Positive-Point Grading System

Educators agree that there is no perfect grading system. Dr. Maryellen Weimer of Faculty Focus presents the benefits and liabilities of using a point-based grading system. She made this statement:

> I'm surprised that so little research has been done on this common grading system. Does it promote more effective learning (as measured by higher exam scores or overall course grades) than letter grades or percentages? Does it motivate students to study? Does it make students more grade oriented or less so? Does it provoke more grade anxiety than other systems or less? Does it make a difference whether we use a 100-point system or a 1,000-point system? We all have our preferences—and sometimes even reasons—for the systems we use, but where's the evidence?

What I am sharing is not intended to offer empirical evidence to answer her questions. However, teachers who use a positive-point system do testify that student motivation to improve performance is enhanced, self-esteem improves and discouragement diminishes. Furthermore, if the goal in learning is to acquire what is being taught, then every attempt should be made by teachers to ensure that mastery takes place. So many times, student work is graded and little or no feedback is given relating to success or failure.

Recently, I attended my grandson's Grandparent Day at his school; he is a third grader. One of the things his teacher wanted her students to do was to show their grandparents the work they had been doing in class.

My grandson took out a folder of completed assignments. I noticed on one of his Math papers he had scored 82%. When I commented, "That's really good." He responded, "I would have done better. I just do not understand a couple problems." He pointed out a fraction problem where he was shown some boxes divided into segments and had to translate the number of boxes into fractions. After a couple minutes of going over the box segments with him, he completely understood and could make the corrections on the other problems he had gotten wrong.

If the teacher would have used a positive-point system, he would have been motived to go back over the fraction problems and come up with the correct answer. The chances of success on a second attempt would have been enhanced since he had already gotten several similar problems correct.

So, what is a Positive-Point System? It is a process whereby students are given credit for going over a problem that has been missed and working to get the correct answer. On tests, if they get the problem correct, they earn half the credit given to the problem. On daily work, they might earn 2 points for making all the corrections.

For the student who is struggling, having an opportunity to make corrections allows them to score much higher. And for the fast learner, making corrections could move an already high score up over 100 percent.

Positive Point System 2% Added for Corrected Assignment										
Grade System	Student	Daily Assignments					Test	Average		
Positive Point	Peter	X	0	X	0	X	65	71	C	6 points added
Traditional		40	30	70	45	80	65	55	F	
Positive Point	Susan	X	X	X	X	X	75	85	B	10 points added
Traditional		78	75	90	88	70	75	79	C	
Positive Point	Mark	X	X	X	X	X	98	108	A	8 points added
Traditional		100	98	96	94	100	98	98	A	