



## Syllabus

**Course:** Assessment and Grading for Student Achievement

**Presenters:** Damian Cooper and Ken O'Connor

**Number of Credits:** 3

**Instructor:** Robin Bromley

**Email:** Courseadministrator@kdsi.org

**Instructor Bio:**

Robin Bromley earned a Master of Philosophy degree and a Master's degree in English literature at Columbia University and her Bachelor of Arts degree from New York University. After nearly two decades in publishing and writing, she is currently teaching at LaGuardia Community College and Kean University. She has also taught at NYU and CUNY and served as assistant director of composition at Columbia College.

*From the Resource tab in the eClassroom, please download and read the "Expanded Syllabus" which includes your grading rubric and the KDS plagiarism policy.*

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## Overview

Expert educational consultants Damian Cooper and Ken O'Connor argue the necessity of rethinking assessment practices to help all students learn and to become more efficient. Participants will analyze their current practice and begin to implement improvements based on careful distinction between assessment *for* learning vs. assessment *of* learning.

Mr. Cooper's strategies will facilitate for teachers such critical tasks as routinely sharing learning goals with students, providing examples of excellence (e.g., through rubrics), promoting collaborative work and self- and peer-assessment, and providing feedback that both informs students how to improve and allows them the time and space to do so.

Ken O'Connor joins Mr. Cooper in the final two units of the course to explore the critical distinctions between formative assessment and summative grades and to ask and answer such questions as whether grades promote learning at all; when, what, and how to grade; and what functions grades can serve in a standards-based system.

Interviews with teachers and classroom footage punctuate the presenters' key points throughout and provide examples of their theories in practice.

## **Objectives**

After completing this course, educators will know:

- Formative assessment vs. summative assessment
- What makes formative assessment facilitative of learning
- What constitutes essential learning
- Backward design
- The zone of proximal development
- What balanced assessment looks like
- The relationship between instruction and assessment
- The benefits of standards-based grading
- The role of grades in learning
- What makes grades quality

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

After completing this course, educators will apply the following skills:

- Employ formative assessment to improve student learning
- Use backward design principles to design effective instruction and assessment
- Teach to students' zones of proximal development
- Provide effective feedback to students
- Balance their assessment plans
- Embrace standards-based grading over norm-referenced grading
- Produce quality grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning

## **Units:**

### **1. Rethinking Assessment for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

In this unit, Damian Cooper outlines his two critical goals for assessment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: to use assessment to help all students learn and to render the practice of assessment more efficient for teachers. Participants will consider their current processes and begin to analyze how and whether those processes advance student learning and are consistent with their missions as educators. They will learn the definitions and different uses of different assessment types, including pre-assessment (or diagnostic), formative, and summative. They will prepare themselves to improve their practice in terms of providing effective feedback to students, adjusting their

instruction in response to assessment, recognizing the influence of assessment on students' motivation and self-esteem, and preparing students to self-assess to effect their own improvement.

## 2. Program Planning with the End in Mind

In this unit, Damian Cooper offers Wiggins and McTighe's backward design model as the foundation for developing and employing affective assessment. Backward design, Cooper notes, enables teachers to share the process of developing assessment with their peers (making it less private, more public, and therefore both more accurate and more consistent for students). Participants learn to identify what's essential for students to learn and to design assessment tasks and assessment tools accordingly. They consider the different kinds of data (or evidence) students can produce to illustrate their understanding of the essential knowledge and skills.

## 3. Balanced Assessment

In this unit, Damian Cooper guides participants in the crafting of a balanced assessment plan, in which students write, do, and say to illustrate what they are learning. Participants will study how to assess their learning targets with tasks that involve students in authentic, real-world problem solving. They will learn to improve their performance tasks by incorporating interaction into activities, as well as on-the-spot thinking and application of the knowledge and skills students are developing.

## 4. Connecting Assessment with Instruction

Damian Cooper begins this unit by exploring assessment in differentiated classrooms, including those containing struggling students. He introduces the notion of the zone of proximal development to help participants develop instruction and assessment that sufficiently challenges all children, without overwhelming them. He outlines how to differentiate for students' different skill levels or interests, in order to help all students achieve proficient or exemplary achievement at their grade level.

## 5. Assessment that Promotes Learning

In this unit, Damian Cooper introduces six questions about assessment for learning critical to the teacher's success at promoting student achievement. Participants watch classroom footage to help highlight how answering "yes" to those questions improves a teacher's practice and student learning.

## 6. Article: Collaborating with Students in the Assessment Process

Participants read the article "Collaborating with Students in the Assessment Process," available under Resources, and address the questions that follow.

## 7. Communicating Performance Standards to Students

In this unit, Damian Cooper explores rubrics, moderated (or collaborative) marking, and summative conferences for their benefits to students, particularly as methods of communicating performance standards both within individual classes and from class to class and grade to grade. Rubrics provide a descriptive roadmap to excellence, moderated marking develops consistent grading practices from teacher to teacher, and summative conferences enable teachers and students to do a careful analysis of a student's achievement in relation to standards over the course of a semester or year.

## 8. Article: Not Everything that Counts Can Be Counted"

Participants read the article "Not Everything that Counts Can be Counted," available under Resources, and address the questions that follow.

## 9. Grading and Reporting, Part 1

In this first unit devoted to grading and reporting, Ron O'Connor joins Damian Cooper for a dialogue that concerns such questions as whether grading is essential to learning, what needs to be communicated to parents in a standards-based system, and how not only to engage all students in learning, but how to get them to complete all relevant tasks. They explore what makes grades quality (accuracy, consistency, meaningfulness, and supportive of learning) and how to achieve that quality both singly and with one's peers.

## 10. Grading and Reporting, Part 2

In this unit, Damian Cooper and Ken O'Connor continue their in-depth consideration of the role of grading in students' education. They delve deeper into the issue of consistency and its impact on student learning; discuss when grades measure growth, progress, or achievement; and explore what specifically makes grades meaningful to students and supportive of their learning. They also consider provocative questions about what to grade, whether and when to consider behavior, whether to give zeros, whether to allow late work, and other issues that can plague teachers in the classroom.

## 11. Article: "Redefining 'Fair'"

Participants read the article "Redefining 'Fair,'" available under Resources, and address the questions that follow.

### **Presenters Bios:**

**Damian Cooper**, who has a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education, as well as a Master of Education in Curriculum, is an independent education consultant who specializes in helping schools and school districts improve their instructional and assessment skills. In his varied career, Cooper has been a secondary English, special education, and drama teacher; a department head; a librarian; a school consultant; and a curriculum developer. He has specialized in student assessment for more than twenty years and served as assessment consult to the School Division of Nelson Education where he worked on the development of assessment principles and strategies for a wide variety of K-12 resources. Prior to that appointment, he was Coordinator of Assessment and Evaluation for the Halton District School Board in Burlington, Ontario. Cooper's current work focuses on helping teachers and administrators connect curriculum, instruction, and assessment in ways that improve learning for all students. He is the author of *Talk About Assessment: Strategies and Tools to Improve Learning* and *Talk About Assessment: High School Strategies and Tools*, as well as co-author, with Nanci Wakeman, of *Getting Assessment Right: Language* and *Getting Assessment Right: Mathematics for Data-Based Directions*.

**Ken O'Connor**, who earned his Master's of Education at the University of Toronto in 1973, has been an independent consultant since 1996. His 23 year teaching career includes experience as a geography teacher and department head. He has been a staff development presenter and facilitator on assessment, grading, and reporting throughout North America, presented at myriad conferences, and served as a curriculum coordinator for the Scarborough Board of Education and the Toronto District School Board. O'Connor is the author of a number of books, including *How to Grade for Learning: Linking Grades to Standards* and *A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades*.

### **Recommended Texts:**

Cooper, D. (2010). *Talk About Assessment: High School Strategies and Tools*. Scarborough, ON: Nelson Education

Cooper, D. (2007). *Talk About Assessment: Strategies and Tools to Improve Teaching and Learning*. Scarborough, ON: Thomson Nelson

Available at <http://www.nelsonschoolcentral.com/cgi-bin/lansaweb?webapp=WBOOKSITE+webtrn=booksite+F%28LW3ITEMCD%29=9780176289164>

### **Methods of Instruction:**

- Videos (presentations consisting of lecture, interviews, and classroom footage)
- Text (units based on required reading)

- Reflection questions (open-ended questions at intervals throughout the video presentations where participants are asked to reflect on the course content, their own practice, and their intentions for their practice)
- Quizzes (selected-response quizzes to assess understanding of the video presentations and eBook content)
- Discussion forum (prompts after each unit that engage participants in online dialogue with their cohorts)
- Midterm (a project intended to get teachers to begin to develop their practice by putting to work in the classroom what they have learned)
- Final (a project that enables educators to reflect on their practice and assess their students' work through the lens of what they have learned)

**All steps listed under each topic must be completed to receive credit for the course. No partial credit is given.**

### Plagiarism Policy

KDS recognizes plagiarism as a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is the dishonest passing off of someone else's work as one's own and includes failing to cite sources for others' ideas, copying material from books or the Internet, and handing in work written by someone other than the participant. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade and may have additional consequences. For more information about plagiarism and guidelines for appropriate citation, consult [plagiarism.org](http://plagiarism.org).

### KDS Rubric for Letter Grade Courses: 3 Credits

Percentage of Course Credit

- Reflection questions 25%
- Quizzes 15%
- Midterm 25%
- Final 35%

A: 90 - 100 points

B: 80 - 89 points

C: 70 - 79 points

F: Fewer than 69 points

Component	Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<b>Quizzes</b>	<u>(6 points)</u>	<u>(9 points)</u>	<u>(12 points)</u>	<u>(15 points)</u>
	<u>Quizzes:</u>	<u>Quizzes:</u>	<u>Quizzes:</u>	<u>Quizzes:</u>

<p><b>Reflection questions</b></p>	<p>0-40% correct <u>(10 points)</u> <u>Reflection questions:</u>  -Participant includes no content from the course in his or her responses -Participant does not address the questions posed</p>	<p>60% correct <u>(15 points)</u> <u>Reflection questions:</u>  -Participant includes some content from the course, usually appropriate, in his or her responses -Participant answers the questions directly, not always fully</p>	<p>80% correct <u>(20 points)</u> <u>Reflection questions:</u>  -Participant includes appropriate content from the course in his or her responses -Participant makes thoughtful comments in direct response to the questions</p>	<p>100% correct <u>(25 points)</u> <u>Reflection questions:</u>  -Participant provides rich detail from the content of the course in his or her responses -Participant makes his or her responses to the questions personally meaningful</p>
<p><b>Midterm</b></p>	<p>(10 points)</p>	<p>(15 points)</p>	<p>(20 points)</p>	<p>(25 points)</p>
<p><b>Final</b></p>	<p>(20 points)</p>	<p>(25 points)</p>	<p>(30 points)</p>	<p>(35 points)</p>

	<u>Requirements of Assignment:</u> -The assignment is substantially incomplete	<u>Requirements of Assignment :</u> -Many requirements met, but a few pieces are missing, while others are underdeveloped— e.g., missing reflection or rubric or scant reflection and vague rubric	<u>Requirements of Assignment:</u> -Participant has fulfilled all the requirements of the assignment	<u>Requirements of Assignment:</u> -Participant has fulfilled all the requirements of the assignment with marked creativity, intelligence, and thoughtfulness
	<u>Form:</u> - Plentiful grammatical mistakes -Confusing content -Missing documentation of sources	<u>Form:</u> -Distracting grammatical errors -Confusing content -Inconsistent or missing documentation of sources	<u>Form:</u> -Participant has written a solid essay or lesson plan, including appropriate detail and in an interesting style	<u>Form:</u> -No grammatical errors -Eloquent expression -Proper citation of sources
	<u>Content:</u> -No main idea and/or main idea is irrelevant to the assignment -No apparent paragraph organization -No supporting evidence for supporting ideas -No evidence in the lesson plan—in objectives,	<u>Content:</u> -The main idea is not clear in the opening paragraph -Relevance to main idea of supporting paragraphs is not always clear -Supporting ideas are only minimally illustrated by examples or	<u>Content:</u> -Essay is organized around a thesis or main idea -Paragraphs are organized around ideas relevant to the main idea -Supporting ideas are evident, and usually include	<u>Content:</u> -Essay is organized around a thesis or main idea -Paragraphs are organized around ideas relevant to the main idea -Supporting points are illustrated with examples and/or quotes

	activities, or assessments—that the learner comprehends the course content	quotes -The lesson plan does not show enough evidence that the learner understands the course content. Objectives and/or activities and/or assessments only vaguely apply to the course content	illustrating examples and/or quotes -The lesson plan shows evidence of understanding of the course content in its objectives, activities, and/or assessments	-Lesson plan shows evidence of a deep understanding of course content and participant uses that understanding to create opportunities for students to authentically show what they have learned
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**KDS Pass/Fail Option: 3 credits**

Passing Requirements

- Grade of “C” or higher