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Adventures with Cooperative Learning and standards-based grading in the college classroom (or, how I tried to re-program myself to teach in only one semester). Preliminary report.

After reading much research on Cooperative Learning and the effects of grading on students, I decided to do a complete overhaul on how I ran my Linear Algebra and Essential Calculus classes this semester.

First, I decided to use a Cooperative Learning (CL) structure in my classes. More than just "group work," CL is a method that has 115 years of research to support it.

Second, I decided to use a "standards-based grading" system. This was designed to give my students detailed feedback on what they understand (or don't) and minimize the emphasis on grades. In short, standards-based grading organizes scores according to topic rather than chronology.

Finally, I will discuss issues of implementation (how do you do CL when classes are only 70 minutes long?), successes, failures, lessons learned, and the wisdom (or lack thereof) of making two huge changes to one's teaching at once. I will provide an overview of the research that led me to make these changes, and I will provide anecdotal evidence on how well each worked. (Received September 21, 2010)