using," being "grades and comments," as she feels there should be an added component for behavior (P3, line 2 & 3). Anita argued that grading should be provided as letter grades, as she finds it difficult to assign a number to a student (P4, line 2). Anita goes on to explain that she feels that letter grades are "less stressful," "less competitive," and "more fair" to her students (P4, lines 4 & 5). Pierre also added to this idea of letter grades being "softer" for the children, whereas 100 distinctions seen in the percentage scale has more of

a "coldness" to it (P1, line 57 & 58). Ken, Chrystal and Brittany all agreed that letter grades would be easier to explain as opposed to percentages (P7, line 48; P6, line 45; P2, line 8).

On the other hand, Ruby found that letter grades and percentage grades are just as difficult to assign to a student. She would rather write anecdotal comments for her students, as it would be easiest for her to identify the child's progress (P9, lines 2, 3 & 5). Jennifer expressed that she appreciates the letter grade report cards in Kindergarten, as it is comment based, so she can really explain what her letter grades mean. That being said, she stated that Kindergarten report cards are extremely subjective and vary by teacher, even between her teaching partner and her as they plan learning activities together (P5, line 53).

Leila and Brittany said that grading is frustrating and takes a lot of time, but that it varies based on subject (P2, line 15; P8, line 2). Writing assignments take longer to correct than a math test, for example, yet constructing the math test takes long as well (P8, lines 3, 5 & 6). So either way, teachers have to manage their time accordingly. Leila stated that she thinks despite the frustration and time management, grades are important to help get an idea of where the students are in their learning (P8, lines 2-8). If she were not forced to grade for the report card, she may not know what level all the students were at (P8, line 111). Parker shared similar thoughts about time management and his workload as a music teacher. He expressed not enjoying grading because he finds it takes away time from doing other things that he considers to be more important. Since he only sees the students for half an hour to an hour a week, he finds it hard to manage creating meaningful experiences in the class while also having to evaluate them before the end of the term (P10, lines 2-6). Parker explained that if he were to spend adequate time on evaluation, he would not be able to provide the students with extra curriculars as he does now (P10, lines 43-44). Since he has to grade the whole school as opposed to one class, his grading

workload is much bigger than the average teacher.

Chrystal explained how she feels that grades are "useless" when it comes to teaching Dance and Drama. They take time to complete, and grades do not tell her how smart a student is (P6, lines 6 & 8). She went on to explain that grades can be useful for different subjects, such as math, where "you need to know the facts" (P6, line 7). Chrystal much prefers a letter grade system, or a 1-5 system for the more subjective subjects such as Dance and Drama or English (P6, line 45). Ken shared a different view on grading, as he finds it makes his job worthwhile. Since the common belief is that Phys Ed teachers are just babysitting all day and playing games in the gym, he likes grading because it makes his job "worth it" (P7, line 11-13). This is an interesting perspective that none of the other participants mentioned. The idea that teachers think the teaching profession is perceived as "babysitting" is in itself quite demoralizing. The fact that they feel their only saving grace is grading, in order to feel like they are professionals, is even worse.

It is evident then that homeroom teachers and specialists alike find a differentiation between the grading of different subjects. As seen above, some subjects are experienced as easier to grade, while others are harder to plan tests for. Subjects such as Dance and Drama, Physical Education, Music and English seem to be harder to grade as they are more subjective in nature. Whereas Math was seen to be easier to assess and grade. Most teachers agree that grading takes up a lot of time, while few argue that grading is the only way to track student progress. Teachers are not in agreement over whether percentage grades, letter grades or anecdotal feedback would be easier to assign. Two key points are the time management factor and a dislike for assigning percentage grades by the majority. Regardless of how teachers feel about grading, it is a mandatory part of the job. Let us examine if teachers believe in the effectiveness of

communicating through percentage grades.

What teachers believe about communicating student learning to students

Figure 4.

<u>*Best Way to Help Students Understand How They Are Doing*</u>
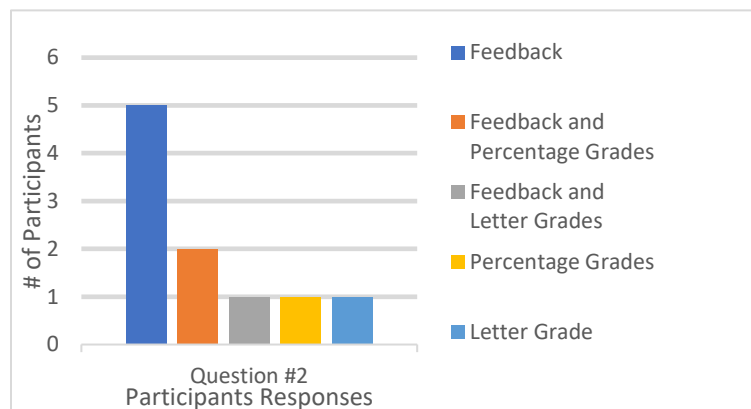
Note. Participant responses to question #2: student understanding

Here is a chart that represents the second question from the questionnaire: *"what do you believe is the best way to help students understand how well they are doing?"* Two out of ten participants chose written or verbal feedback and percentage grades, which is what our current system expects of teachers. Eight of the participants chose written or verbal feedback as being the best or one of the best ways to communicate learning to students. If the purpose of report cards is to communicate to students about how well they are doing, this provides some evidence that most teachers do not think students are accurately receiving this information with our current grading system. If this is the case, what is the purpose the purpose of report cards and who is it benefiting?

While delving into this topic throughout the interviews, most teachers stated that report card grades were, in fact, not intended for students. Rather, report cards are seen as being strictly for parents as students rarely ask about their marks (P7, line 20). Chrystal added to this, saying

that she thinks her students "don't care about their Drama marks" (P6, line 15). She included that sometimes the older students will ask if they did well, but never ask what they got as a grade (P6, line 17). Ken also stated that the students never ask him why they got a particular grade in Physical Education, which leads him to believe that they do not care (P7, lines 21 & 23). Parker echoed similar views in that "grades do not represent anything to the younger grades" as they are not able to interpret the meaning behind the grade, so the reports really are just for parents (P10, lines 28, 31 & 32). Jennifer and Brittany mentioned that they think the report cards are for the parents as well, and that children do not "internalize what those numbers mean" (P2, line 26). Rather, they react to the verbal feedback teachers give them in class about their work and they just want to make their teacher happy (P5, line 30; P2, line 25-26). This statement falls in line with most of the participants who chose written/verbal feedback as being effective. Ruby's thoughts were similar as she says that students have no clue what the numbers mean, and she has seen them ask parents "did I do well?" as they try to understand the meaning of their grades (P9, lines 15 & 16). This provides more evidence that students are not understanding their percentage grades and these marks are not providing adequate feedback on their learning.

In contrast, Anita stated that her grade six students often compare their grades with their peers and can be hard on themselves over perceived bad grades, which leads them to focus more on the end result rather than the process (P4, lines 23-25). Leila agreed with Anita that her grade five and six students are increasingly aware of their grades. She has observed that when they get so caught up in the grades, they are not seeing the bigger picture, which is: are they actually understanding the material or not? (P8, lines 83 & 84). Parker also briefly talked about how music quizzes stress his older students and they get fixated on how much things are worth (P10, lines 78-79). For him as a teacher, this attitude "negates the purpose of learning for the sake of

learning" (P10, line 80).

I would argue that it is not that children "don't care" about their grades, like Ken stated. Rather, they do not understand what the grades represent and they are therefore meaningless for most students. It appears most students under Grade 5 do not understand their percentage grades, whereas fifth and sixth graders start developing an understanding that percentage grades mean *something important,* but they do not necessarily understand what that something is. This could be due to the fact that, as the participants have stated above, report card information is not provided to students in a way that they can derive meaning even though, from the time students are in Kindergarten, they receive these report cards three times a year, every year. Fast forward to grade five, when all of a sudden students start to figure out that report card grades are extremely value-laden, whether it be because parents start paying more attention due to high school admissions like Ken stated, or they just become more aware with maturity. What matters here is that students are still not receiving adequate feedback about their learning. The teachers clearly believe students will receive this best through verbal/written feedback, which is not being given in a report card. Furthermore, the grades they are receiving are often causing pressure and stress in regards to high school admissions, parental approval and peer competition. All of which are negative consequences that shift their attention away from the main purpose of school: learning.

What teachers believe about communicating student learning to parents

Seeing as how grades are mostly intended for parents then, as agreed upon by the participants, this section explores further how teachers perceive parental understanding.

Figure 5.

Best Way to Help Parents understand How Their Child is Doing
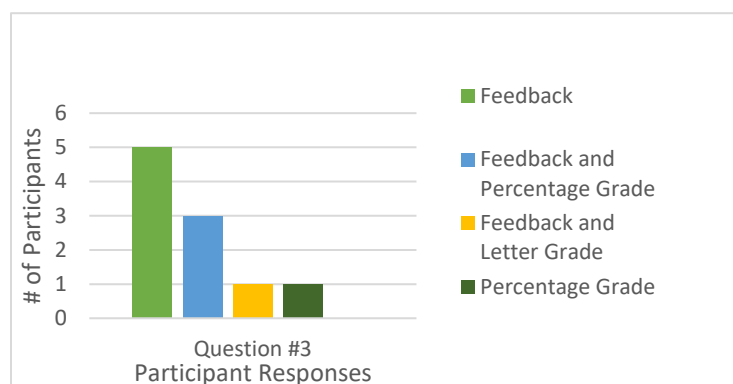
Note. Participant responses to question #3: parental understanding

For the question regarding parents, *"what do you believe is the best way to help parents understand how well their child is doing?"*, teachers' responses were similar to that of the "student understanding" perspective. This table shows that nine participants believe that feedback (written/verbal comments), in some capacity, is the most effective way of showing parents how their child is doing in school. Three teachers think that parents are more likely to understand feedback paired with percentage grades, as recommended in our current system. It is quite evident that feedback seems to hold higher value in communicating student achievement to parents as well. None of the teachers chose letter grades alone to be effective in communicating, yet five of them verbally stated that letter grades would in fact be easier to explain, less competitive, and "softer" to digest (P4, lines 4 & 5; P1, line 57 & 58; P7, line 48; P6, line 45; P2, line 8). This is interesting because it provides some evidence that even the teachers who prefer letter grades still find them to be insufficient without the verbal/written feedback to back it up.

Many teachers agreed that anecdotal feedback and a chat with parents would be more helpful for parents to understand where their child is at and how they are progressing as opposed to a grade (P1, line 14; P3, line 19; P8, line 64). Others stated that the comments are necessary to

explain their marks, otherwise parents would be confused about what it meant (P3, lines 53 & 54; P5, line 11). It is evident then that teachers do not think a percentage grade is sufficient information to inform parents of student learning. In line with this, Ken shared insight into the parent perspective on understanding report card grades. Ken stated that how as a father, despite being a teacher himself, he does not understand his children's report cards because "things are weighted so differently" (P7, line 56). He would be studying with his children for a test, only to find out later, if he asked the teacher, how much it was worth. He explained how the report card grade is made up of various academic tasks that are weighed differently and averaged, so it is difficult to really know what each grade means (P7, lines 57-58).

In conclusion, these teachers believe that verbal or written feedback is the most useful form of feedback that should be given to both students and parents in order to best communicate information about student learning. This is interesting because a) it is not the mandated format of feedback that teachers have to provide in Quebec, and b) the teachers also expressed that they often tip-toe around the comments they make in order to not upset parents. Teachers in Quebec are expected to provide one percentage grade at the end of each term, for each subject, with a prewritten comment selection to choose from. Personalized general comments are recommended, but not mandatory for each school. By the time teachers finish calculating and inputting all the percentage grades for each subject and each student, there is hardly any time for writing up genuine, individual feedback that now explains the grade. The participants all mention that with how long grading currently takes, there cannot possibly be time to communicate what teachers want to communicate, the way they want to communicate it. Therefore, what teachers think is the best way of communicating student learning to both students and parents alike is not being done due to the anticipation of negative parental reactions, the mandated percentage grades, and the

lack of time. It makes me wonder then, what is the purpose of report card grades, and whom is it serving? If report card grades are meant to inform parents about student learning, why is meaningful written feedback not mandatory? It appears that the parents and students are not being served well by report cards – even though we have been using this system for decades.

What teachers think report cards actually represent

Despite not being able to communicate learning the way they think is best, teachers also have varying opinions on what report cards, as they are, actually represent. When asked in the interview "what does a report card grade represent to you?", the results were all unique. Pierre and Leila claimed that the goal of the report card grades should be to inform parents of their child's strengths and weaknesses so that parents can provide support at home (P1, line 23; P8, line 44). Pierre explained that if a student is having difficulty with something, he will write a comment specific to the topic and makes sure that the grade is lowered so that the two are parallel in communicating this message for the parents (P1, line 27). For these two teachers, report card grades across subjects represent the areas a student thrives in and where they struggle. More information would be needed in order to get a clearer picture of what exactly these comments look like in relation to a grade. If a child struggles with basic addition, for example, but masters all other units in math – let us say on shapes and place value within the same term - does the report card grade and comment magnify the struggle or the successes? Surely it cannot demonstrate both of these in one grade, even with a relevant comment to explain. Similarly, if a child performs poorly on tasks related to basic addition, but does so because he is disruptive and is constantly sent out of the classroom during instruction time, will the comment and averaged grade explain that? Allal (2013) found that in cases where student performance was not consistent across the term and teachers had to choose between two final

grades, more information was needed to judge the student's understanding properly. Some of this information was gathered through examining student struggles in comparison to their daily tasks, student discussions and levels of participation. Other information was collected through extra conversations with the students, their parents, and even other colleagues (Allal, 2013).

Pierre also stated that each child's final grade and the distance from the class average is significant as it is telling of where they fall in comparison to their peers (P1, lines 41, 45, 46). Anita shared similar beliefs and stated that the report card tells all stakeholders if the student is at grade level, what they are really good at and what they need more help with (P4, line 16). Chrystal also claimed to believe that report card percentages compare students to their peers and inform parents if they are on the right or wrong track (P6, lines 13, 35 & 36). Brittany disagreed with the former opinion as she does not believe the class average is very telling of anything because she does not think we should be comparing students to each other. Rather, teachers and parents should be looking at where each child was before, and how they have progressed so far (P2, lines 19, 21). She elaborated on how she cannot even compare her own two children, as they are completely different learners and students, never mind comparing them to an entire class (P2, line 20). So for Brittany, the report card is a benchmark for where they started off in relation to the progression of learning, and where they need to reach by the end of the year based on their grade level competencies (P2, lines 28 & 29).

Chrystal suggested that the percentage does not really matter in the end, because if two students got different passing grades, the difference could be due to various factors, e.g., how well they perform on tests, if they mishandled one assignment, or how they do not learn well in the way that their teacher is teaching. She explained that "many factors come into play that we can't see in a grade," and so grades do not communicate how "smart" students are (P6, lines 8,

38 & 40). Jennifer explained that she thinks report cards mean different things for different grade levels. Her report cards should be perceived as a baseline of where they started off, and where they will end up (P5, lines 28 & 32). Due to the descriptive nature of her Kindergarten report card format, she emphasized on the report card comments reflecting student behaviors, kindness and respect (P5, line 18). This means that her report cards are not only communicating student progress, but also how kind, well behaved, and respectful her students are throughout the term. I think it is important to note here that this discrepancy from younger grades to older grades needs to be communicated to parents clearly.

Ken stated that he sees the report card grades as representative of effort. As mentioned prior, Ken does not give high grades to the experienced athletes in his class just because they are athletic. He wants the report card grade to communicate how much the students are trying and participating, even when the sports/movements are hard for them (P7, lines 27-31). Likewise for Parker, who emphasized on student engagement and how they participate in class with the tasks and materials. For him, the grades reflect their level of effort, perseverance and the ability to keep up with the lessons (P10, lines 51, 54, 55). As mentioned above, Leila expressed how report cards inform her of how easy or hard certain subjects are for each student. Contrary to Jennifer and Brittany, it does not tell Leila how much they have progressed from one assignment to another. Whether a student is really good in a subject or improved in that particular subject, the grade will not be telling of this (P8, lines 55, 56, 57).

Guskey and Bailey (2010) and Cox and Olsen (2009) emphasize how important it is for the whole school faculty to be on the same page about what report card grades are representing. As found by Brookhart (1991), when grades are representing varying factors that are unknown to the recipients, it results in "hodgepodge grading" which has a detrimental impact on the validity

and reliability of grades. There is evidence from this study that teachers are participating in this type of practice as report card grades represent something different to each participant. When asked what report card grades signified to them, the teachers spoke about a wide variety of representations: progress, prosocial behaviors, effort, participation, student engagement, perseverance, a distance from the class average, student strengths and weaknesses, how easy or difficult subjects are, and individual benchmarks for the year. The shock of this conclusion is threefold. First, some of these teachers work in the same school, and all work within the same school board, yet they still have extremely different views on this topic. Second, and as a consequence of the first point, parents and students are only going to know what their teacher is trying to represent with their grade under the condition that teachers are being direct and purposeful in their communication to families. Third, we know that most teachers are not being direct and purposeful in their communication because a) they are not communicating in a way that they think students and parents understand best (written/verbal feedback), b) they are tip-toeing around the messages they really want to convey as to not upset parents, administrators, and students, and c) they do not have the necessary time to be purposeful in their feedback.

If this does not yet convince you of how erroneous report card grades are, let us go a bit further. Not one teacher stated that report card grades were representative of how much the students have actually learned, in other words, "student achievement," one of the main factors report cards are supposedly intended to communicate, as stated by Guskey (2015), O'Connor (2009) and Brookhart (1991). Not only does the research elaborate on this particular point but it was also agreed upon by all of these same participants, who stated that they consider "student achievement" as being very important when developing their report card grades. This sets up a quandary: teachers are focusing on student achievement when assigning report card grades, yet

they do not think report card grades are representative of student achievement.

What issues/benefits can be found in the current system

This brings us to our next topic, which is teachers' thoughts on the issues and benefits of our current percentage grading system in Quebec. The ability to understand report card comments and percentages was seen as an issue in our current system. It was mentioned above that parents and students do not understand report card grades as they are, due to the varying factors that teachers consider when formulating their grades, and due to inconsistency in the intended purpose of the grades, as perceived by the teachers. Additionally, a few of the teachers have identified the percentage scale as being problematic for other reasons.

One major issue with percentage scales is that parents, teachers and students alike do not understand the difference between varying percentages. There is no clear description for each percentage in the 100% scale. Brittany stated that "parents should know what a 60 means, an 80, a 90" but then later asked, "what's the difference between an 80 and 83?" (P2, line 9 & 17). She came back to this idea later on in the interview and stated that there is a "minimal difference between 82 and 85" and it is hard to make a case for the 3 percent difference (P2, line 61). Like Brittany, Chrystal also asked the question "what's the difference between 84 and 89?" She claimed that "nobody knows" (P6, lines 5, 45, 47). Guskey (2013) explains that the 100% scale creates an illusion of precision, yet in reality, it could not be further from precise. As seen in this study, teachers do not know what each individual percent represents as there is no standard criteria for each percent in this scale. It is clear that if teachers do not know the difference for each percentage in the 100% scale, parents certainly cannot know either. This provides some evidence that a range of percentages may be easier to explain, as each individual percentage lacks specific criteria. Some teachers did identify a range of A-D or 1-5 as being helpful for them

when it comes to assigning grades for this purpose.

Ruby also expressed her own confusion with report card grades when she asked, the student gets "75% of what?" She raised another important question about how a grade can be reflective of "the curriculum, the goals and the competencies" all in one (P9, lines 50 & 51). In other words, how can one percentage grade encompass all of the curriculum being taught, the individual and grade level goals for each child in each subject, and all of the targeted competencies? It appears that the notion of averaging several grades into one report card grade seems inaccurate and inexplicable to Ruby. Parker stated that because grading is not standardized at all, a lot is up to interpretation for the teacher. Despite knowing this, teachers still need to come up with a grade somehow (P10, line 87, 90, 91). Jennifer reiterated several times that grading is extremely subjective, and a huge disadvantage to our reporting system is that we do not have standard grading grids for everyone to use. Due to this, one teacher's 75% grade will not be the same worth as someone else's (P5, lines 65-67). Anita also echoed this when she said that "an 80 at our school can be a very high grade at another school," concluding that grades across teachers and schools can be completely different despite the student doing the same quality of work (P4, line 43). The point that grades do not necessarily communicate what teachers want to communicate is clear based on the teachers' responses. Leila explained that report cards do not always show progress and hard work because although the student might be making progress, the work is also getting harder throughout the year. This, she added, is why the comments are so important, as she wants students to realize what they understand, what they have progressed in, and what they still struggle with (P8, lines 94-98).

Melissa explained that the way the grade levels are divided by cycles in Quebec is a disadvantage to students because the ones who struggle usually only receive the help they need

at the end of their cycle (P3, lines 50-52). Melissa elaborated on how this is a waste of time for the student who should be receiving help right away. Although this is not directly related to percentage grade disadvantages, it may be an important factor when some teachers formulate their grades. Ruby stated some concerns for the younger children who are not developmentally ready for their grade level. She thinks it is ridiculous that teachers still have to grade them knowing that all kids are at different levels (P9, lines 44 & 45). Ruby explained that the goal of "life-long learning" at her school board is heading in the right direction, where students are encouraged to engage in meaningful learning experiences that can later be transferred to real situations in the world. That being said, this type of philosophy, as good as it appears on paper, does not translate itself well to percentage grading. Ruby expressed wonder at how teachers can effectively assess students' ability to apply meaningful learning and skills in all areas of their lives through the use of inconsequential grading methods (P9, lines 73 & 74). Morrison (2003) supports Ruby's statement, and adds that students are often discouraged from becoming these lifelong learners that we hope for. By grading students, we are forcing their focus on performance and competition amongst peers. Lifelong learning should instead focus learning for the sake of learning (Morrison, 2003). Thus encouraging life-long learner mindsets and assigning grades cannot function in parallel to one another.

Benefits of report cards

The participants did not only mention disadvantages to the report card system, they also elaborated on some key benefits. Parker believes that the benefits of the percentage scale is that if you are a high achiever, and you do really well, percentages let you know how much of the requirements and expectations you have met (P10, line 82). Similarly, Ruby stated that the percentage grades set the high achievers apart from the rest (P9, line 43). On the other hand, low

achievers are also set apart from the rest – which can be extremely damaging to a child's self-esteem and self-confidence in school, which we know are key predictors of later success. According to Klapp (2015), there were significant differences between low-achieving students who were graded, and low-achieving students who were not graded, in relation to their later academic success. The students who were graded continued to perform at a lesser extent compared to the ungraded low-achievers (Klapp, 2015). Therefore the idea that grades are good for the high-achieving students puts many other students at a disadvantage and we must not assume that grades are benefiting all students equally.

Pierre, Anita and Chrystal claimed that comparing student grades to the class average is a benefit as it is indicative of whether students are on the right track in their grade level. I would argue that this is putting a lot of responsibility on the students to be the ones to set the bar to success in their grade level. With this line of reasoning, each grade level's grade expectations would change every year depending on the group of students - instead of the curriculum, tasks and goals for each child. For example, one year, the third grade students could perform significantly low as a group due to a large variety of student factors. The class average could be 65% which would make 65% the standard or "acceptable" grade to which all parents hold the students against. The following year, the third grade students could perform significantly higher, let us say 90%, thus setting the standard much higher for grade level success. Does that mean that the child who receives a 65% in the first year, knows more than the child who receives 65% the second year? Does it mean that the child who receives 65% with a class average of 65% is at grade level, whereas the child who receives 65% with a class average of 90% is not at grade level? This puts to question what being at "grade level" even means in a world of percentage grades. If 100% mastery is the target level of success, why do we care about class averages and

peer comparisons? I believe the more important factor to consider to know where students are "supposed to be" in their grade level would be the "Progression of Learning" provided by the Quebec Education Plan, and it has nothing to do with percentages or averages. We should be focusing on how far each student is from complete mastery (100%), instead of focusing on how far they are from the majority of students (average). Similarly, the class average does not tell anyone how much of the curriculum was understood and which parts need more work and practice. Again, comparing a student to the average is not very significant *if* the purpose is to assess student knowledge.

In addition, studies have shown that creating this type of competitive classroom culture, where parents and students compare themselves to peers, has its disadvantages. Morrison (2003) emphasizes how focusing on this type of "performance orientation," that amplifies how well a student learns a topic in comparison to their peers, deters students from attaining the goal of learning while forcing them to focus on earning a good grade instead. In line with this notion of "performance orientation," Leila added in that report card grades can be compared to money as payment for work in the real world. It can give students something to work towards and force them to organize themselves to reach the goal they want, which she sees as positive (P8, lines 105, 106, 108). However, this is precisely what Morrison (2003) argues against. When students invest their attention towards 'earning a grade', as compared to money, they lose focus of the learning orientation. The learning orientation directs students to make sense of their learning and the content being taught in order to feed their natural curiosity and excitement towards understanding the world. This orientation enables them to think critically and problem-solve, all the while not fearing failure. The minute we include grades as a reward for performance, we shift their attention away from this spontaneous, genuine curiosity and discourage their level of risk

taking as a consequence (Morrison, 2003).

Unlike the majority of participants, Leila argued that one of the benefits of report cards are that the grades are easy to back up, through calculating the average of all the different assignments (P8, lines 91, 93). Jennifer stated that a benefit of the reporting system is how it helps build a connection between home and school life. Despite grades not meaning anything to kindergarten students, it opens the door for parent and teacher interactions (P5, lines 30 & 50). These outlier comments demonstrate further the subjectivity of the grading experience for teachers.

There are several disadvantages and benefits to our current report card grading system as identified by the participants. Given the potential harm of grades, some of which are linked directly with benefits (e.g., differentiating students), an important question is: "are report card grades worth the damage they instill?" Based on teacher perceptions of the goals of education, we see more clearly how grades have little to do with educational goals.

Goals of education today

Parker stated that he is not really sure what the goals are in education as so much is left up to each person's own interpretation. That being said, he elaborates on his personal goal of education, and that is to develop lifelong learning around music. He speaks to the importance of empowering students to be resourceful when trying to figure out or create music. One of his other goals is to teach the students how to play music without his help, so that in the future, they can be independent in their musical endeavours (P10, lines 92, 97-101). Pierre also said that he believes the goal of education should be to inspire life-long learning, stating that inspiring students is a major concern in his classroom throughout the year, although he acknowledged that this does not happen in every classroom (P1, lines 75-77). Ruby's thoughts echoed Parker's and

Pierre's when she stated that the ultimate goal of education, which she relates to the Ministry of Education curriculum, is to have students learn the skills for life-long learning. She explained that this means learning skills that can be used across many situations and content areas (P9, line 73 & 74). She, similar to Pierre, recognized that this does not occur with every single teacher as it is a more progressive view on education. Ken stated that the goal of Physical Education is to find ways to reach all students and motivate them to be active participants in their physical health and education (P7, lines 49-51).

Jennifer argued that teachers do not spend enough time teaching their students life skills (P5, lines 55 & 61); instead of focusing on these important skills, teachers are too busy focusing on the competencies and making sure all the material is covered, and all the while students are becoming "puppets" (P5, lines 61 & 62). Brittany added that the schools do not teach students the necessary life skills or foster efficient work habits for future high school life (P2, line 59). Jennifer claimed that she does include teaching her students the basic skills needed to learn such as listening, following rules, sitting still and being kind (P5, line 60). She hopes to help them become "good people" and to use their skills across different classrooms or settings (P5, lines 56 & 57).

Anita explained that the goal of education is in fact to prepare students for the workforce and the "real world" (P4, lines 45-46). Similar to this, Chrystal stated that she believes the goal is to help develop well-rounded students who grow enough confidence and can pursue and succeed in whatever career their choose (P6, line 41). Along these lines, Leila believes that the goal is to develop caring individuals who have the ability to think for themselves so that when career doors open, they can reach their potential (P8, lines 101-104).

Melissa claimed that the goals of education are to just move students through seven years of their school life. She stated that some students get the help they need, while others are just going from "one door to the next" (P3, lines 55 & 56). Similarly, Brittany shared that the goal is for students to finish their seven years of elementary and be ready and successful for high school, yet she does not believe the system does a good job at this. Since Brittany's school does not believe in homework, she expressed that students are underprepared for what high school is like: managing one's time, completing assignments, and being independent learners outside of the classroom (P2, lines 57 & 58).

Teachers have so many different views on what the goal of education is today. I think grading is a problem that can only be looked at more closely once the education system is redefined, repurposed and realigned. How can we grade students based on inconsistent and unclear notions of what it means to be an educated person in our society? This goes beyond teachers' personal teaching philosophies; rather, it is about society. What does this society believe the purpose of our education system is? Is it to help young people become productive adult citizens, as suggested by Anita and Chrystal? Is it to create lifelong learners who can think critically and problem solve in novel situations, as suggested by Parker, Pierre, Ruby and Ken? Or is it to help move children along to high school as suggested by Melissa and Brittany? Until we decide and agree, together, what the purpose of educating children is, we cannot move away from the interconnected conundrums that make up the broken system.

If these variations of the goal of education are meaningful or reflective of the greater teacher perceptions, percentage grades hinder each and every one. The focus on percentage grades pushes students away from the life-long learning mindset that so many teachers claimed to be the goal of education (Morrison, 2003). Life-long learning promotes the desire to learn for

the joyful sake of learning, and aims to fulfill a child's genuine curiosity. Percentage grades suppress this genuine desire and curiosity by having students instead focus on their performance, avoid risk-taking behaviors and compare themselves to their peers. In terms of "preparing students for real life," I think it goes without saying that in real life, we rarely receive 'grades' for our work. Instead, employers normally have conversations with their employees where they discuss strengths and weaknesses and they provide constructive criticism (hopefully). I would also argue that learning in elementary school should not be compared to working in the workforce as the two are completely different skills. Lastly, if the goal of education is strictly to help students prepare for high school, percentage grades are a hindrance here too. As stated by Klapp (2015), low grades in earlier years was a predictor of later academic struggles, compared to students who were not labelled with low grades. This by itself shows some evidence that grades can be more damaging than helpful in preparation for high school, and can in fact set them up for failure.

Synthesis of Part 2

In conclusion to the second research question (what teachers believe about our grading system), it goes without saying that teachers have many negative feelings towards the grading process. The main opinions against report cards are that they promote potential conflicts with parents, they take a great deal of extra time in order to provide accurate feedback, and teachers have difficulty differentiating between the various percentage grades. The majority of the participants believe verbal or written feedback to be the most efficient form of feedback for parents and students to understand what occurs in the classroom. This is even more important for grade five and six students, as there seems to be a clear shift in the valuation of grades at this stage. It is evident that teachers are not communicating in clear or meaningful ways with the sole

use of report card percentages. It is no wonder why students and parents are not understanding what the percentage grades represent. We have no clear descriptions for each percentage grade, and grades represent something different to each teacher. Not only do they represent something different to everyone, none of the participants claimed that grades represent student achievement. According to Guskey (2015) and Brookhart (1991), student achievement should be the main factor that teachers are trying to communicate through their grades. However, this has been shown to be much more challenging than assumed.

Implications and Conclusions

What can we learn from teachers' experiences of grading practices in elementary school? The purpose of this study was twofold: first, to find out how elementary teachers formulate their report cards and, second, to explore what Quebec teachers believe about our current grading system. It is clear that grading is a complex part of both teaching and learning that teachers, students and parents need to navigate. This study explored how the lack of direction, communication and standardization within grading policies and methodologies forces teachers to develop their own grading systems which vary greatly.

According to measurement theoriests such as Brookhart (1991), the purpose of grading is to communicate to parents and students about student learning. As per the findings of this study, it is clear that percentage grades are in fact not communicating to all parties effectively. More so, it is evident that teachers are including more than just student achievement in their grades; rather, they are including many factors such as effort, progress and behaviors. This makes it nearly impossible for parents to dissect and understand what each grade represents. As important as parent-teacher communication is, there is a risk of conflicts arising due to the lack of understanding on the part of the parents. As Pierre explained, no matter what grade teachers

choose and how much time they put into finding the perfect number, there will always be a range of parental understanding and disappointment (P1, lines 78-80). I think with more regular communication, more meaningful feedback about student learning, and through moving away from labelling students with percentages, these conflicts could be lessened. There needs to be a new system in place that allows for teachers to communicate grades the way they feel is most effective, that is, through verbal and written feedback. This would also benefit the students who internalize their grades, and focus solely on the end results instead of the process of learning. Grades were found to distract them from the "learning orientation" and force them to focus on the "performance orientation" which has many negative consequences (Morrison, 2003).

My personal and professional take-away from this study is that the issue of grading is inextricably linked to a deeper systemic issue of understanding the goals of education. In addition, I believe that with clear goals for each child, anecdotal records, regular conferences and purposeful feedback, all parties have the possibility to understand the mind of the learner in more depth. We should only compare students to their previous selves – and no other standard should be considered. We should focus our attention on how much of the curriculum is being mastered by our students, not necessarily how well they are learning it compared to their peers. Before this can even be a possibility for many teachers, we need to restructure our school policies so that teachers can be given the *time* and *resources* needed to engage in these meaningful interactions. Teachers need to be responsible for fewer students, as in, smaller class sizes. Teachers need extra support for students who are struggling to meet the expectations of their curriculum. A teacher's freedom to evaluate based on what they believe is important is not the problem; rather, it is percentage grades as the main form of communication and misinterpretation from parents and

students that is problematic. I want to reiterate that the teachers I have interviewed and worked with in the past are not at fault for the issues that I identify in this paper.

This qualitative study enables others to see deeper into the teacher perspective in regards to report card grading. The results suggest strongly that many factors come into play when developing report card grades. Indeed, too many factors – that address both achievement and non-achievement elements – bring to question the validity and reliability of report card grades in elementary school. It becomes increasingly difficult for parents and students to make meaning from report cards, which renders these documents ineffective at communicating student achievement.

Limitations of Study and Implications for Further Research

Due to the qualitative nature of this study and the small sample size, generalizations cannot be made about teachers' perspectives on report card grading to the entire teacher population. That being said, this small sample size was also an advantage as it allowed for deeper conversations and consequently, richer data that may not have been gathered on a larger scale. Furthermore, as all participants worked for the same school board, it was beyond the scope of this study to compare perspectives and methodologies across different school boards. All participants used the same report card format, which is mandatory across Quebec, therefore this study sheds light on the education system within Quebec and should be read through this lens. This sample included a large variety of teachers with respect to grade level, subjects taught and years of experience. This could be considered a limitation as perhaps comparing and contrasting teachers who teach the same subjects and grade levels would offer different information. Additionally, only the teacher perspective was analyzed, and not that of parents or students, which may offer different information. Another limitation is that of the questionnaire aspect in

the methodology of the study. It was meant to prepare the participants with the topics and vocabulary for the upcoming interview and was used as a form of triangulation. This could have created a bias and impacted the way they responded to the interview questions. A final limitation is that I, the researcher, came to this topic through a very personal lens as an elementary teacher seeking to find answers. Although this can be seen as an advantage to some, it could have led to biases in the data analysis and interview questions. Despite these limitations, the results of this study are still valid in answering the two research questions based on teachers' personal experiences with grading.

Future research could focus on varying formats of report cards across school boards and look into how other educational systems evaluate students. Studies could also be done throughout different provinces in Canada to explore how teachers feel about grading across the country. Further research is needed to establish how report card grades are formulated for students with special needs and specific adaptations, and to explore how this impacts teacher, parent and student experiences. Future research could also aim at exploring how subject specific teachers feel about grading their subject to a particular age group; for example, grade six teachers who teach and evaluate math, strictly. It would be interesting to have employees of the school boards and Ministry of Education as part of a future sample to discover their perspectives on grading. On a completely different note, future studies should take into account the teachers who do not use grades in their classrooms at all, and to examine what alternatives are used instead. Lastly, with Covid-19 forcing schools to shut down for four months in March 2020, and resuming with online learning in many areas around the world, it would be worthwhile to explore how teachers plan on evaluating students if this would become the new norm. Future research is

needed to establish how parents and students feel about report cards and what they think it tells them about student learning.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Participant information
Name:
Age:
Gender:
Current grade level:
Level of education:
Years of experience as a teacher:
Grades taught:

Questionnaire
1) In your opinion, what is the most accurate way to collect evidence of student learning?
a) tests
b) assignments
c) projects
d) homework
e) observation
f) other: _____

2) What do you believe is the best way to help students understand how well they are doing?
a) percentage grade
b) feedback (written/verbal)
c) percentage grade and feedback (written/verbal)
d) letter grade
e) other: _____

3) What do you believe is the best way to help parents understand how well their child is doing?
a) percentage grade
b) feedback (written/verbal)
c) percentage grade and feedback (written/verbal)
d) letter grade
e) other: _____

4) Which factors do you take into account when grading a student? Circle all that apply.
a) Achievement (assessment grades)
b) Behavior
c) Homework completion
d) Effort
e) Progress
f) Other: _____

5) Place these student factors in order from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important) in your perspective as their teacher.
__ Progress
__ Achievement
__ Effort
__ Behavior
__ Homework

6) Which other external factors impact the way you develop report card grades? Circle all that apply.
a) previous year report card grades
b) administration
c) parents
d) personal beliefs about learning and evaluation
e) teacher-student relationships
f) other: _____

Appendix B

Sample Coding of Individual Interviews

Table P1: Pierre's Interview

Pierre's Transcript (P1)	Themes
1	
2 Everybody does it differently. There is absolutely no standard.	Lack of standard
3 But I am telling you, there is no standard.	Lack of standard
4 that sounds good, let's give them that grade	Value of grade
5 nothing done in class is meaningful towards grade	Value of grade
6 Grades have no relevance to work done for many teachers	Value of grade
7 teachers use grades to communicate a message they can back up for how they feel	Grades to communicate how they feel
8 be able to professionally rationalize and support why you gave that evaluation.	Support evaluation
9 doesn't mean you need set amount of evaluations	Evaluation methods
10 We should be using anecdotal feedback	Anecdotal feedback
11 parents first question is always 'how is my child doing?'	Parental feedback
12 Grades not capturing the goal of communicating to parents	Grades not communicating to parents
13 The parents are not getting the message if they ask 'how is my child doing'	Grades not communicating to parents
14 Anecdotal commentary and a talk with parents is far more useful	Anecdotal feedback
15 Talk to parents face to face instead of wasting time writing comments	Parent communication
16 Every school at this board has to meet with parents first term	Parent communication
17 student's place with respect to the average, that's meaningful	Class average
18 Look at the comments	R.C comments
19 Our comments are not written in a human, easy to read manner. Parents don't understand what we write	R.C comments
20 comments are written in professional lingo, talk in nuance. The parents don't get it.	R.C comments
21 We need to communicate with parents. We need to let them know.	Parent communication
22 as a dad, I wouldn't want to wait and know at the end of the year that my kid sucks at what he is doing. No one likes surprises	Ongoing communication
23 goal of grades should be communication to parents about how they can help at home. That's it.	Goal of grades
24 If it's a communication with the student, you aren't talking to your students enough in class	R.C not for students
25 A student and you should know where they are great, where they are awesome and where they need to work on.	Student feedback
26 R.C shouldn't offer anything knew to students, it is purely for the parents	R.C for parents
27 If student needs to work harder, I will put that grade lower and write comment that matches that need, for the parents	R.C for parents
28 I have no problem with low grades. If your child dropped the ball, you need to pick it up and we need to work together	Collaborate with parents and student
29 Some admin shy away from failing. Some say there is no reason to ever fail.	Personal grading system
30 Some h.s programs only available for kids failing elementary	Educ system
31 place all my students in 'learner profiles'	Personal grading system
32 so based on 70, 80, 90% learner profiles, I look at each student and see how high/low they are in that range	Personal grading system
33 Can't give someone 100% first term and communicate improvement as it is the highest grade	Personal grading system
34 Even the high students, I don't give them their highest possible achieved score	Personal grading system
35 start with low 90s, second term go to mid 90s, and third term if there is still improvement, high 90s	Personal grading system
36 I rarely go below 40%. As long as I note a fail, that's all I need to do	Personal grading system
37 talk about what it means to be excellent, good, have rubrics. We talk it out.	Understanding grading system
38 Or I show them samples of work	Understanding grading system
39 Grading stresses teachers out, because dealing with parents is stressful	Parent-teacher stress
40 Grades represent reward/punishment from parents. Emotional disappointment from teachers	Impacts of grades
41 R.C grades represents distance from the average	Class average
42 I've had colleagues who gives students 90s because she loves them	Value of grade
43 colleagues who don't go higher because of last years report cards	Grades as stable

44	giving more importance to last years teacher	Teacher worth
45	Distance from average is always relevant, regardless of how you grade	Class average
46	distance from average is the telling part	Class average
47	I'm communicating learning profiles and distance from average	Class average
48	They don't, globablly. It's not for how I'm doing report cards.	R.C don't reflect
49	R.C grades generally communicate more about the teacher than the child (generally)	Grades communicate about teacher
50	student who enjoys learning, is cognizant, moves themselves forward	Student behaviors
51	poor student is opposite of that	Student behaviors
52	we were using letter grades. So I got it in my head that an A is in the 90s, B are 80s, and so on.	Personal grading system
53	I had letter grades as a child	Old system
54	My grandmother was a teacher, she would blast parents. The language was harsh.	Old system
55	I had a teacher write to me "peter should go to clown school"	Memory of comments
56	letter grades more meaningful than numbers	Preference to letter grades
57	softness to 5 letter grades	Letter grades are softer
58	coldness to have 100 distinctions (percentages)	Percentage is cold
59	letter grades are more digestible	Preference to letter grades
60	updating parents all throughout the year. Sending them pictures, explaining what we do in class	Ongoing communication
61	"you're child is nuts", I always do it with a smile. I can get away with saying things that other teachers can't	Open, genuine communication
62	we have to get to the truth with parents.	Honest communication
63	human interactions with parents - away from professionalism so much	Genuine communication
64	we have to humanize the experience more. Stay away from 'teacheries', it doesn't help the parents.	Genuine communication
65	there is an openness, freedom for each school and teacher to decide how they want to grade	Freedom of evaluation
66	we have to allow the freedom to convey the message we want to convey	Freedom to communicate learning
67	issue is that we grade differently, and we confuse parents because there is no standard	Grades not standard/confuse parents
68	as much as we give that sheet to parents, nobody looks at it when we do report cards.	Grades not standard
69	The only official representation we give parents, but it's meaningless to teachers	Miscommunication with parents
70	we're not aligned, and we are not communicating an alignment	Grades not standard
71	having freedom to mark as we want is not the problem. Parents need to understand our language	Explicit explanation of grading system
72	I can speak Japenese to you, if you speak Japanese. Next year the teacher can talk Chinese, as long as parents learn Chinese that year.	Explicit explanation of grading system
73	how these symbols are used, needs to be communicated to parents	Explicit explanation of grading system
74	Send out article about what grades mean for me	Explicit explanation of grading system
75	To inspire the love of life long learning	Life long learning
76	education SHOULD be to inspire the love of life long learning.. But not everyone does this	Life long learning
77	A big part of what I do is inspiration.	Inspiration
78	Don't put much stock into the numbers first term	Investment in grading
79	know that the numbers are meaningless. Breathe. It can be a very stressful time.	Meaning of grades
80	no matter what grade you give, someone will be upset, understanding, confused	R.C for parents
81	be able to tell parents how their child is doing, if your grade matches how you would answer that question, then that's the grade you put.	Personal grading system
82	explain your grade with confidence	Advice
83	tell them you hate this system, and that you think this convo is more meaningful	Honest communication
84	this number kind of reflected the message I wanted to share with you	Link grade to student performance
85	this is what I meant by putting this number.	Explicit explanation of grading system
86	talk about your number with confidence	advice

Table P2: Brittany's Interview

	Brittany's Transcript (P2)	Themes
1	Brittany's Transcript (P2)	Themes
2	I hate doing report cards. 3 times a year parents judge what goes on in the classroom	R.C for parents
3	Teachers think they have to write comments to justify their marks	Justify grades
4	Tip toe around what we say based on which parent it is for	Avoid conflict with parents
5	Say things more gently to judgemental, confrontational parents	Avoid conflict with parents
6	Conversations with parents that happen before the report card	Parent communication
7	No surprises on report card, but parents put value on that number	Grade value
8	Letters are better	Preference for letter grades
9	What's the difference between an 80 and 83?	Differentiate between percentages
10	Teachers don't even know what the difference is	Differentiate between percentages
11	Limited expectations, meets or surpasses. Then you know where they stand.	Letter grade criteria
12	I use how the work in class, how they participate	Student behavior
13	Based on what they know and what I see them producing in class, whether it be tests or work	Student knowledge and work production
14	I base grades on meets expectations, surpasses, how well they know content	Grading system
15	Math is easier to grade than the languages	Preference for grading subjects
16	R.C done because ministry tells us to. Not sure if parents understand what is on them	R.C for the ministry
17	Parents should know what a 60 means, an 80, a 90. They compare the averages	Grade value/ Class averages
18	Parents 'insulted' if child works below average	Parent conflict
19	which means nothing, you can't compare kids	Comparing students
20	can't compare my two kids, different students with different work habits	Comparing students
21	Benchmark should be where their child was before, not the class average	Student progress
22	Parents don't communicate what's in that R.C to students	R.C not for students
23	kids don't know how they should move forward for next term	Students don't receive feedback
24	students not curious about marks, don't know the difference between 80 and 90	Lack of understanding grades
25	If I take a minute to explain what their mark means and how much they understand, they get it	Student verbal feedback
26	They don't internalize what those numbers mean, they just want to make me happy right?	Lack of understanding grades
27	They don't know what the number means. I don't think parents communicate to them.	Lack of understanding grades
28	R.C tells me where they are in progression of learning based on gr level	Progression of learning (QEP)
29	Benchmark of where they are, where they need to be by the end	Progression of learning (QEP)
30	the main difference between good student/poor student: Effort.	Student characteristics
31	Student who tries her best, wants to learn, participates,	Student characteristics
32	These behaviors not reflected in her gade. But she is a good student	Inaccuracy of grades
33	doesn't make him a better student because he is smarter "academic wise"	Achievement doesn't make a good student
34	willingness to learn, put in the work and time compared to the kid who comes in and does nothing	Student behavior
35	R.C does not reflect effort	R.C does not reflect effort
36	R.C different back then - letter grades and small space for minimal comments	Old system
37	Comments important because parents wanted us to respect teachers and try out best	Old system
38	Parents knew what an A/B/C meant	Old system/Understanding grades
39	R.C have to be made more clear now than before	Comparison between R.C
40	We do more communicating with parents now, but they still don't understand our grades	Parent communication
41	minimal communication back then, and parents knew what grades meant	Old system/Understanding grades
42	Value and importance of education has changed	View on educ. Change/ Old system
43	Not sure if parents have the same respect for teachers and education today	Parental view on educ changes
44	The way each teacher reports across province isn't standard	Lack of standardization
45	could get X% at one school, but lower at another school.	Inconsistent meaning of grades
46	marks shouldn't change so much from one building to the next	Incosistent meaning of grades
47	The way teachers grade and report grades is not the same	Inconsistent meaning of grades
48	Grading should be completely objective and not subjective	Objective grading
49	What benefit are we doing the child if he gets different grades in two classes teaching the same thing?	Inconsistent meaning of grades
50	All using the QEP, should be objective across the province	Inconsistent meaning of grades
51	Effort is not your skill, it's your will. Can't mark your will	Effort cannot be graded
52	Physical report card is standard and same anywhere you go across QC	Consistent report card
53	We have room for comments, all using percentages. There aren't many benefits	Consistent report card
54	to be able to come out of 7 years ready for high school and successful	Prepare students for next step
55	taught on the continuum, communicate about what was done year before and after	Prepare students for next step
56	expectations aren't the same, communication isn't what it should be	Inconsistency in education
57	reality is, you have projects and assignments in high school.	School philosophies
58	students are shocked in high school that they have homework now	School pihloosphies
59	haven't taught them work habits and life skills	Importane of life skills
60	base grades on criteria more than the number.	personal grading system
61	Minimal difference between 82 and 85, hard to distinguish	Differentiate between percentages
62	Find out how everyone else grades in your school	Consistency within school

Table P3: Melissa's Interview

	Melissa's Transcript (P3)	Themes
1		
2	I don't like the format we are using.	Feelings towards grades
3	Grades and comments, missing a part that should be behavior	Grading system
4	Effort is the most important	Effort over ability
5	we have to write a novel for each kid to address behavior in comments	Frustrated by comments
6	when I was a kid and got a 67, parents knew what that meant	Meaning of grades
7	letter grades for behavior, percentage for academics	Meaning of grades
8	Space to address behavior and learning separately	Meaning of grades
9	entitled as a society, don't genuinely want to know how kid behaves	Parents view on behaviors
10	Behavior doesn't affect their grades now, can't show it on report card anywhere.	Report card exclude behaviors
11	if behavior affected their grades, maybe some parents would address issues more. Admin rarely follows	Behaviors and grades
12	grading is hard because based on observations and games, hard to show parents	Grades for parents
13	grading older kids, you have more tangible items to show parents (tests, assingments)	Grades for parents
14	I Don't do tests in grade 1	Evaluation
15	unprepared dictees, based on what we are doing in class (sounds, syllables)	Evaluation
16	tells me who is struggling, but I don't base my evaluation on that.	Evaluation
17	Grid that helps convert to percentages	Grading system
18	MELS wide grid	Consistency
19	Slightly different versions	Consistency
20	Parents get more out of conversation with teacher than report card	Parent communication
21	Parents don't discuss R.C with kids	Grades not for students
22	Parents rarely ask about french marks	Parents prioritize subjects
23	I don't think parents care about the french in grade 1	Parents prioritize subjects
24	Parents start to care in older grades, for high school entry	Parents prioritize subjects
25	Older kids realize what a 60 vs 80 means	Grades for students as they get older
26	Where students are now, and where they progressed from	Grades as indicators of progress
27	good indication of how he will end the year	grades as stable over time
28	a 65 kid is a 65 kid all throughout their school life	grades as stable over time
29	effort and work habits make a good student	Student behaviours
30	Which we can't include in report cards	Report cards exclude behaviors
31	have to write comments to demonstrate whole child, to compensate for poor R.C of QC	Whole child vision
32	What makes a good student is work habits and effort, eventually it will kick in	Work habits and effort
33	Good grades don't mean well-rounded student	Achievement vs. behaviors
34	No room in R.C to communicate what teachers want to communicate.	Importance of behaviors to teachers
35	We had tests back then. We were accountable. You fail, you fail. You don't study, you fail. You don't do your ho	Differentiating between past education and current
36	We had standardized tests at the end of the year that counted for something, I don't know how much.	Old system
37	We had test that were serious, they were important. That, I think, could determine whether you passed or fail	Differentiating between past education and current
38	And then when you did fail, you failed.	Old system
39	In many occasions, not all, you had to repeat because you didn't attain the objectives.	Differentiating between past education and current
40	We still see this in the French sectors, not on the English side. I don't believe in systematically repeating a ki	French vs Eng
41	I don't think that should be done systematically but in certain cases I think it's what's best for the kid.	Teacher philosophy
42	work habits no longer written in R.C	Behaviors on r.c
43	Learned early on that determination was important	Student determination
44	I don't like how R.C are divided	Grading system
45	Teachers misuse competencies on R.C	Personal grading systems
46	R.C are misleading because teachers change the competencies	Personal grading systems
47	In past, it was clear: writing, comprehension, reading, and speaking. Now they are mixed together	Differentiating between past education and current
48	We simplify for parents as oral, reading and writing. But that's not it.	Grades for parents
49	I like that we have room for comments	Comments on report cards
50	issue of cycles, kids who need help are encouraged to wait until end of cycle	Wasting time for struggling learners
51	have to tell parents to wait until end of cycle, and waste year to react to learning issues.	Wasting time for struggling learners
52	We have to wait until the next year, to see if it's serious. A whole year of no help and resources	Wasting time for struggling learners
53	French drop down menu for R.C are translated from English. They don't make sense. How can parents understa	Parent communication
54	Forces us to write hand written comments, on our own time	Frustrated by comments
55	goal to get them through 7 years of education	Goal of educ
56	Get them from one door to the next, try to help some of the kids	Goal of educ
57	I don't know how much kids are actually learning	Student's learning
58	Academics are pushed aside a bit. Emphasis on self-esteem, emotional well being	Emphasis on emotional instead of academics
59	Talk to other teachers while you evaluate and do report cards	Mentor teachers
60	It's not because you tweak your evaluation to meet needs of students that you are not really evaluating.	Personal grading systems

Table P4: Anita's Interview

#	Anita's Transcipt (P4)	Themes
1	Anita's Transcipt (P4)	Themes
2	grading should be letter grades, difficult to assign number to kids	preference towards letter grades
3	letter grades are less competitive, and more fair to students	preference towards letter grades
4	letter grades easier and less stressful	preference towards letter grades
5	Big issue is class average stated on report card	Class average
6	class average is a big thing for parents	Grades for parents
7	Back up mark	Back up grades
8	assignments and tests for evidence to back up mark	back up grades
9	Notify parents if there's risk of child failing	parent communication
10	a lot of pressure on kids and teachers	feelings towards grades
11	emails if parents don't agree with the mark on a test	Grades for parents
12	reporting accurately vs giving child another chance to succeed	Reporting in the moment vs retake
13	3 assignments per term	Evaluation
14	parents put pressure on school board and government to implement marks	Grades for parents
15	Less stress for teachers and kids	Letter grades less stressful
16	communicates if kids are at grade level, and what their weaknesses and strengths are	Communicate strengths/weaknesses
17	math situational problem requires different level of prompting so struggling students can get it	Teaching students where they are
18	difficult to give general explanations for tests because not all kids will get it	Student abilities
19	easier to give students a range than a number out of 100. more forgiving.	preference towards letter grades
20	Parent reaction big impact on how child perceives their grades	Grades for parents and students
21	A parent refuses to sign a test with lower than 85% on it.	Grades for parents
22	Kid hides low tests, becomes issue of miscommunication between parents	Parent communication
23	students compare their marks with others.	Grades are comparative to others
24	kids beat themselves up over grades.	Impacts of grades
25	students focused on the end result, not the process	Product vs proress
26	if you had to work really hard to get 75, we are more proud of you than if you got 90 cause it was easy for yo	Effort over ability
27	effort pays off	Effort
28	grade represents stress and work.	Feelings towards grades
29	students write their report card based on behaviors	Grading behaviors
30	Work habit, effort, organizaitonal skills, asking questions	Student behaviors
31	skills that require maturity.	Student behaviors
32	report cards do not necessarily demonstrate 'good' vs 'bad' student	inaccuracy for reporting
33	parents ask 'who are you to tell me my child isn't putting effort? How do you know?''	Effort immeasurable
34	maybe he is working his hardest but it is really hard for him.	Effort immeasurable
35	if teacher liked you, it mattered for fairness.	Fairness based on teacher feelings towards you
36	Well I had these terrible grade 6 teachers and maybe that's the reason I'm a grade 6 teacher.	Negative memories of school
37	But I had these terrible, terrible teachers. They told my parents lies	negative memories of school
38	She said, don't hang out with them because they are trouble. And I remember thinking, how the heck does	negative memories of school
39	She didn't even have us as students yet. It's because I had an older sister, who could be trouble sometime	teacher assumptions of students
40	unfair attitude towards us	negative memories of school
41	find something nice to say about this kid, don't want to be that teacher.	Impacts of past experiences
42	Flexibility is good and bad at same time	Teacher Freedom
43	an 80 at our school can be a very high grade at another school	Grades vary by school
44	easier for a kid switching to a different school	Grades vary by school
45	prepare kids for the real world.	Prepare students
46	prepare you as a person in the workforce	Prepare students
47	learn lessons the easy way, in safe environment	prepare students
48	be careful, refer to report card previous year	Past report cards
49	I wanna be ready for parents to receive a drop in grades	Grades for parents
50	Compare my grade to what they got last year, I check myself.	Past report cards
51	instead of giving a 0, rexplain and give part marks	Opportunities for success
52	communicate extra opportunity for part marks on test for parents	parent communcation
53	willing to put in the work and try, I will meet you half way.	Reward effort
54	grades are the most terrifying, stressful part of my job.	Feelings towards grades
55	must be my fault when kids don't do well	Parental conflicts
56	Yes. I applied for a sabbatical. Because, well it had nothing to do with marks but a parent did not like to h	Parental conflicts
57	what I had to say about their kid bothering other kids.	Parental conflicts
58	the mom told me that I was only a teacher for opportunities to bully small kids.	Parental conflicts
59	be gentle with yourself	self-care
60	don't shy away from giving another opportunity. Provide proof of first test and second.	provide opportunities
61	provide enough opportunity	provide opportunities
62	communicating on the test is huge	parent communication

Table P5: Jennifer's Interview

	Jennifer's Transcript (P5)	Themes
1	Jennifer's Transcript (P5)	Themes
2	subjective report cards, based on observation and behaviors.	Subjective report cards
3	questionnaire for parents, gives us a bseline and accounts for progress from beginning of year	Progress
4	Parents worried about french and academics	Report cards for parents
5	I focus on behaviors and getting them ready for school	Grading Behaviours
6	we explain that evaluations are based on behaviors. We want them to love learning.	Grading Behaviours
7	Some parents can be very focused on academics, and excuse the bad behavior	Grades for parents
8	But behaviors impact the marks	Grading Behaviours
9	Grades give parents view of what's going on in class, but it's subjective	Grades for parents
10	grading not based on a baseline from year to year, it's their opinion	Teacher's opinion
11	Report cards are comment based, so can explain to parents very well	Report cards for parents
12	Don't give D's out	Personal grading system
13	A exceeds expectations, B meets, C with support, and D not even a bit	Grading system
14	that's the criteria on the Kindergarten report card	Grading system
15	we give parents a copy of criteria at meet the teacher	Parent communication
16	I don't really give A at the beginning, don't feel like it gives opportunity to work towards	Personal grading system
17	high expectations for certain things	Personal grading system
18	Marks reflect being kind and respectful to others/adults	Grading behaviours
19	collect student work to follow progress	Student progress
20	By end of term, I should see progress	Student progress
21	If I see progress, they will get a B. Some kids exceed expectations, they get A	Grading progress
22	Might not get A next term	Grades fluctuate
23	Grade where they are currently	Grading student presently
24	I do notice if term 1 was really good, and then suddently something is not right	Student consistency
25	Whether they are not colouring/cutting properly anymore, or not caring. Motivation is huge	Student motivation
26	Effort is a huge part of my mark. I expect them to try their best.	Grading Behaviours
27	Report card directed solely at parents. I don't feel that parents explain r.c to their kids	Grades for parents
28	R.C means different things for different levels	Meaning of report cards
29	Primarily for the parents	Grades for parents
30	I don't think grades mean anything to K. The children react to what I'm doing in class. When I am proud, they kno	Grades not for students
31	if they haven't tried their best, I will make them redo task	Feedback
32	Grades as a baseline of where they are going. Good idea of where they started and where they will go.	Grades as a base
33	Good student someone who is motivated, follows directions, really tries	Student behaviors
34	don't expect them to be perfect, but if it is child's best work, important	Student's best work
35	Yes, it's their behaviour. Their willingness to listen to a grownup's instructions whether they want to or not.	Student behaviours
36	If somebody tells you clean up and you don't, well no, you're not listening.	Student behaviours
37	Letter grades as reflective for struggling students who need support	Report card accuracy
38	Easy to back up grade, makes it clear.	Back up grades
39	Parents can look through kid's work to see where I've gone with it.	Parent communication
40	My mom went by "did you do your best?" and she knew if I did or did not	Parental support
41	I got a D on one test that counted for the report card	Impact of bad grades
42	Mom was livid at teacher for not telling us it was counted for report card	Lack of parent communication
43	then I got an A the following term	Impact of good grades
44	Mom wanted me to do my best. I was a perfectionist. Under A wasn't good enough.	Internal pressure on self
45	I worked hard for my marks.	Working for grades
46	Grades reflected my hard work	Accuracy of grades
47	Kids need to be self-motivated, otherwise what's the point	Student self motivation
48	Success based on their own expectations	Student expectations
49	Kids understand what their best is	Student self reflection
50	Benefits of report card: connects home and school	Home and school connection
51	Grades are subjective, parents except kids to stay within percentage range	Grades for parents
52	have to reexplain your objectives/expectations.	Parent communication
53	me and my partner, same assignments/tasks, yet grade differently	Varied grading methods
54	Grades as personal opinions	Varied grading methods
55	Goal of education is not to prepare them for the real world	Preparation for real world
56	in my classroom, to become good people.	Students to become good people
57	To be ready for a different classroom/setting. Need to know how to follow rules	Adaptable students
58	In this class, I'm the boss. We have to work together.	Accountability
59	these ideas follow them to grade 1	Accountability
60	sitting still, skill needed to listen and learn to read. Kindness to others.	Student behaviors
61	We don't focus on (life skills) enough. We shove competencies down, like who cares?	Importance of life skills
62	Every kid deserce to have life skills to live and be apart of society. But we make them puppets!	Importance of life skills
63	Love what you do, clear goals in mind - easier to put that into grade.	Personal grading system
64	If you know what goals you're trying to meet, finding percentage grade is easier	Personal grading system
65	Subjective, your version of 75 is not the same as someone else	Grades subjective
66	our system doesn't provide accurate grid to follow	Inconsistent grading
67	No baseline amongst teachers evaluating	Inconsistent grading
68	What does it matter what I give them if there's no baseline?	Grading lacks value

Table P6: Chrystal's Interview

	Chrystal's Transcript (P6)	Themes
1	**Chrystal's Transcript (P6)**	**Themes**
2	grades are useless, because they have to show effort, and participation is what really counts for my subjects.	feelings towards grades
3	you can't fail a kid for not liking dance or ability	grades can't be based on ability
4	decent grades based on participation, effort, being a proper audience member	grades on behaviors
5	parents questioning how their kids didn't get 100% cause it's an easy class	Grades for parents
6	don't like grading, takes up time	Time management
7	Some subjects, you need to know the facts.	Subject variations
8	Grades don't tell me how smart the kid is	What grades communicate
9	It's just a mark that I follow a rubric on.	Rubrics
10	so I knock it down to 1-5. 5 is 100%. I break it down based on different criteria.	Personal grading system
11	don't necessarily give 100% even if they get 5 on everything, give high 90s	Personal grading system
12	usually kids get mid 80s, cause they don't always want to participate, and sometimes talk during audience watching	Personal grading system
13	how well you are doing against other children based on class average	Grades against class average
14	grades for parents	Grades for parents
15	kids don't care about their drama marks.	Grades not for students
16	older kids want to know if they did well, not what they got.	Feedback over grade
17	they don't ask me what number they got	Feedback over grade
18	I don't tell them I gave them a 4, or 4+. I give them feedback	Feedback over grade
19	Sometimes they don't see what I am marking	Grades not for students
20	The parents don't see this (rubrics). It's basically for me.	Rubrics for teacher
21	To students grade represents how they're doing. It tells them that they are doing well.	Grades as indicators of how well they do
22	For teacher it represents how well they are doing.	Grades as indicators of how well they do
23	strong student shows effort, try to figure it out, asking questions, focus on their work. Weak student doesn't care.	Student behaviors
24	Kids who try so hard (strong student in her opinion), probably getting a 70.	Effort and low grades
25	I had a lot of A's and B's.	Memory of grades
26	Highschool math was miserable, 59.5% was a victory cause they would bump it to a 60%	Memory of grades
27	I hate math, but I am a better math teacher because of it.	Impacts of grades
28	I can help the kids who feel like they don't understand math. I know how they feel.	
29	If I were to teach gr 5 or 6 math, I would break out in hives.	
30	I put in effort, I just didn't get it.	effort and low grades
31	It was only about tests back then. We didn't do projects. No one said "Wow look at the effort!"	memory of grades
32	All very different from now.	memory of grades
33	Nature of subjects I teach	Subject variations
34	if they put together a really good story, but it's full of mistakes, oh well! We will work on spelling tomorrow.	Content over mistakes
35	percentage to see how you compare to everyone else	Grades as comparison to others
36	class average let's you know if you are on the right track	Grades vs. class average
37	class average let's you know if you are on the wrong track	Grades vs. class average
38	it doesn't matter if you got a 92 and I got an 80. Maybe I messed up one test, maybe I'm good at taking tests	Comparing grades
39	We had a terrible history teacher, and without my friend teaching me the stories, I probably would have gotten 70 on those tests.	External factors related to grades
40	Yeah. Exactly. Many factors come into play that we can't see in a grade.	Factors in grades
41	to develop well-rounded individuals who are confident in the job they choose	Confident well-rounded individuals
42	Look at the big picture	
43	use tests as a guideline, but also let kids tell you where they get it from.	Students explain thinking
44	Let them try to evolve in their own way so that you can see their thinking	Students explain thinking
45	I would rather just teach and have fun, see what happens	Feelings towards grades
46	prefer ABCD over percentages, that's how I use my 1-5 now.	Personal grading system
47	my 5 correlates to 95-100. I preferred that when I was younger. You knew that you were in the 90s.	Feelings towards grades
48	What's the difference between an 84 and 89? Nobody cares. Nobody knows.	Confusion about percentages

Table P7: Ken's Interview

#	Ken's Transcript (P7)	Themes
1	Ken's Transcript (P7)	Themes
2	Unlike other phys.ed teachers, I don't just look at students and say "you get an A"	Evaluation
3	I have certain rubrics that I follow, for MELS and competencies	Evaluation
4	Competencies and subcategories to evaluate	evaluation
5	Averaging scores and determine what they get	Evaluation
6	Parents only care if child is below average	Parents perspective
7	Parents don't care about specialists marks	Parents perspective
8	Parents of gr 5 students focus most on the marks	Parents perspective
9	Parent's view of their kids being athletes because they play sports	Parent perspective
10	Back up grades to explain why	Back up grades
11	Grading makes your job worth it	Feelings towards grading
12	Instead of just babysitting, people think you're in the gym playing games	Feelings towards grading
13	you feel more worth it	Feelings towards grading
14	There's 3 competencies. I focus on the first one for term 1	Evaluation
15	Competencies two and three	Evaluation
16	Within those competencies, there's subcategories to evaluate	Evaluation
17	Competencies into a rubric, I take that. I base my marks on that.	Evaluation
18	1-5. 5 being the best, and 1 being the lowest.	Personal grading system
19	there's a percentage on top. Let's say between 81-87% is a 4 or 4+	Personal grading system
20	Grades for parents. Students have never asked me about their marks.	Grades for parents
21	They've never questioned me after report cards, "why did I get this?"	Grades for parents
22	if the child is doing fine, parents won't question you	Grades for parents
23	Students don't care. Which is unfortunate	Grades for parents
24	Parents don't care for comments unless their child is doing poorly	Report card comments
25	Write out own report card comments for some kids instead of drop down menu	Report card comments
26	Parents analyze comments and question why you said them	Report card comments
27	I see it as effort. If someone is a great big athlete, I don't see him as going to get an 80 or 90 just be	Effort
28	It's more effort, and even if they can't do it, are they trying?	Effort
29	Someone who isn't great in sports but is trying, can get the same grade as someone else	Effort
30	If you're just sitting there and not interested, it's about sportsmanship	Effort
31	Somebody that listens, follows the rules	Student behavior
32	They know my expectations	Teacher expectations
33	They know what I expect from them.	Student behavior
34	Report cards do not mirror good student vs poors student	Inaccuracy of report cards
35	No, prior years do not impact grading	Prior years do not impact grading
36	I don't look at previous year report card	Prior years do not impact grading
37	I don't even want to have that thought. as soon as year is over, destroy old marks	Prior years do not impact grading
38	No issues from parents from one year's grades to another	Prior years do not impact grading
39	I was a typical student, supportive parents. Don't remember my marks	No significant experiences in past
40	Study hard, get 80s. That's as high as I would go.	No significant experiences in past
41	I was just an average kid. Not above, not below.	Average kid
42	No, when I was graded it was ABCD	No significant experiences in past
43	Issue with third competency, adopting a healthy life style	Issue with competencies
44	Hard to grade a healthly life style	Hard to grade
45	Not going to ask a student 'did you take a shower today?'	Hard to grade
46	Following safety rules, tie their shoelaces, hard to grade	Hard to grade
47	A lot of weight from the other two competencies, cause it's hard	Personal grading system
48	ABCD would be easier to explain yourself - I like percentage grades for my kids	ABCD would be easier to explain yourself
49	Goal of phys.ed would be for everyone to participate	Participation
50	Motivate students to participate	Participation
51	everyone wants to do something, just have to encourage them	Participation
52	Back up everything you do.	Back up grades
53	without rubric, I would have been in trouble	Back up grades
54	be able to open up binder and show proof of why child got X%	Back up grades
55	I know based upon their homework how they are already (my kids)	Homework
56	I know they have this mark, but things are weighted so differently.	Weighted grades
57	there's 10% of this, 10% of that	Weighted grades
58	you're studying for a test and you find out it's only worth 8-9%	Weighted grades
59	happy if my child tried hard, I know their limits.	Effort
60	for my daughter if she gets lower than 80, I'll be like "okay, what's going on?"	Knowing type of learner
61	My son, he's an average just like I was	Knowing type of learner
62	Grades take a long time, especially with comments	Time management
63	they think cause it's phys.ed "give them whatever"	Grading by subject
64	you really need to back it up	Back up grades
65	kind of makes your job feel worth it	Feelings towards grading

Table P8: Leila's Interview

	Leila's Transcript (P8)	Themes
1		
2	Frustrating, takes time	Feelings towards grades
3	English writing takes long, it gets tiring	Time management
4	how I mark on day 1 is not the same as how I mark day 5	Time management
5	Marking math is lots of fun, right and wrong, black and white	Grading by subject
6	Math tests preparation takes time	Time management
7	Either way you are doing a lot of work	Time management
8	I think it's important to get an idea of where kids are actually at.	Grades = achievement
9	came back to work in term 1 report cards	
10	so I wanted the teacher who replaced me to share the grades with me to know where each kid was	Grades for parents
11	I was surprised, she barely referred to grades in parent teacher interviews	Parent communication
12	It was all about social, in grade 4, social and emotional behaviors	Parent communication
13	1-2 parents brought up grades out of 45 families	Parent communication
14	Thought it would be grade driven.	
15	so much pressure. You need to prove your grades	Back up grades
16	Prove your grades	Back up grades
17	if you don't steer it towards grades, it might not go there.	Parent communication
18	More grade focused in my interviews	Grades for teacher
19	have a general idea of where each student is	Feedback based on grades
20	look at that grade to base my comments and understand how they are doing	
21	I talk a lot about the grades.	Emphasis on grades
22	Especially need to back up bad grades and advise parents prior	Back up grades
23	if you are going to put a bad grade, need to back it up and warn them before so	
24	Before giving a bad grade, make sure work is done. Easier to inflate their grade.	Pressure on teachers
25	I don't do that personally, I do my work. My grades are backed up.	Back up grades
26	Elementary grades are subjective	Grades are subjective
27	Subjective components in oral marks	Grades are subjective
28	I assess that based on a rubric	Evaluation
29	I staple 7 pages together for each student by subject	Evaluation
30	Mix of grades and comments per assignment	Personal grading system
31	no grade, just wrote feedback for me to understand	Personal grading system
32	where the kid's at, where they have trouble.	Personal grading system
33	small check list, can child write - yes/no, small comments about each child	Personal grading system
34	couple of columns for writing at the beginning	Personal grading system
35	Never feels like it's enough assignments	Pressure on teachers
36	Struggle to gather grades	Pressure on teachers
37	I always feel like writing could always have more	Pressure on teachers
38	it depends on term also, term 1 was a short one, I do less.	Personal grading system
39	recommended quantity for situational problems (math) 2-3	Quantity of assignments
40	when they go to highschool, that competency kind of disappears	
41	I think we could do more writing.	Quantity of assignments
42	Hard to assess ideas, spelling,	Hard to grade
43	Grades for parents and students. In 5-6, they are aware of their grades.	Grades for parents and gr 5/6 students
44	Grades as identifying strengths and weaknesses	Grades as identifiers
45	Grades as reflection of who they are (students)	Impact of grades on students
46	can be negative because if they get bad marks, can destroy them	
47	Grades as a reflection of who their children are (parents)	Impact of grades on parents
48	can lead to uncomfortable parent-teacher interviews	
49	students identify as good or bad students based on grades	Impacts of grades on students
50	provide clear feedback with grades	Impact of grades on students
51	students identify 'I'm a 70 student', but we shouldn't be talking like that at all	Impact of grades on students
52	parents think my kid is an 80 student, they will always be in the 80s or better	Grades label students
53	if they get a 70, parents ask why? They aren't a '70 student'.	Grades label students
54	R.C grades tell me how easy it is for them	Grades as identifiers
55	if they are strong or not in certain domains	Grades as identifiers
56	it doesn't tell me how much they progressed, especially for strong students(Academics)	Progress vs product
57	when a stronger writer became stronger, I don't know	Progress vs product
58	have to look at the feedback part. The grade doesn't do that.	Importance of comments
59	there's grade strong. Kids with innate ability to study and do well	Student achievement
60	write long paragraphs with no mistakes cause it's easy for them, those are strong students	Student achievement
61	Weak student is someone who struggles. Everything is hard	Student achievement
62	I think grades represent these two types of students. I don't really include effort in my grades, unless it's to balance something out awkwardly	Ability over effort
63	some students working harder than the stronger students who are not getting good marks	Ability over effort
64	that's where parent interviews come in. Comments and conversation	Parent communication
65	I wanna add one thing I do sometimes as a pop quiz for math before a couple of days before the real test.	Teacher methods
66	and I go through them, I sit down in a mini conference with them with their test.	Teacher methods

67	So I don't mark it, we correct it as a class and I sit down with them one on one.	Teacher methods
68	. I read through them all and I make a list of who didn't get what concepts, and so I make a small group of who needs this concept reviewed et	Teacher methods
69	So that way, two days later, it's fresh in their mind, most kids do well.	Teacher methods
70	Because it's short term memory, which is what you need for math tests, and it just helps everyone out.	Teacher methods
71	Because the day before the test I actually sat with them on the thing they needed.	Teacher methods
72	We did it in physics in grade 11 too, there was a pretest and a test. Because it gets them working.	Teacher methods
73	You haven't studied, you just got a zero! And it just forces them right before the test.	Teacher methods
74	I try and avoid that at all costs because in terms of work for me, it's huge and it's not fair right?	Teacher methods
75	If you would start retesting all the kids, everyone would do better on a second test.	Teacher methods
76	So no, I don't really do that. That's why I try to get my kids to pass on the first round.	Teacher methods
77	. So essentially a lot of kids might fail that, and there's no mark and it's a qualitative assessment. I see who knows what and I actually talk to th	Teacher methods
78	The reason I think kids are affected by grades was because I was affected by grades	Memory of grades
79	Internalized how well I was doing based on grades	Memory of grades
80	kids are invested emotionally in their grades, I don't want to destroy them.	Emotionally invested in grades
81	some kids don't care about grades, but I wasn't one of them.	Memory of grades
82	I was one of those kids who would ask why did I get the 98?	Misunderstanding grades
83	I wasn't seeing the bigger picture	Process over product
84	the big picture is, do you understand or not?	Process over product
85	80 doesn't matter. The idea is, you're getting it.	Understanding content
86	I didn't get that until maybe CEGEP	
87	I got an 80 on something and got in trouble because I said something the teacher overheard	
88	Fair, I worked really hard but I missed a point	
89	she couldn't give me the higher mark, but I couldn't believe it.	Impacts of grades on students
90	this was grade 10, still basing myself on if I don't get a good mark it's because the value of a mark…	Impacts of grades on students
91	Benefits of percentages, calculating grades is easy to back up. You got this on your test, that on your test.	Back up grades
92	in elementary I put columns of marks like participation I count a bit, especially oral	Back up grades
93	the benefit is it's easy to back up	
94	disadvantage is it doesn't always show what we're trying to show	inaccurate communication of information
95	doesn't show who's worked or progressed a lot and was struggling	Shows product versus progress
96	the mark might actually stay the same because even though they are getting better, the work got harder.	inaccurate communication of information
97	that's why comments are important	Comments
98	kid's need to realize what they do and do not understand	Student metacognition
99	more self-evaluation, self-reflection. Math journal of "what do I know"	Student metacognition
100	it's actually going to help them remember because they're doing it.	Student explaining knowledge to others
101	to allow students to achieve their potential and opening gates for them	Student achieve full potential
102	open gates to different careers	Education as gateway to career
103	develop a human being who is caring and able to think for themselves	
104	we need caring people who know how to think	Emotional and intellectual students
105	Report cards give students something to achieve and work towards	Report card as goal
106	Kids organize themselves to reach goal	Report card as motivation
107	Ethics for caring people, which we grade!	
108	Report card is like real world in that instead of money, you get grades	Report card as reward for work
109	Kids who want 100% miss the big picture	Students focused on getting 100%
110	ABCD system could be shattering for kids, I think I grew up with letter grades	ABCD system can always be damaging
111	Most frustrating part of our job. if we weren't forced to do it, I wouldn't force myself to know how well they are doing	Feelings towards grades
112	Create a system that works for you and you're able to justify to yourself	Personal grading system
113	Plan school goals backwards	Assignment organization
114	End of term goals.	Assignment organization
115	I map out what I wanna do in each term.	
116	Grading is one of the most stressful parts of the job	Feelings towards grades
117	A big part if parents. Some are very concerned about grades	Grades for parents
118	Dealing with parents who are upset about grades, detracts from us teaching and planning	Grades for parents

Table P9: Ruby's interview

	Ruby's Transcript (P9)	Codes
1		
2	difficult to give grades, percentage or letter grades	Hard to grade
3	easier to write anecdotal	Anecdotal
4	where the child has come from to where they are	Student progression
5	progress	
6	Easier to give a grade to high achievers	Easier to grade high achievers
7	Samples of their work, talk to them about their work and how they came up with their answers	Evaluation
8	We usually had some type of rubric	Evaluation
9	Report cards communicate to parents, that's what they want.	Grades for parents
10	The higher the grade, better for the parent.	Grades for parents
11	report cards do not tell parents what children know	Inaccuracy of report cards
12	I think anecdotal and I think you can use a rubric if the school insists on some type of grade leve	Evaluation
13	If you have a rubric with a little bit more leeway, and a little bit more words attached to it, ther	Evaluation
14	Students looking at a higher grade, the better	Satisfaction with high grades
15	students don't always know what grades mean	Lack of meaning in grades
16	You'll hear them say to their mom 'did I do well?' Or, my mom said I didn't do very well, and the	Lack of meaning in grades
17	Grading is hard	Feelings towards grading
18	How well, how far they've come.	Progress
19	I think an ideal student is someone who is independent, comfortable making mistakes, comforta	Student behavior
20	Ideal student probably going to get good grades	Student behavior leads to high grades
21	Average students are doing well too	
22	Parents want high grades	Grades for parents
23	Teachers pat themselves on back for high grades	High grades for teachers
24	Average students are doing well too	
25	low marks = parents knowledge, that's fair	Parent communication
26	I was an average student. Vs, VGs = Good, Very good were my life.	
27	excellent, very good, food, fair and unsatisfactory	Memory of evaluation
28	I have no idea how I got those grades	Lack of meaning in grades
29	I read, I did spelling, I did whatever	Memory of evaluation
30	I was a very average student	Memory of evaluation
31	Grades not a big deal at home	Memory of evaluation
32	Figure out how to get a better grade based on teachers	Grading systems
33	I used to wonder how the smart kids got such high grades	Lack of meaning in grades
34	how do kids get 95%', it was beyond my understanding	Lack of meaning in grades
35	Feel for kids who don't get high grades	Impact of grades
36	They think they are not as good as everyone else	Impact of grades
37	they don't reflect 'I've done really well', 'I've moved forward'. We don't instill that in kids.	impact of grades
38	we talk about it as adults, but kids don't get it	Lack of meaning in grades
39	Need to start talking to kids about reflecting on grades	Student reflection
40	we have a lot of lip service for kids "oh you're doing really well," but they might not be	Unclear feedback to students
41	That's right. It's the same as ''oh, try and be good today.'' It's hard.	Unclear feedback to students
42	We do say it all the time. "Bad boy!" poor kid, what does that mean? Like google the definition.	Unclear feedback to students
43	Identifies smart kids who are going to do well anywhere	Grades identify high achievers
44	In the younger grades, it's absolutely ridiculous since the developmental part is huge.	Grades developmentally inappropriate
45	Variety of developmental readiness, still have to give a grade	Grades developmentally inappropriate
46	it doesn't make sense	Confused by grading young children
47	New teachers to find a grading range that they are comfortable with	Personal grading system
48	Future: younger grades will be done with percentage grades	
49	Full inclusion makes percentages tough	Percentages not useful for inclusive education
50	you get 75% of what? We all talk about it but it's so out there.	Lack of meaning in grades
51	How is one test a reflection of the curriculum, the goals, the competency, the MEQ?	Evaluation
52	Who are your students	
53	Have a range for grades	Personal grading system
54	If you're stuck with them, you have to play the game	
55	in your head you can have between 75-85 are kids who can write clearly, get thoughts on paper	Personal grading system

56	then you're doing them justice by giving them what they need.	Personal grading system
57	reflects sort of what they are able to do	Personal grading system
58	One class versus another class in same school can vary in terms of difficulty.	Inconsistent grading systems
59	standardized IQ tests	IQ tests
60	This is where most of them are on a range. We don't do that when we are throwing percentage	IQ tests vs report cards
61	Identify how much each child should know per age/grade level, we don't do that.	Content by grade level
62	we've gone from A's where there was a range to now they are right back to the olden days of p	Changes in system
63	more of a range, you could tell a parent what a B was.	ABCD evaluation accurate
64	It was more anecdotal, you were just throwing a letter on it. Which I'm more comfortable with	ABCD evaluation
65	Parents still want grade to match ABCD range	Grades for parents
66	Yes. It's also where people come from right. How they are wired.	People's experiences
67	Like the very rigid structured people, they want that. Other people are a little bit loose.	People's experiences
68	Grades conflict with who you are.	Inner conflict with grading
69	difficult to give grades in grade 5	Hard to grade
70	how to decide what is more valuable to grade: way they expressed info vs content	Hard to grade
71	The correct answer can be given in many ways	Hard to grade
72	difficult to give grades	Hard to grade
73	Skills for life long learning	
74	Using skills here, there, everywhere. But how do you grade that?	How to grade efficiently
75	Disconnect at MEQ level	Disconnect between ministry and percentages
76	Skills being passed on cross curricular - but still need an individual grade.	Disconnect between ministry and percentages
77	Life long learning positive thing - even for children with special needs.	Lifelong learning
78	Difficult to implement lifelong learning with budget cuts, teacher variations and philosophies	Lifelong learning difficult to implement
79	Old school teacher mentality	
80	UDL classrooms, Observation	Teacher philosophies
81	Teacher philosphies should not impact knowledge learned - same results at end of year exam	Teacher philosophies
82	Knowledge learned in progressive ways should not impact test taking	Flexible learning styles
83	Observe and listen to kids, how did you get to that answer? Explain learning	Evaluation
84	If their explanations make sense, YAY.	
85	Parents still want to see grade	Grades for parents
86	We haven't educated parents enough, that this is okay too.	Educate parents
87	Anecdotal/observations: child as a whole being.	The whole child
88	give me one piece of writing, I can tell a kid where they are at.	Evaluation
89	Hard to give mark with clear conscious	Inner conflict with grading
90	CEGEPS, they don't have the UDL system there right.	Higher education
91	They claim in the workforce, these skills are needed.	Higher education
92	A lot of emphasis on grades	Emphasis on grades
93	Parents judge themselves on child's grades	Impact of grades on parents
94	Lack of education on our system	Educate parents
95	When you explain to parents what anecdotal is, they "what'd he get?"	Grades for parents
96	Looking at the next step	Impact of grades: high school
97	Highschool based on marks	Impacts of grades: high school
98	if you wanna get into Loyola, need good marks	Impacts of grades: high school
99	Methods of tracking achievement: Anecdotal vs giving work that is too hard and give poor grade	Evaluation
100	Oral and communication, but with heavy content in second language.	
101	Flexibility, boundairies, good pedagogy	
102	Life long learning positive - but not alongside percentage grades	Disconnect between ministry and percentages
103	Not as much. Anecdotal is more efficient than grades.	Anecdotal more efficient than grades
104	Parents just wanna see good marks. They compare to their friends, and don't think they are goc	Impact of grades on parents
105	Parents judge themselves on child's grades	Impact of grades on parents

Table P10: Parker's Interview

	Parker's Transcript (P10)	Themes
1	Parker's Transcript (P10)	Themes
2	I do not like grading	Feelings towards grading
3	I think about the experience of the child in music class	Student experience
4	As a specialist, seeing students half an hour a week	Limited time with students
5	hard to create experience for those students to appreciate music while also evaluating them	Time management
6	you have three and a half hours of teaching each class before report cards are due	Limited time with students
7	kids I see on Mondays, I see them 7 times within a term	Limited time with students
8	With an assembly, 6 times. So it's really hard.	
9	3 and a half hours before you have to give grades	Limited time with students
10	Which is weighted the same as any other subject that they've seen like 10 times as much.	Specialist class weighted same as homeroom class
11	I take the pressure off myself to be like, okay, grades are not a big part of my teaching	Teacher beliefs about grading
12	I base [my grades] on effort and participation	Student effort and participation
13	cause kids come from different backgrounds in music	Different skill level
14	some have a musical background where parents appreciate music, listen to music, grow up in a mus	Different skill level
15	others have no grouding for music	
16	Recognize that they all come from different backgrounds in music	Student performance
17	regardless of how much knowledge they have, it's really to see the next step in their learning.	Student knowledge
18	So teaching them an instrument, songs, how to create, to see if they are engaging in it.	Level of engagement
19	Don't put students at disadvantage/advantage based on prior experience	Different skill level
20	to see if they are engaging in the material	Level of engagement.
21	grades are intuitive, based off their participation from class to class	Student participation
22	I still give assignments, homework at a minimun, and these in class quizzes	Evaluation methods
23	sometimes projects for older grades, so they can show me what they have learned	Evaluation methods
24	Quizzes/projects at a minimum compared to class effort and participation	Evaluation methods
25	Grades for the parents	Grades for the parents
26	that's my philosophy: I don't feel that the grade will change the experience for the student in class.	Student experience
27	regardless if they go home with 60 or 100, for me it's like, what did you get out of music class?	Student experience
28	I feel like grades really are... at an elementary school level, they really are for the parents.	Grades for parents
29	in 5 and 6 it's more for highschool, so I try to give more projects and assignments	Evaluation methods
30	so [grades] based off something more concrete, but for younger grades, you know..	
31	Grades do not represent anything to younger grades. Especially if they can't count to 100.	Lack of meaning in grades
32	Unable to interpret meaning	Lack of meaning in grades
33	[grades on R.C] for me, a large part is student effort	Student effort
34	seeing the kids engage with it.	Level of engagement
35	I said "learn your own song", we lost time and all students were still working.	Level of engagement
36	they were engaged, looking up chords, learning the chords.	Level of engagement
37	I asked them "fast forward 5-10 years from now, you think you're going to think about your grades?"	Process vs. product
38	or are you gonna know how to find a song on the internet?	Independent learners
39	When I think long-term, I don't remember any grades I ever had in highschool/elementary	Long-term importance of grades
40	For me it's always been about the experience.	Student experience
41	that's why I try to focus my teaching around the experience for the child.	Student experience
42	that's why my philosophy is to give kids extra curriculars, to focus on all those things	Student experience
43	I know if I had to give 'concrete' grades, I would't have time for extra curriculars, which are importan	Time management: Maximizing meaningful experiences
44	because I value something like CBC music challenhge/doing shows, I spend more time on that than	Time management: Maximizing meaningful experiences
45	so when it comes to R.C, it's the season where I can't be doing other things	Time management: Maximizing meaningful experiences
46	Music comes easily for some	Student ability
47	they learn the recorder, ukulele, so teaching them the chords and how to strum	Student ability
48	so for some, it comes like that.	
49	so you're doing great, even though it came easy, they still tried.	Student effort
50	I don't put them at a disadvantage, not going to give a lower grade because it was easy	Grading based on ability
51	put in the effort, you learned what I feel is adequate for grade level, you get a high grade	Grade level knowledge
52	whereas other students need to put in more effort, but sometimes they give up if they find is comes	Student perseverance
53	Because they give up, they get a lower grade	Student perseverance
54	Reward students for effort to learn, follow and keep up	Student effort
55	so effort mixed with skill	Student effort and skill (ability)
56	[Report cards do not accurately represent ideal student vs weak student] cause if it were, I'd have 1(	Inaccuracy of report cards
57	cause they way I do it, there isn't a fluctuation from 0 to 100	Personal grading system
58	normally you can have 100 and the lowest is 0	
59	but my range is purposely almost between 70-100	Personal grading system
60	so if you have a 75, you're really playing with like 5/30	Personal grading system
61	but it's political. Cause you can't say 'you're kid is bad at music'	Student ability
62	They have some grounding, they showed up.	Student ability

63	grades were not a big deal at the elementary school level	
64	Being devastated getting a 4 (lowest), our system was 1-4	Memory of grades
65	personally remember wanting 1s, and 2s were ok. But 3-4 were a bad sign	Memory of grades
66	[I recognized this] but Not when I was young in K to 4.	Memory of grades
67	but grades 5-6 I was like "OH!!!, a 4 is bad."	Understanding grading system
68	Like that's the bottom quarter! You're not hitting anything.	Understanding grading system
69	High school, I can't remember all the grades there.	Memory of grades
70	Well, CEGEP I remember. I can tell you every grade.	Memory of grades
71	High school level, [adequate/fair grading system]	System of grading
72	more organized and structured	System of grading
73	each quiz was worth 10% and you're gonna have 10 quizzes, or test is worth 25%, so you can track it.	System of grading
74	Control over your grades, and you know how to study for it, and what you need to get on the next thir	System of grading
75	you know how to control your grades, study for them, made calculations in your head of what to invest more time in.	
76	like a quiz woth 5% and an exam worth 50%, should I spend my next 10 hours on my quiz or exam?	System of grading
77	So it's fair when students are empowered to know where grades are coming from	System of grading
78	but setting up a system adds extra pressure on elementary students	Student stress
79	Quiz results in panic, freaking out, 'how much is it worth?'	Student stress
80	Negates the purpose of learning for the sake of learning, so I try to stay away	Teacher philosophy
81	at the same time, quizzes just need to be done.	Evaluation methods
82	benefits of percentages: you know if you get 100, you met all the requirements and expectations of y	Mastery of content
83	Lack of standardization for what should be taught for specialists	Teacher interpretation
84	one school does violins, others do band, others do no instruments, etc. it's up to the teacher to set t	Teacher philosophy
85	there are some overall things to follow	Teacher interpretation
86	but a lot of stuff is left up to interpretation on teacher's behalf.	Teacher interpretation
87	so when it comes to grading, it's not standardized in any way.	Lack of standardization
88	if I give a 75, someone might say hey take it easy on them, I would have given them a 90 or somethir	Lack of standardization
89	it's just tough	
90	a lot of it is left in my hands for interpretation	Teacher interpretation
91	I don't like that it's always interpretation, but you need to come up with something somehow.	Lack of standardization
92	my philosophy of education: I wanna create lifelong learners around music	Teacher philosophy
93	Today I wanted to show kids how to find chords and learn how to play chords to any song	Student experiences
94	so empower them.	
95	I remember my experience, learned three chords the whole year.	Teacher memory of experiences
96	but I've already taught them 8 chords, goal to learn 16.	Independent learners
97	teach them how to atleast find it or create it.	
98	Teach them how to be resourceful	Resourceful students
99	philosophy: make them resourceful, empowered, because they will be gone next year (grade 6)	Teacher philosophy
100	so do I wanna spend more time creating a number that is pleasing to parents,	Teacher philosophy
101	or do I say regardless of grade, they now know how to play music without me.	
102	I asked them today, "will you need me to know how to play a song?	Independent learners
103	half said yes, half said no	
104	half of them saying no we don't need you, was the best answer I heard.	Independent learners
105	same when teaching phys. Ed, is it about the grade or exposing them to activities	Student experience
106	so that they say "I wanna continue doing a physically active lifestyle", or "I remember learning ultimate frisbee with Mr. H, it was so much fun"	
107	just exposing them to sports, different games, individual or team sports	Student experience
108	at end of the day for me, it's not about grades as much as it being like, "AH! Here is that thing"	Student experience
109	obviously you can incorporate it, but just spending more time and giving them opportunities.	Time management: Maximizing meaningful experiences
110	if they received bad grades, it would negatively impact the way they engage with music.	Impacts of grades
111	often hear people say they hate math, or aren't good at math.	Impact of grades
112	Impacts them as adults, I think the same would be true for music.	Impact of grades
113	unclear as to what overall public system goals are. So much interpretation	Up to our interpretation
114	Teachers have loose guidelines	Loose guidelines
115	Good system for those motivated to be good teachers	Good system for those who want to be good teachers
116	Professional development hardly mandatory	
117	if u wanna do a grading system properly, you should have started a week ago	Time management
118	hit the ground running!	Time management
119	especially since you have 250 students to grade, you literally have 1000% bigger workload	Work load
120	if you want a true grade that reflects student's learning and ability, get ready to work 10 times harde	Work load
121	suggest that you find some quizzes/projects that you feel will accurately reflect the students learnir	Personal grading system

Appendix C

Sample Quebec Report Card

Sample Report Card

School Information	Student's Name	Student's ID

NE=Not evaluated/Non-évalué | Teacher's Name

Subject Competencies / Compétences disciplinaires	Weighting	Terms / Étapes 1	2	3
		Marks in %		
English Language Arts Cycle 2				
Reads and listens to different texts	25%	80		
Writes different texts	25%	78		
Uses different media	25%	NE		
Uses language to communicate and to learn	25%	75		
Subject result:		78		
Class average:		75		
Effort: Term 1: Satisfactory / Satisfaisant				
Français, langue seconde - Immersion Cycle 2				
Communiquer en français / Communicates in French	33%	67		
Lire des textes / Understands and reads texts	33%	72		
Écrire des textes / Writes texts	33%	68		
Subject result:		69		
Class average:		65		
Effort: Term 1: Satisfactory / Satisfaisant				
Mathematics Cycle 2 / Mathématique - 2e cycle				
Solves a situational problem / Résoudre une situation-problème	30%	70		
Uses mathematical reasoning / Utiliser un raisonnement mathématique	50%	85		
Communicates by using mathematical vocabulary and symbols / Communiquer à l'aide du vocabulaire et des symboles mathématiques	20%	NE		
Subject result:		79		
Class average:		72		
Effort: Term 1: Highly satisfactory / Très satisfaisant				
Science and Technology Cycle 2 / Science et technologie - 2e cycle				
Solves problems / Résoudre des problèmes	40%	84		
Uses his/her knowledge of science and technology / Utiliser ses connaissances scientifiques et technologiques	40%	81		
Communicates by using scientific and technological vocabulary and symbols / Communiquer à l'aide du vocabulaire et des symboles scientifiques et technologiques	20%	80		
Subject result:		82		
Class average:		74		

NEW (Weighting) NEW (Marks in %) NEW (Subject result:)