Categories – Total Points vs. Assigned Weights

There are many valid ways to set up a grading scheme. But depending on the decisions that a teacher makes, he/she can emphasize different aspects of the class. Many teachers use 'Total Points' – a valid, easily understood method where every assignment is assigned the number of points proportional to its worth. This discussion addresses another method where pre-determined weights are assigned to each category.

Suppose that you wish to emphasize a particular part of your curriculum.

Example:
> You want to emphasize the speaking and writing components of your World Language class.

Set up the categories that you wish to use and decide on the percentage weights that you wish to emphasize. For instance:

Homework/Participation	10%
Vocabulary	10%
Structure/Grammar	10%
Reading	10%
Culture	10%
Listening	10%
Speaking	20%
Writing	20%

Then, when assigning point values to different assignments, you do not need to balance them between categories. The points assigned to Writing are not compared against Reading. Even with relatively few speaking and writing assignments, your students will need to take them seriously because they are worth 40% of the total grade. Within each category, relative point values DO matter. So if you have one 100 point writing assignment, it will count 5 times as much as a 20 point writing assignment.

Conversely, if you use this system, you need to be careful that the categories ARE worth the percentages assigned. If you set up your system like this and then ended up only assigning one little paragraph essay for your Writing Category, it would be patently unfair.

If you use this system, you should make sure to include Category Grades in any progress report shown to parents so that they can see which categories their student is strong and weak in.

Note that you could also make your categories the more traditional Homework, Quiz, Test, and Participation. The method works equally well with those. You must choose which categories you wish students and parents to differentiate between. "You do well on your tests, but your missing homework is keeping your grade down." "Your vocabulary is very strong, but you need to practice your speaking. If you were to read out loud for 10 minutes every evening, …" (This can be done with setting the percentages – the percentages are used so that you do not need to balance your point assignments.)

Instructions for implementing this in Zangle are posted. Please feel free to e-mail me at tryon_peter@asdk12.org with comments or questions.