

Teachers, are you GRADING right?

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SPEAKERS

Seth Perler

 Seth Perler 00:00

Teachers, are you stressed? Hey, what's up parents, teachers, administrators, school counselors, therapists, tutors, paras, everybody working with kids right now. It's the end of the school year, and are you a bit stressed? It's been a stressful year, we are ready for summer break. My name is Seth Perler, I'm an executive function coach and I help struggling students navigate this thing called education so that kids can have great life. And if you are somebody who's been following me for a while, sorry, I didn't vlog this week I've been traveling. I was in Los Angeles, now I'm in Florida. So I've been in Hawaii, Los Angeles, Florida, and I am exhausted. I did not get to my blog on Sunday, I apologize for that. Sorry, not sorry, because life happens. Anyhow, back to the topic.

 Seth Perler 00:42

My intention for today, really, is to share with teachers. But the rest of you will probably really get a lot out of this. Teachers, my intention today is to share a plea, a plea with you. A plea to remember why you do what you do. A plea to do the highest good. So, teachers, I'll get around to the details of this. But it's the end of the school year, it's been a crazy school year. Why do you teach? Why did you get into this in the first place? Do you remember? What's your 'why'? It's to serve, to serve kids because you love kids, because you want to give. That's why we do this. So in this video, let's talk about grades.

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Seth Perler 01:21

When I was teacher, I remember that as a teacher for 12 years, and we gave out these things called 'grades.' And I remember that nobody really explained to me how grades are supposed to be done. And I started learning as a new teacher that everybody did grades differently. What does an A, B, C, D, F mean? How do we evaluate that? How do we create metrics to determine whether or not a student earns or deserves a certain grade? Well, at this point in my life, I don't believe in grades. I think they're archaic. I think that they need to be done away with. They don't tell what we think they're telling. People don't agree upon what they tell. They're outdated, they need to go. But you know, you teachers have to grade kids. That they exist [grades. They're a necessary evil at this point. So you know, these broken metrics, there's the saying, "Not everything that is measured matters. And not everything that matters is measured." And this is particularly true when it comes to grades and how we evaluate human beings. To be very blunt with you, I think grades are stupid. They're archaic and stupid. So anyhow, what's happening right now, teachers, is that you are in a position where you have to make a choice about students grades.

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Seth Perler 02:35

Now, I particularly work with students who struggle with executive function. These are often kids who are misunderstood and who fall through the cracks. You have to make a choice that impacts their life about what grade to give them. Or if you don't think it's giving it to them, if you think it's that they earn or whatever, what grade is going to go on their grade card? The grade card, that is a big power. It's actually a quite ridiculous power that we are given, if you ask me. So what my plea is about is to really think about what is in the best interest of the child, the students? I don't care if you're working with elementary, middle school, high school, college, what is in their best interest for the totality of their life? Okay, so is it better to fail a kid? If they failed your class, what does that really mean? That they were not compliant? That they didn't learn anything? That they didn't try? I mean, what are we going to do? So anyhow, let's also think about engagement this year. If we were to grade you or your administrators on how well schools engaged, let's say we were to grade the administrators, how well did the administrators empower teachers to engage students this year? What grade would they get? A, B, C, D, F? Will teachers get A, B, C, D, F on how well they engaged students and meaningful learning experiences that were engaging? Were the students engaged on a level 10? They were so engaged, they just couldn't get enough of the class? Or were they minimally engaged? Were they engaged as a one? What if we graded you on that? How would that feel? It'd feel pretty horrible to me, as a teacher, I know that. So engagement has everything to do with executive function. When we are not engaged, it is very, very, very difficult to execute, use executive function, the prefrontal cortex of the brain, the front part of the brain, to help us to execute on our schoolwork or any number of things.

Engagement is huge when it comes to executive function, and this year has been incredibly not engaging.

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Seth Perler 04:41

Why? Why has it been so hard to engage? Well, it's really hard for the students to relate with a teacher when they are online and on a screen like you're watching me right now. Like how engaging is this? Really? Are you really 100% focused on me? What if I graded you on your engagement with me right now? What if I put you into a breakout room with a couple other people and I wasn't even in there with you. The breakout rooms are so hard. These kids, a lot of these kids are essentially having to teach themselves. They're not teachers. How do they teach themselves when they're not? What if these are kids who hate the camera? Like what if they really do? Do you like the camera? What if they don't want to be on camera? What's that like for them? What is that due to? Executive function, engagement? What about technical problems, technological problems, problems just with turning things in? We're even having the tech in their home or how many, you know, devices does a family household have? Families that have money, they have a lot more devices, typically, than families that don't have money. Is that equitable? So what about saving things because you struggle with executive function? What if they forgot to save something, and they lost all this work that they did? What about all this stuff they have to sift through online just to find out what the assignments are and stuff like that?

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Seth Perler 05:52

So anyhow, how do we determine what we're going to grade them on? Is it their effort? Is it how much they've learned? What if they got behind? What if they got behind because they were sick or tired, and they have to catch up all the time? Or somebody in the household was sick? What about kids who have processing issues or attentional issues and they get behind, and they have to catch up? What about social problems that they've had, and lack of social engagement, and being with their friends, and learning social things this year? What about how that impacts their engagement? What about their family and being suffocated with families all the time and the problems that brings up. The many, many problems that that brings up? What does that do to engagement? What about just the fear that these students have had? What about implications of racial injustice that has been all over the place and how that impacts kids this year? What about just what's going on in news and how that impacts the kids? And just all the unrest in culture and society in the world and how that impacts executive function and how well these kids were engaged? What about legitimate trauma that these kids have had, and what about trauma that these kids experienced during this year because of everything that's going on?

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Seth Perler 05:52

This is a different year, a different life, but it's the same system. We haven't adapted enough to meet the kids needs. It's different year, different type of world, but the same system? I mean, we've changed things. Of course, you teachers have worked our butts off, we appreciate so much that you've done. We totally do. We know how hard this has been for you, parents finally understand how hard it's been for you, finally, or at least they a little bit understand because they've had to teach their kids and understand how to motivate them when things are not motivating. So anyhow, it's the same system, we're still covering the material and following the standards and all this stuff.

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Seth Perler 07:39

As you grade these kids, for this year, my plea to you is to really think about what is in this child's long term best interest? If they fail your class, should they really retake the class? If yes, then are they going to retake it with you? How is your relationship with them? Are they going to take it with another teacher? How's the relationship with that teacher? Is that a teacher who's compassionate, empathetic, and understanding to neurodiverse kids? Or is that a teacher who's strict and rigid, and they're just going to fail again? Or they're just going to plod through that class and not learn anything in it? Like, what is the point? So should they retake it? What is the best? I don't know what's in their best interest, but my plea is for you to really think about it. What if they shouldn't retake it? What's the benefit of that or the negatives to that? Should they have to take summer school and retake the class? So these are some things to think about.

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Seth Perler 08:31

The thing I really want you to leave here with today is, again, your 'why.' Why are you a teacher? Why are you doing this? What did you get here to do? You get a lot of pressure from the system to do certain things, grade certain ways, cover certain curriculum. But why did you become a teacher? Because you love kids, you want to be of service. So using your empathy, your compassion, putting yourself in the shoes of these students, and knowing that you don't know the whole story. And remembering, what if you were graded for your performance this year at work with letters? And you think about the impact that this year has had on your relationships, your friendships, your self care, and the days that you just couldn't rally and you just struggled, and you were graded on all of this stuff. So the question is, what is in the highest good for the students that you're serving?

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Seth Perler 09:25

Thank you from bottom my heart teachers, principals, counselors, paras, all of you people working with kids. For the parents out there watching, thanks for watching. I hope that this gives you some insight as to what I might say to teachers, you know, as a teacher for 12 years and so I hope that this gives you some insights when we think about what are the grades gonna be. We're at the last minute of the school year, what are you going to do teachers? How are you going to grade these kids? What is in the highest good for these individuals? And again, from bottom of my heart, thank you for serving. Thank you for serving these kids need you, they need you. Thank you so much for everything you've done for us this year, I mean that.

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Seth Perler 10:06

My name is Seth Perler, I'm an executive function coach and my site is SethPerler.com, got a bunch of freebies for parents and teachers Find me on YouTube, leave a comment below. What do you think about grading kids this year, and about grades in general? Are they immoral? Are they ethical? Are they telling us what they're supposed to tell us? What information do they give us? Are there better ways? Yes, there are. There are definitely better ways to assess students meaningfully. But what are better ways than using these letter grades? This clearly is not working this year, yet it has not changed and these kids will have grades that will impact their lives. What do you think of that? Leave a comment below in the comments if you're watching me on YouTube or on my blog here at SethPerler.com. Have a great day. If you haven't subscribed, subscribe. Give it a thumbs up, leave a comment, likes, things like that. Those help my message get out to more people. Be well, it's almost summer. We almost get to take a big sigh of relief that the school year is over and hopefully onto a much better fall. Be well.