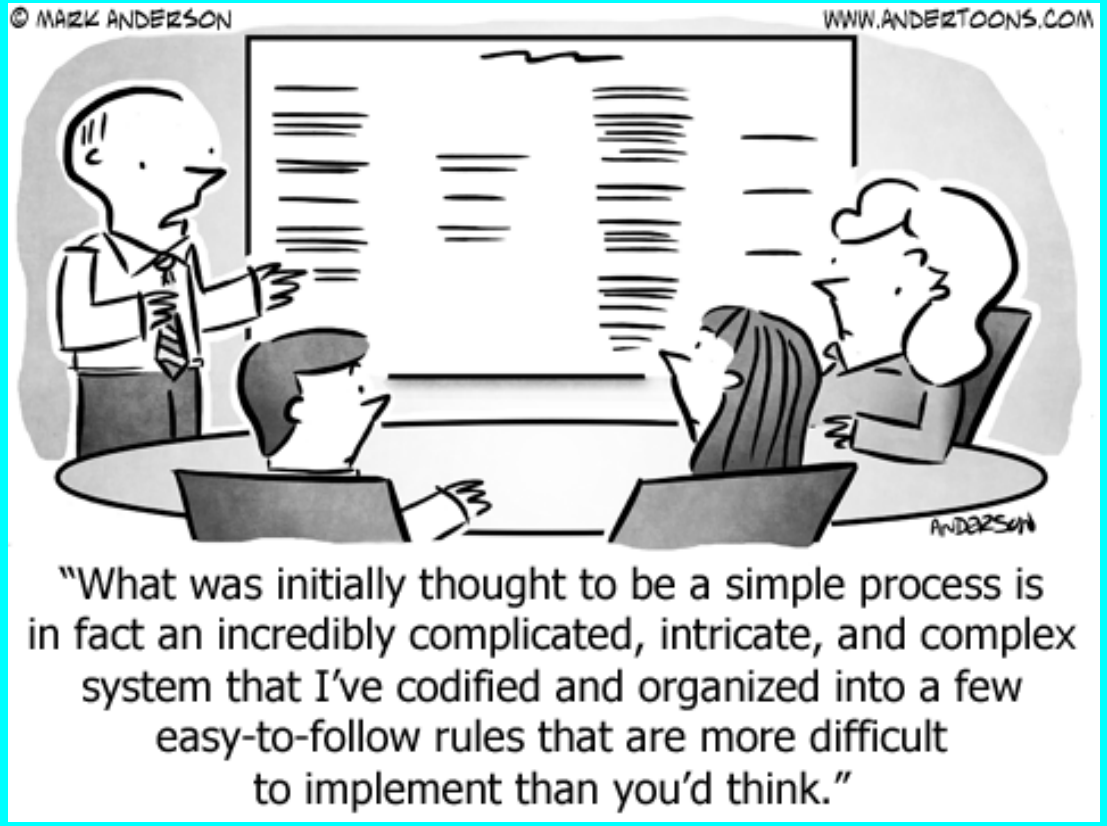


Proficiency Based Learning - It's complicated

But when done well it's a big improvement . . .

Two goals for my two hour presentation:

#1 - Reinforcing that the expectations in ACT 77 are good for students and teachers

#2 - Reminding all that bringing about these expectations is going to be very challenging

Newsflash: SBG Does Not Improve Student Learning: CVU Learns Blog Post by Emily Rinkema

Standards-based grading isn't the answer. It will *not* boost our students' achievement. It will *not* increase our students' engagement. It will *not* raise the rigor of our classrooms.

But standards-based learning (SBL) will do all of these things.

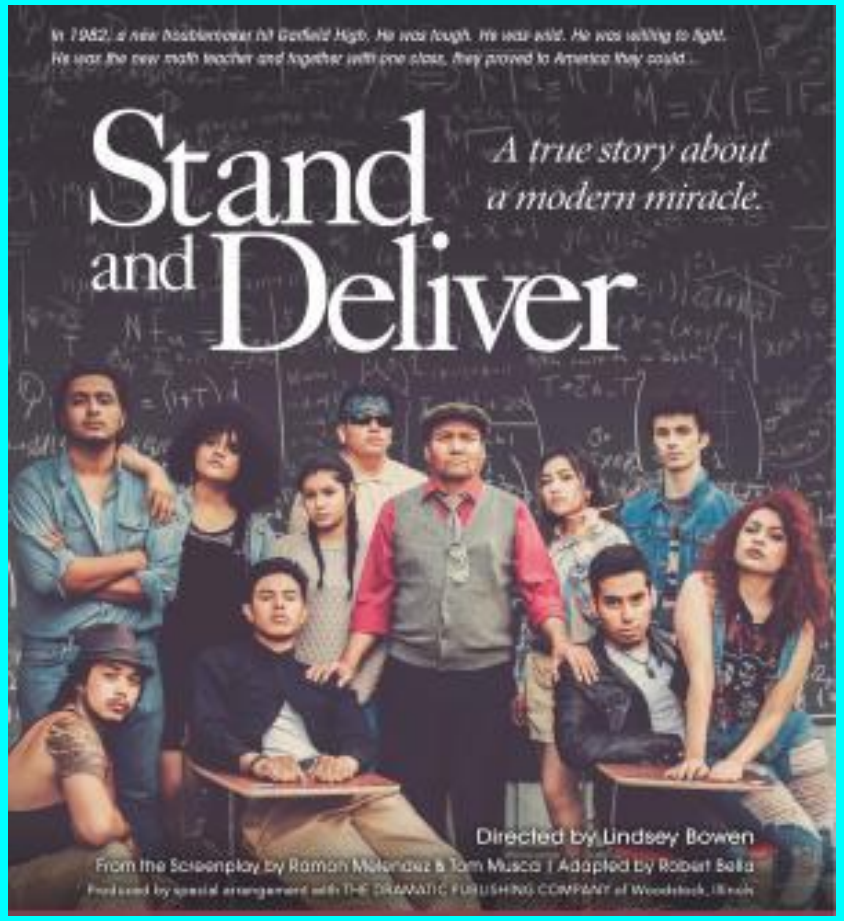
SBG without SBL won't work. These terms and initials are often used interchangeably, but the distinction is critical. We would like to argue here **that schools and teachers must understand and embrace changes in learning *before* attempting changes in grading**. We must transform our instructional practices if we want our grading practices to reflect learning.

LINK To Blog

Emily sites five ways that her instructional practices have changed

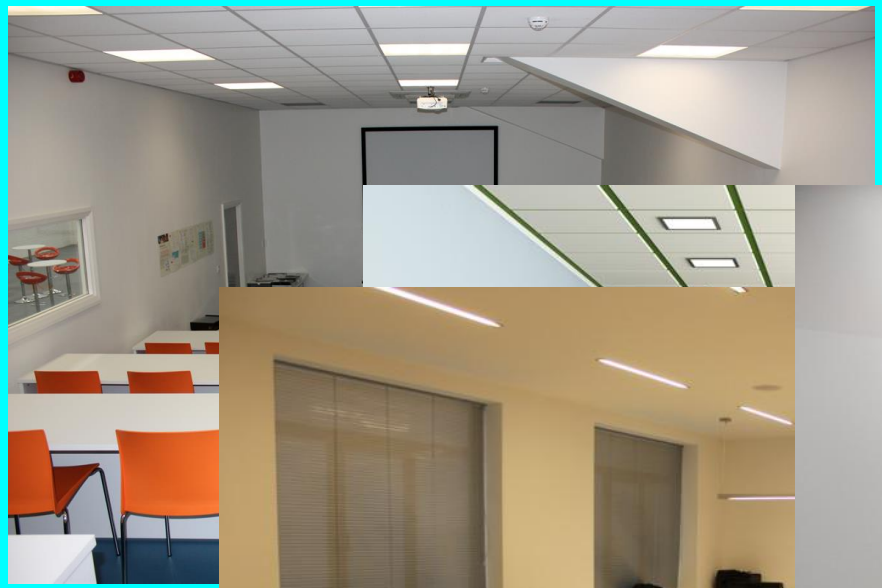
- Targets, not content, drive instruction:
- Teachers plan in response to data from formative assessments:
- Students spend the majority of every class practicing and playing and thinking and trying:
- Groupings, furniture setup, and classroom structures change constantly based on the learning needs:
- Students track their own learning and take control over the paths they take to that learning:

While these appear to be common sense practices implementation is much more complicated than "traditional" teaching pedagogy.



“The person doing the work does the learning.”

When you search “modern classroom” in Google images - Here are the first five results.



Why building practices around SBL/PBL is an improvement over traditional (and easier) practices? Using an example that is close to home (literally):

The Class: German IV/V

The summative assessment: Short answer questions around novel students read in class.

The dilemma: How do you assess students who answer the question correctly, but use basic sentence structures? Or students who don't get the answer fully correct, but use more complex sentence structures?

The discussion: The goal of German IV/V is to become "intermediate" language users (ACTFL standards). Using basic sentence structure is considered at the "novice" level. Students with a higher "level of language control" are more proficient. (Two grades)

How the students get to proficient:

Quizzes are "stepping stones": Formative assessments that provides the teacher and student with information about understanding.

Impromptu Situations: You are at your host family's house and they only have one bathroom. Have a conversation with your partner about how you communicate about the sharing of this bathroom.

Clear Standards: ACTFL provides clear guidance about recognizing Novice or Intermediate language users - also Advanced, but this is usually at the college level.

Encourage students to challenge themselves: Encourage the use of more complex language structures - more reward for trying versus punishment for getting it wrong.

Practice: Many opportunities to practice during class

"Sympathetic Listener"

What was language teaching like 20 years ago? (Or in some cases today . . .)

Memorized dialogues

Vocabulary Quizzes

Passage Translations

Textbook exercises - Fill in the blank, grammar worksheets

The thinking my wife is doing about instruction and assessment is so much deeper much more focused on the needs of her students.

- Will they be speaking German 10 years from now? Probably not.
- Are they learning broader skills that will help them no matter what they do? Yes.

Were these five strategies employed in a “typical” classroom during your educational experience?

- Targets, not content, drive instruction:
- Teachers plan in response to data from formative assessments:
- Students spend the majority of every class practicing and playing and thinking and trying:
- Groupings, furniture setup, and classroom structures change constantly based on the learning needs:
- Students track their own learning and take control over the paths they take to that learning:

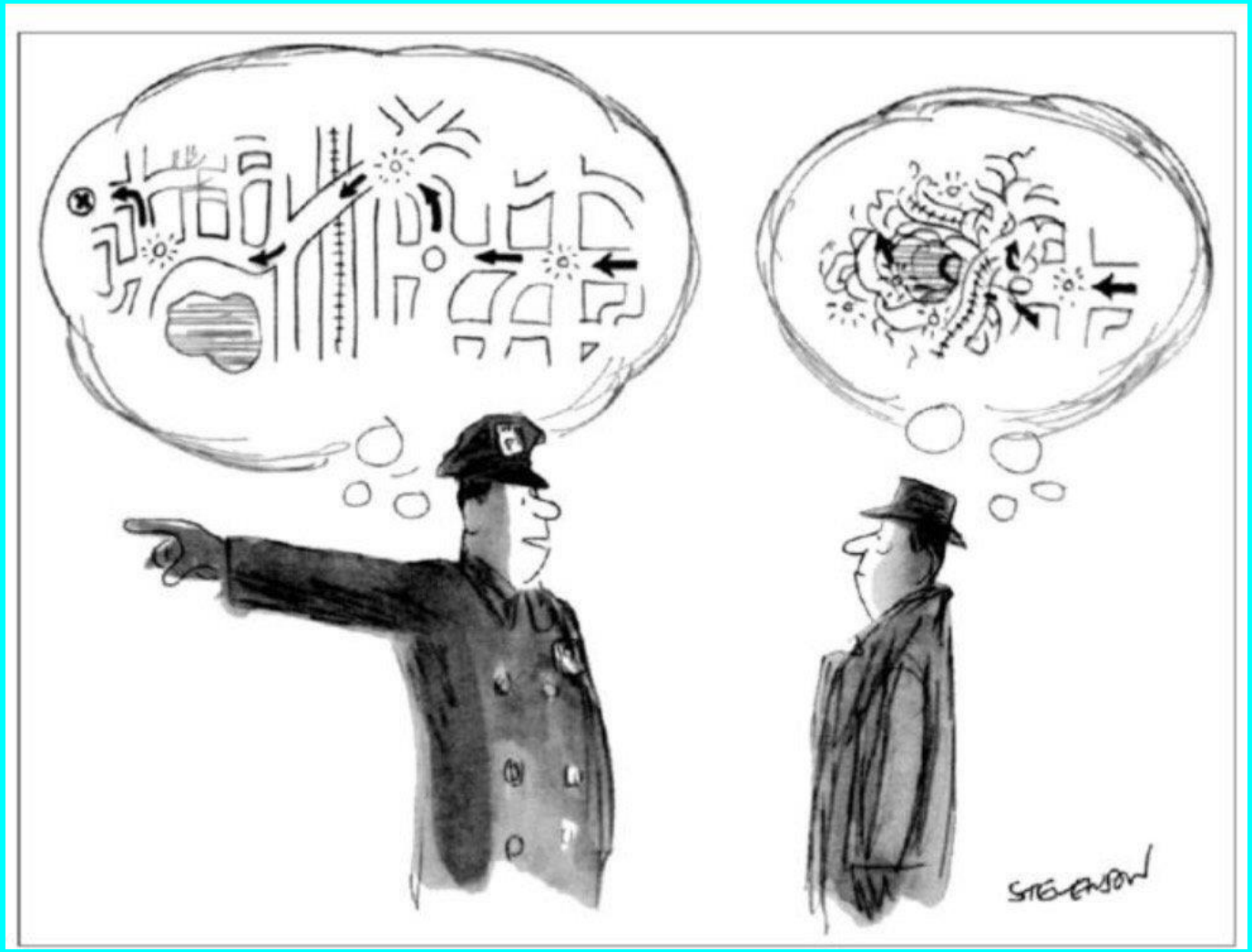
These are not “transactional” changes, they are “transformative” changes. Much

So what needs to be done . . . (in my opinion)

Keep moving forward, support the good work that is happening across the state.

"Increased flexibility for students requires increased teacher flexibility." MLR

Understand that there are going to be growing pains. All transformational work has struggles.


STEVENSON