Mr. Foster’s TTOG Journey

*Teachers Throwing Out Grades*

1. After doing Standards Based Learning for three years, I realized that SBL is just the first important step as an educator to get the growth mindset to get the Culture Of Learning mindset and to work out logistics of several items: separating proficiency from behavior, facilitating redos/retakes for full credit and, most importantly, providing a continuous loop of feedback for students to improve their proficiency on specific learning goals/standards/targets.
2. I emailed Starr Sackstein (national leader in TTOG) on 1/19/15: “I am thinking about doing ttog and here is my plan: kids track my feedback and progress on standards through digital and paper means all marking period. I periodically meet with them individually to check in, and they have an exit interview with a portfolio to discuss the number/letter that I have to put on their learning at the end.” She said: Your above summary is spot on...
3. I discussed this idea with my AP Literature and Composition class periodically throughout the second trimester. They seemed optimistic and no one was opposed to the idea.
4. I participated in many #ttog twitter chats. A few of my AP Lit. students also were in the chats-conversing with Starr, Mark Barnes and other vital stakeholders in this movement.
5. On 1/20/15, I got official permission to do this with AP students in the third trimester of 2015 from Mrs. Laurie Wilson.
6. On 1/20/15, I shared the narrative below with the AP students:

* It is now third trimester, and in Mr. Foster’s class I have six learning targets that I need to log. This means that I have to record my proficiencies, deficiencies and performance in six specific areas: literal reading, figurative reading, reading the text as a whole, answering a question in my writing, follow grammar conventions in my writing, and have an engaging writing style. I will also need to monitor my citizenship in four specific ways: task completion, participation, collaboration and behavior.
* I can collect my evidence in numerous ways: retyping words that Mr. Foster highlighted on rubrics or that Mr. Foster wrote or said, taking pictures of rubric words or Foster words, and/or literally cutting these words out with scissors. How I collect my evidence will determine the format of my “Proficiency Portfolio” that I need to submit at the end of the trimester. This “Proficiency Portfolio” can be submitted digitally or in scrapbook/paper form-or a combination of both.
* I will meet with Mr. Foster periodically to “check in” and discuss evidence I have gathered so far for demonstrating my proficiency in all six learning targets. During these “check-ins,” I do not need to have a final portfolio product, but need to present proficiency evidence that I have gathered so far.
* At the end of the trimester, Mr. Foster will meet with me individually to discuss/negotiate/debate a final letter grade that is an accurate reflection of my proficiency of all six learning targets. This will be a discussion about proficiency and meet a standard, not a discussion of improvement, participation or work ethic.
* Also at the end of the trimester final letter grade meeting, I will discuss my citizenship will Mr. Foster. I will present a log of how proficiently I submitted tasks, submitted tasks on time, participated in class, collaborated in class and behaved in class.

Student reactions were:

* Lots of “I like it” and thumbs up.
* I like having 6 learning targets instead of 12; it is confusing to keep track of that many.
* This system focuses more on learning in general, not just learning with grades.
* If we do TTOG, I won’t focus so much on grades.
* What if we are just really hard on ourselves? How will the negotiations go? Foster response: We will practice the final meeting/negotiation periodically throughout the trimester with “check-in” meetings. We will basically have formative meetings where we work together to cite evidence of learning. Therefore, the “final meeting” will not be new or as scary.
* Students jokingly asked, “Can we meet at a coffee shop for these check-ins?” Foster response: I plan to host Achatz check-ins or Starbucks check-ins along with in-class check-ins. I will attempt to take another teacher with me to build collegiality and to model feedback conferencing.

1. On 2/18/15, I reviewed this idea again with my AP students. I told them that their poetry project will be the first task they can use to gather evidence for third trimester. This project is due 2/23/15, Monday. I also gave them a citizenship log and learning targets matrix to help gather evidence. I also emphasized that this is a journey and there will be bumps in the road along the way and we have to be professional and patient with each other. We also made a commitment to not withhold concerns throughout the process: kids have to tell me if they are stuck/confused/worried/concerned about how it is going and I have to tell them if they are not being as diligent in this process as I had planned.
2. On 2/18/15, I told the AP students that they needed to read all of the TTOG articles below by 3/1/15-the first day of third trimester. On this first day of third trimester, we will discuss these articles: on twitter, fishbowl, socratic, etc.
3. On 2/24/15, we had our first genuine practice in ttog. Students had to present a poem to the class and explain the poem’s significance. During this presentation, the class had our six Learning Targets for the trimester in front of them to look for positives/negatives in the presentation. Also during the presentation, I recorded feedback for the student (specific to learning targets, keeping in mind to show explain how I saw proficiency, gaps and suggestions for revision). After the first presentation, students shared feedback from the presentation. This caused two issues. First, students struggled to provide feedback that was specifically related to the standards. I have to repackage their thoughts to tie them to the standards clearly. I think this will change over time; it was the first time we did this. Second, students hesitated giving criticism in front of the presenter because they “Didn’t want to hurt feelings.” We will work on this by “putting on professional skin” and maybe I can be the first “victim” and have kids criticize me for teaching or the way I do a physical activity or the way I am dressed or something. As a temporary fix, for the subsequent presentations, we had the presenter leave the room as we shared feedback. While students shared feedback, one recorder wrote down the feedback and gave it to the presenter. I also gave my feedback to the presenter. I am **worried** at this point that students will not stay organized or diligent in recording their feedback. Maybe I should give graphic organizers or outlines or something to help them log their feedback. Or maybe I should create a blog or google doc to keep track of this digitally.
4. 2/25/15: We practiced criticizing me in class. Kids said that I try and do too much too fast and gave me specific examples. Then, I had them analyze how I reacted to this criticism. They got the point. Then, we discussed my worry about staying organized. Multiple students gave multiple ways for them to track their proficiency in the 6 learning targets. After a 10 minute class discussion, they discussed organization solutions in groups and then tweeted questions using the hashtag #ttog.
5. 3/5/15: I brainstormed different ways that kids plan to keep track of their progress. They shared some ideas and I pasted a picture of their thoughts below. I also suggested that students can use the free grading program called Active Grade to chart their progress.
6. 3/6/15: After reflection with colleagues, I had a couple concerns and addressed them with kids today. The “answers” to the reflections are in red.
   1. Will students keep track of feedback that is critical and shows a lack of proficiency? As a class, we decided that their feedback organization process needs to include an element of growth. Students need to track areas and instances that they are lacking and they how they fixed it to show growth.
   2. What is students lose evidence/feedback? We decided this was not a concern in my AP class because the kids are responsible, they understand the feedback IS their grade and most of the tracking is done digitally. However, the general plan we came up with is “Too bad.” ☺
7. 3/9/15: I am halfway through reading Assessment 3.0 by Mark Barnes. His SE2R model for feedback is helpful. While I do not use that specific acronym, I incorporate all of the elements of it in my feedback: summary of what the student did, analysis of how the work reflects (or doesn’t reflect) standards, redirecting students to improve on their work in specific ways and a directive to resubmit their work.
8. 3/10/15: I had the first meetings with kids and asked a few questions highlighted below.
   1. How are you organizing your feedback?
   2. What is your strongest and weakest learning target so far?
   3. Show me one piece of evidence and how it shows growth or proficiency in a specific learning target
   4. If you had to determine your final grade today, what would it be?
9. 3/13/15: After grading the first AP essay under TTOG and reading Assessment 3.0 by Mark Barnes (keeping his SE2R feedback model in mind) and talking to colleauges, specifically Meagan Moran, I was inspired to create the sheet pasted below for student feedback on essays. I will fill out one of these for each student, or at least tell him/her all elements of it in some way for each AP essay; I will also attempt to fulfill all the aspects of this feedback form for every task-though I see this as daunting at this point.

**TTOG Feedback**

Mr. Foster will fill this out as your “rubric” for tasks. When you complete the resubmission below, attach this sheet. Be sure to add amendments and/or disagreements to Mr. Foster’s comments on this sheet when you resubmit.

Student:

Task:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Code | Feedback |
| Boxes around words | Strong or weak diction = **color** stylistic authorship |
| Squiggly line under words/phrases | Grammatical error = **black/white** mechanics |
| ATR/HOW/A? | Make the path (author’s ideas 🡺 texts words/literary devices 🡺 effect on the reader) clear; explain HOW the author created meaning; answer the AP question using specific text evidence = **How/answer the question** |

Foster saw:

Foster didn’t see:

How this shows proficiency, or lack thereof, in learning target(s):

Extra practice to address areas of concern:

Resubmission:

1. 3/16/15: Reflection about form. Fishbowl student comments
   1. This helps me internalize my feedback more by having no numbers
   2. I never looked at words he wrote when there were numbers there
   3. I liked how Mr. Foster put what he saw and didn’t see in the essay
   4. It was helpful getting an overall AP essay score for the test to give me a gauge of where my performance stacks up this time.
   5. I liked consulting other students to see how they did well and poorly to help me improve.
   6. I missed having specific comments on the paper at specific spots. Maybe Mr. Foster can use more codes or something to direct us to how specific comments address specific parts of my essay
   7. It was confusing to know how I did though. I want to know if I bombed it. I want numbers to know how I did. Would I have got a “1” in grammar or “2” in grammar?
   8. How would we record our feedback to show proficiency at the end if there are no numbers throughout? Don’t we need numbers to know how well we did?
2. 3/25/15: I altered the form based on student feedback to look like the following below:

**TTOG Feedback**

Your assessor (Mr. Foster or a peer) will fill this out as your “rubric” for tasks. When you complete the resubmission below, attach this sheet. Be sure to add amendments and/or disagreements to the assessor’s comments on this sheet when you resubmit.

Student:

Task:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assessor’s Shorthand Code | Feedback |
| Squiggly line under a word or phrase | Grammar error or confusing wording |
| Box around a word or phrase | Example of particularly strong or weak diction |
| Circle with two vertical lines at the bottom right of it | “Paragraph” |
| A? | Answer the question, “HOW”, Author 🡺 Text 🡺 Reader path |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assessor saw:  Learning Target it addresses: | Assessor didn’t see:  Learning Target it addresses: |
| Assessor saw:  Learning Target it addresses: | Assessor didn’t see:  Learning Target it addresses: |
| Assessor saw:  Learning Target it addresses: | Assessor didn’t see:  Learning Target it addresses: |
| Assessor saw:  Learning Target it addresses: | Assessor didn’t see:  Learning Target it addresses: |
| Assessor saw:  Learning Target it addresses: | Assessor didn’t see:  Learning Target it addresses: |
| Assessor saw:  Learning Target it addresses: | Assessor didn’t see:  Learning Target it addresses: |
| Assessor saw:  Learning Target it addresses: | Assessor didn’t see:  Learning Target it addresses: |

Extra practice to address areas of concern:

Resubmission:

1. asd
2. 4/15/15: Students have completed two essays and got ample feedback from the forms above. They also did a few other assignments where they received similar feedback or voxer replies.
3. 4/24/15: progress report form is below. Student filled it out and we discussed their progress report grade. This was practice for their final grade portfolio meeting. For two of the students, I suggested their grade should be higher, proved why and they agreed. For two different students, I thought their grade should be lower, but instead of arguing, I simply asked them to show me more evidence to prove their proficiency was that high. One student did go get more evidence and explained it, so I let her have her original grade. The other student said that there isn’t any evidence and agreed with me that the grade should be lower.

**TTOG Progress Report due 4/24/15, Friday**

Student Name:

**Progress Report Grade (That I think I earned so far):**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Learning Target** | **Evidence** (circle one descriptor) |
| Literal  Learning Target | Approaching Meeting Exceeding |
| Figurative  Learning Target | Approaching Meeting Exceeding |
| Text as a Whole  Learning Target | Approaching Meeting Exceeding |
| Black and White  Learning Target | Approaching Meeting Exceeding |
| Color  Learning Target | Approaching Meeting Exceeding |
| HOW  Learning Target | Approaching Meeting Exceeding |

What I can do now that I couldn’t do before:

Goal I want to achieve by May 11th, 2015:

How I am going to achieve this goal:

1. 5/7/15: After the AP test, I gave three additional opportunities to gather learning evidence and let them be **optional** for the students: do old resubmissions that they may not have completed, write a specific AP essay question, or submit an analysis of different text that we worked with after the test. Some students took advantage of this and submitted more evidence; some did not.
2. 5/11/15: Final grade portfolio meetings went very well. Kids brought either a website that I pulled up on my lap top as we chatted or a paper portfolio with all of their evidence organized. They said a few words about each standard: why they earned “approaching” or “meeting” or “exceeding” and then cited at least one piece of evidence for each. Then, if I had a discrepancy, I asked for more evidence. All kids showed evidence to prove me “wrong.” No student graded themselves too high. 5 graded themselves too low. No student left the meeting unhappy
3. 5/13/15: If their final reflections about the class, several students commented about TTOG and here are some of their comments. None were negative:
   1. My only critique of TTOG is that not doing all the work makes it difficult to provide an ample amount of evidence to show proficiency.
   2. I really appreciate the TTOG, as it took a lot of pressure off. Keep doing it. I think that the formatives then the summatives structure works very well and helps wean us off numbers.
   3. TTOG was one of the best things I’ve ever had to do. It made me learn to appreciate actual learning rather than standardized education.
   4. TTOG was an amazing change for the classroom simply because it created a less stressful environment for myself and my classmates. This allowed me to focus on actually learning the content taught rather than performing for an arbitrary number that unfortunately, in today's day and age, determines my worth and intelligence.
   5. Please stick with SBG (and TTOG) and fuel the revolution. What you’re doing is opening the minds of so many students. You opened my mind.
   6. Continue Standards Based Grading (and TTOG). I believe that one day I will gather my grandchildren around me and tell them, for the fifth time that day, about how when I was a kid, only one of my teachers used standards based grading. They will all know you are the forward thinking teacher that grandma won’t shut the hell up about.
   7. Ever since you decided to embark on the TTOG quest, you have asked for our opinions on how this should operate. Many teachers have no regard for what their teachers think and just do whatever they please. I am beyond glad that you do not fit this conventional mold.
   8. You never discouraged me. I always felt comfortable in your class, and I believe it’s because of the learning environment you created.
   9. The concept of compiling feedback is unique and helpful most of the time. However, there needs to be a different format, one that is easy enough for kids to not think, "uh, I have to log all of this feedback," but effective enough for them to internalize it efficiently and willingly-students need the drive to do it. You somehow installed that drive of wanting to learn in all of the other assignments, now do it with this one as well to boost your class' productivity.
   10. Specific things that I disliked about TTOG was the vagueness of the process. There was little guidance for something I was not familiar with. However, the pros of this new idea was the whole new level of information processing I acquired. I can now internalize feedback efficiently in a way that will benefit me in the future. On a side note, here are some other thoughts I have had throughout the course of this process. Many things work much better in theory than when put into action. Yes, there was some rough patches while transitioning into no grades at all, but eventually the idea was sculpted to fit "AP literature and composition" specifically. However, how will this TTOG idea work for other classes? I can see a bright future for the process of it all for your class in good time. Other classes, however, it may be a little more of a challenge. Especially for "non AP" students- specifically their mind set. Not everyone can adapt to change so quickly like my class had to and I can not imagine how younger students would feel. It is foreign to them and still a little foreign to me and I just went through it. If learning and "personal growth" are the goals here what if a student can not adjust to the idea? I'm sure you have had the same thoughts I just figured it would be helpful to have it confirmed by a student. Hopefully this all pans out according to plan because I personally feel highly confident in my writing because I can pick out my strengths and weaknesses with no trouble at all.
4. 5/15/15: I resolved how to set up grading for AP next year
   1. First trimester: SBG with 12 standards to establish more specifics of what I need to see in their reading and writing
   2. Second trimester: SBG with 6 standards to reinforce the growth mindset and have students focus on big picture ideas more
   3. Third trimester: TTOG while keeping the 6 standards from second tri as buoys for learning.
5. 5/16/15: Students listed different ways that they compiled the final portfolio
   1. Used the app called Seesaw to record feedback
   2. I created a template with each of the learning targets and put them in chronological order for each assignment. I put these in a binder and arranged them chronologically.
   3. I retyped (or saved digitally) all of the comments that Foster made, linked them to learning targets, and then put them in google docs in folders of “got it” and “kinda” and “need to work on”
   4. Rachelsfeedback.weebly.com
   5. For my portfolio I thought about making a complex folder or a showy presentation consisting of colors, sounds, ect. However, I chose to focus on how I responded to the feedback rather than literally what you have seen. I made a section full of past "fail forward" evidence conveying how terribly I wrote and compiled thought. Once I have established how poor I executed the learning targets I revealed my successes. I gathered the best of my color evidence and presented it to show my creativity and how not only can I deliver it effectively, but I can do it creatively. Once that is presented I brought forth my evidence of every other learning target like literal, how, and text as a whole- these are the most important in my opinion. Hopefully by then the message is across to you that I deserve the grade I want. Through presenting color and the three most important learning targets I delivered why I serve my grade and how I achieved it through critical feedback.
   6. For my portfolio I just typed all the learning targets on a separate piece of paper and wrote the feedback and comments on there. I kept all of my assignments and feedback papers in my binder with the papers.
   7. For my binder, I didn't actually create separate sections. I found a normal binder, and then, went on the website to use the sheets someone else created to put my feedback in. I printed those out and put them in from of the assignment I was recording my feedback on. I put about 4 to 6 assignments on each sheet, depending on how much feedback I had to write on each assignment.
   8. Apfoster.wordpress.com

**Teacher Throwing Out Grades resources**

1. First step to ttog: <http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/work_in_progress/2014/11/the_first_step_to_give_up_grad.html>
2. Students can self assess: <http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/work_in_progress/2015/06/students_self-assess_for_maste.html?override=web>
3. <https://www.wiziq.com/course/96127-teaching-students-to-reflect-on-personal-learning>
4. <http://www.brilliant-insane.com/2015/01/eliminate-grades-heres-your-5-step-blueprint.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+BrilliantOrInsane+%28Brilliant+or+Insane%3F%29>
5. <http://starrsackstein.com/category/student-generated-rubrics-step-2-in-the-authentic-assessment-experiment-2/>
6. <http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/work_in_progress/2015/01/eliminate_grades_change_the_ed.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter>
7. What is the point of assessment? <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/whats-the-point-of-assessment-shira-loewenstein>
8. Grades vs learning: <http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/work_in_progress/2014/09/grading_vs_learning.html>
9. Parents react to ttog: <http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/work_in_progress/2014/11/parents_react_to_a_classroom_w.html>
10. Students react to ttog: <http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/work_in_progress/2014/11/students_react_to_a_classroom_.html>
11. Give up grades: <http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/work_in_progress/2014/11/why_its_time_to_give_up_grades.html>