

Grading on a Skewed Curve

June 3, 2022

Oak Park and River Forest High School, a Chicago-area school, is imposing standards of grading designed to equalize academic performance among races.

According to a plan discussed at a recent school meeting, “Traditional grading practices perpetuate inequities and intensify the opportunity gap.”

Teachers must now ignore whether, for example, students miss class, misbehave, or fail to promptly submit homework. It seems that students of

Grades, after all, are there to serve as feedback – signalling successes and failures in learning, rewarding for excellence and warning for error.

certain races commit such lapses, on average, more often than students of other races.

It's not the first major step taken at the school to promote “diversity, equity, inclusion and justice [sic].” Last year, a teacher there adopted a grading scale under which students had to score as low as 19 percent to get an F and could get an A with 80 percent, a B with 65.



Students who conscientiously try to learn despite the fact that excellence and conscientiousness are no longer being appropriately recognized may do okay despite the perverse incentives being pushed.

But what about students on the margin who *need* to be rewarded for their efforts? Might they not slide into apathy if, no matter what they do, they're treated like anybody else? Grades, after all, are there to serve as feedback – signalling successes and failures in learning, rewarding for excellence and warning for error. Take that away and one incentive to adjust studying habits flies out the window.

Even under the new plan, there will perhaps be some remnant of recognition of actual individual performance at Oak Park and River High. But precedents have been established that pave the way to further erosion of standards.

Unless the whole noxious egalitarian approach is repudiated, things there can only get worse.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.