



Cool Tools

Color and the Grade Center

Blackboard gives an instructor a variety of tools to help instructors track and monitor their student's progress. To be honest, I do not use half of them largely because I find little value in calculated statistics or graphs which detail the ins and outs of a ten question quiz. In short, I know the numbers are important, but I am more interested in what the numbers mean.

One of the quickest ways to gauge student performance is by using color coding in the grade center. I use the traffic light colors (Green, Yellow, and Red), and this allows me to see quickly estimate how my student did in relation to each other, and how well they are doing over all. Setting up color coding is easy and you can turn it off if it becomes annoying.

After logging in to Blackboard, open the Grade Center. Click on the "Manage" button and click on "Grading Color Codes.":

The screenshot shows the Blackboard Grade Center interface. At the top, there is a header bar with the text "Grade Center : Full Grade Center" and a dropdown arrow. Below this, there is a navigation bar with buttons for "Create Column", "Create Calculated Column", "Manage", and "Reports". The "Manage" dropdown menu is open, showing a list of options: "Grading Periods", "Grading Schemas", "Grading Color Codes" (highlighted in yellow), "Categories", "Smart Views", "Column Organization", "Row Visibility", "Send Email", "Manage Pearson MyLab and Mastering Grades", "WileyPLUS Grade Refresh", "McGraw-Hill Connect Reports", and "McGraw-Hill Connect To Do List". Below the navigation bar, there is a table with columns for "Last Name", "First Name", and "Username". The table contains several rows of student data, with some cells containing redacted information. A "Grade Information Bar" is visible above the table, and a "Move To Top" button is located above the table headers.

This will direct you to a new screen where you can set up your color codes:

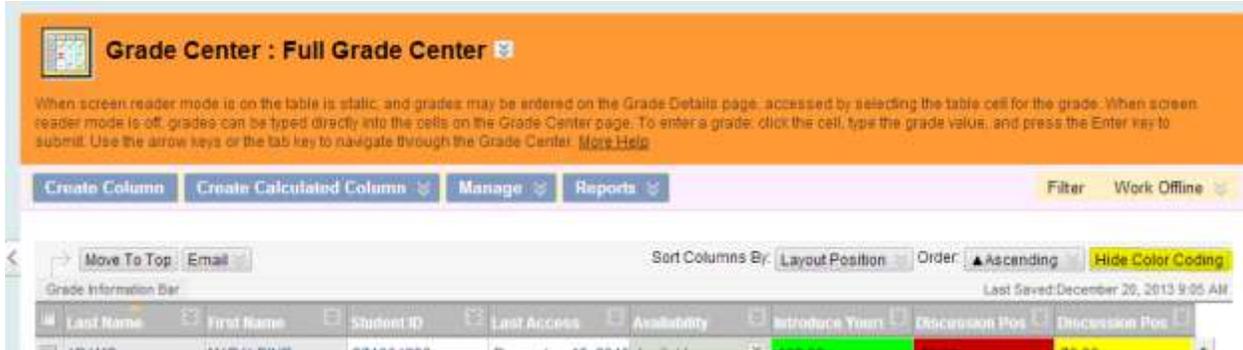
While you can set up different color codes for the grading status of your assignments (See the image above), the focus of this discussion is for grades.

To set up grade color codes, click in the box next to “Enable Grading Color Codes.” This needs to be checked or you will not see the color codes you set-up.

Next, click “Add Criteria” under “Grade Ranges.” This will bring up the following box:

From here you can set-up the various criteria which make sense to you. Fill out the box and then click “Add Criteria” again until you are finished adding them. While I generally use three colors, you may want to use six or more. Note that Blackboard provides an “Indicator Preview” of what your color coding criteria will look like. I highly advise that you use this or you run the risk of not being able to see your student’s grades.

Turning off color coding is simple. Once you have set up your Criterion, simply click on the button labeled “Hide Color Coding” on the right-hand side of the Grade Center:



If you have any questions on these or any other of Blackboard's cool tools, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Tom McKinney at extension 4522.