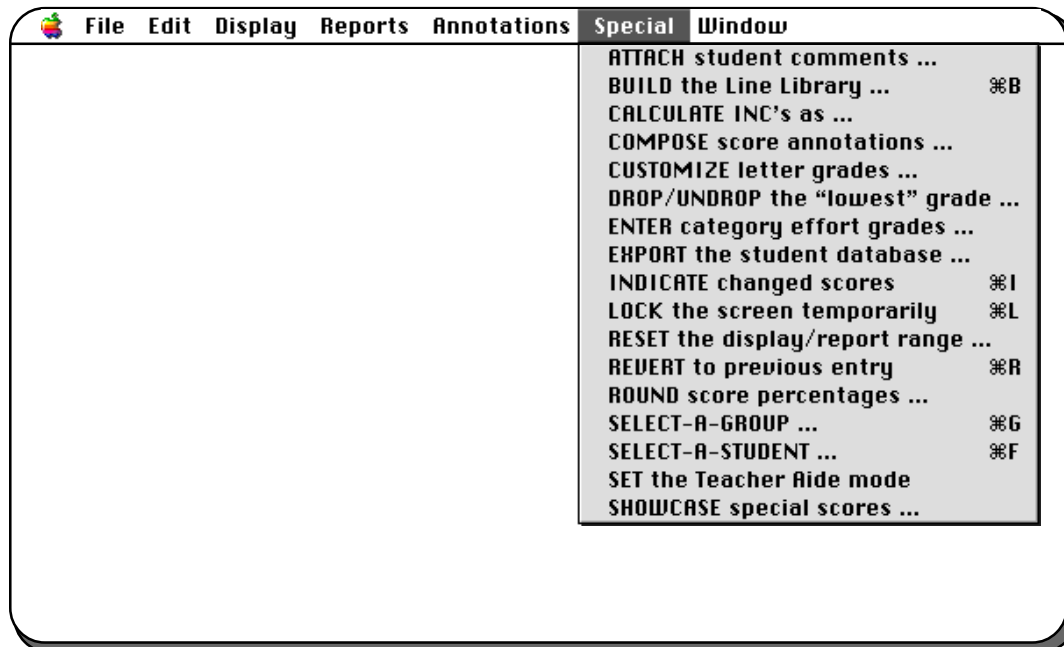


# Special Functions

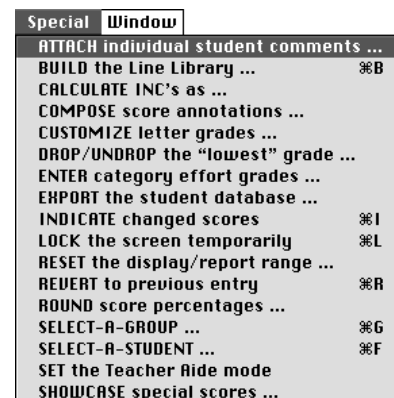


Last, but certainly not the least of *Making the Grade's* powerful gradebook options, is the **Special** menu shown above. Many of these easy-to-use features have been introduced in other guises elsewhere in the documentation, and even the brand new segments are virtually self-explanatory. However, I'd bet (if I were the wagering type) that the fourteenth and fifteenth items on the list, the cryptically titled **SELECT-A-GROUP** and **SELECT-A-STUDENT**, may have stirred your curiosity a bit. And well they should! (A **HINT**: If you've ever been forced to "volunteer" students for a class discussion or other such activity—and were gently accused of favoritism or prejudice in the process—you will *adore* these features. You *may* even wear them out!)

## ■ Attaching Individual Student Comments

The first of our seventeen **Special** functions is one we alluded to very briefly in the **Setting Up A Class** section. (See page 15 and the 18th item in the catalog of *MtG* Database Fields.) Before you may utilize this function, however, you must have already set up your collection of personalized student comments in the **BUILD the Line Library** component. Once you have comments composed and recorded there, you're all set to append them to individual student progress reports. The Rules and Regulations for this feature are mercifully simple and few:

1. You may attach as many of the 100 comments in the Line Library to each student's take-home reports as you wish, in any order you wish.



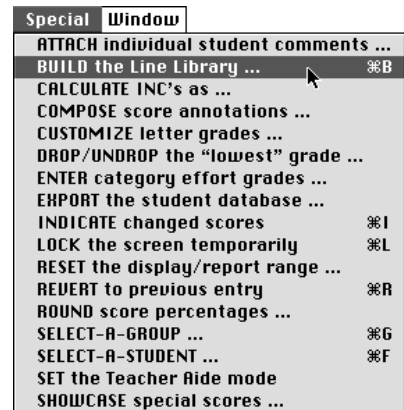
2. You must separate each student comment from the next with a **comma** (or comma and a space).
3. You may group consecutive comments (thus saving keystrokes) with a **hyphen** connecting the first and last items in the series. That is, in the database sample at right, **Dennis Archer** will find comments **6,7,8, 9,** and **28** at the bottom of his next progress report. If you forget this special feature and manually enter the numbers 6,7,8, and 9, they'll be automatically replaced with 6-9 as soon as you press Return/Enter.

Student		Line Library
Last Name	First Name	Comments
1. Archer,	Dennis E.	6-9, 28
2. Douglas,	Charles R.	1, 14, 99
3. Chancellor,	James L.	3
4. Dickerson	Michael R.	21, 35
5. Garcia,	Eugene F.	
6. Glenn,	Helen B.	1, 57, 82
7. Greg,	Kathleen B.	13, 38-54
8. Howard,	Stacey E.	7, 12, 75

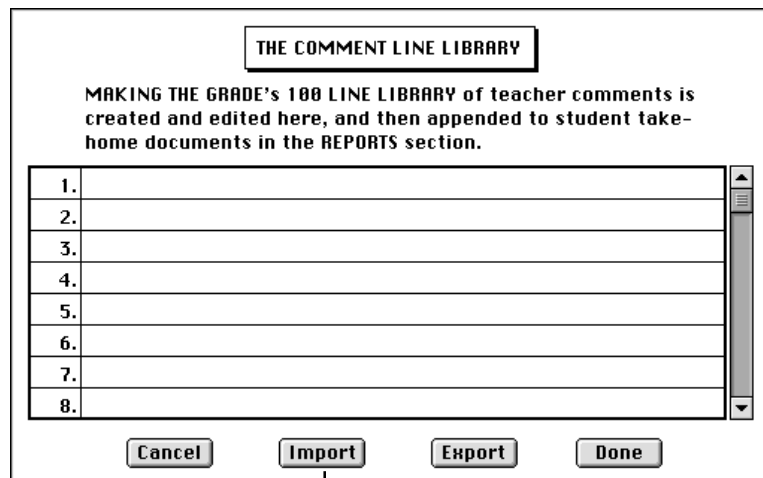
4. You must remember to **replace** existing student comments with new ones (or completely **erase** the old) each time you print your next series of progress reports. Once recorded in the *MtG* student database, these remarks remain active and “appendable” until edited or deleted from the above field.

## ■ Building the Line Library

If you've been looking for a place to compose personalized academic or behavioral remarks about your charges, you have definitely arrived. This is where you will compose, group, and record the remarks which may be appended to individual student take-home reports. You will note that your **LINE LIBRARY** comes to you completely empty, without even so much as a **Sample** button to stir your imagination along these lines. This is so because we refuse to insult your intelligence, sense of style, and educational philosophy with a group of canned remarks like those found in most other gradebook programs. Such generic observations as those more often than not offend us with their poor wording, lack of “applicability,” and simplistic analysis of complex student behaviors, good and bad. At any rate, the restrictions and guidelines for setting up your **100 Line Library** are few:



1. Each comment is limited to **70 characters** of courier (non-proportional) type. Should any statement exceed that length, just continue it onto the next line, and then select *both* lines when tailoring student reports.
2. You may leave **blank lines** in your library as dividers or grouping devices if you wish. For instance, lines 1-50 might be your comments of praise, and 60 through 100 your comments of concern. You can always fill in the intervening blank lines (51-60) whenever inspiration strikes.
3. Unsure of your spelling or typing? Then use the **Export** button at right to “dump” your comments into an ASCII file for analysis by your favorite spelling checker.

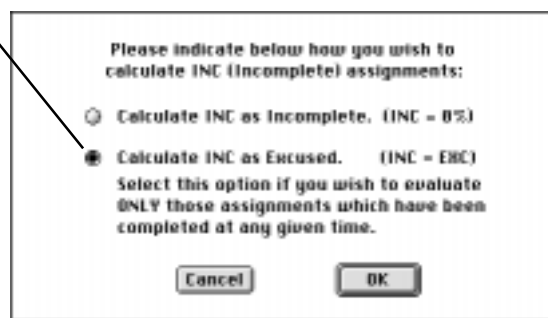
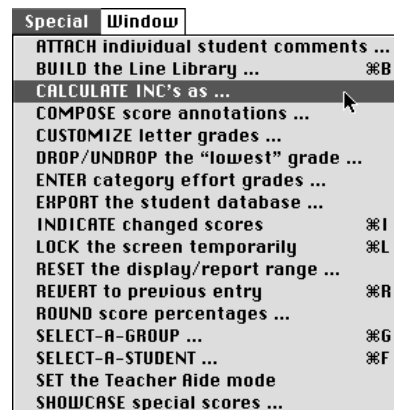


**WARNING!** This familiar button will bring in the *complete* set of comment lines from another class file—not just selected parts thereof. Therefore, this function will **replace** any and all lines you may have entered in this class with those recorded in another.

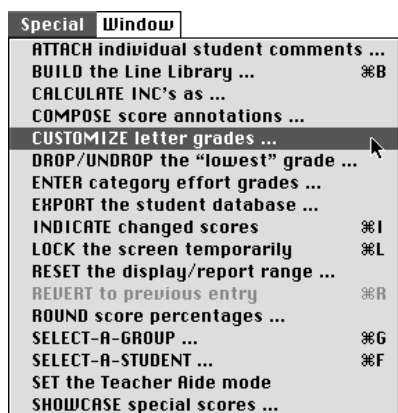
## ■ Calculating Incomplete Scores

This feature found its way into the *Making the Grade* package through the persistence of one of our favorite Driver's Education teachers. Because the scope and sequence of his curriculum was predetermined by state fiat, he could lay out his gradebook files with an entire semester's worth of work at a time. (You should see this gentleman use the *MtG Import* button!) In the process he also entered point values for each required assignment (totaling about 4500 points for the semester), thereby assuring students that they would enter each marking period with 0 points and a cumulative grade of F. The mathematics and negative public relations value of this scenario were intolerable for the teacher, his students, and their parents . . . and something definitely had to give!

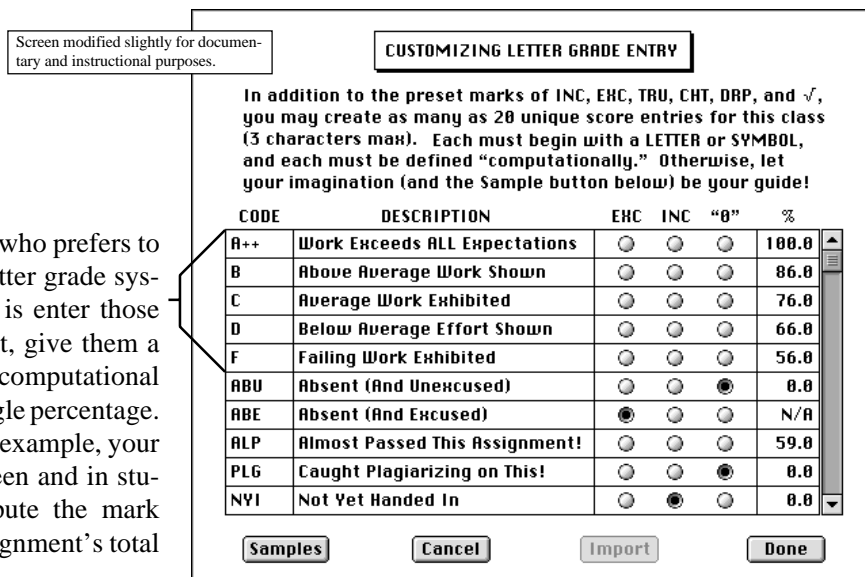
The solution appeared in *MtG* when we developed the feature at right. Even though the program defaults to calculating Incompletes as zeroes, you have the right and power to override the practice. Selecting **Calculate INC as Excused** ensures that your students will be evaluated *only* on the work they have completed and handed in. What this means is that a student who has completed only three activities out of 30 that are required could still have an A. What a marvelous option for self-paced and individualized learning programs! **A CAVEAT:** You will probably want to reset each of your gradebook files to the original format (INC = 0) when the marking period comes to a close. Forgetting to do so will let a great many students off the hook, so to speak.



## ■ Customizing Letter Grades



Have you ever had one of those assignments that seemed to defy objective quantification? (You know . . . points earned out of points possible.) If you haven't yet, you probably will; and when that situation arises, *Making the Grade* will be there for you. With this feature you can create any kind of custom letter grade or symbol—or mixture of the two—you need to help assess your students' academic progress and to motivate them to higher planes of achievement.



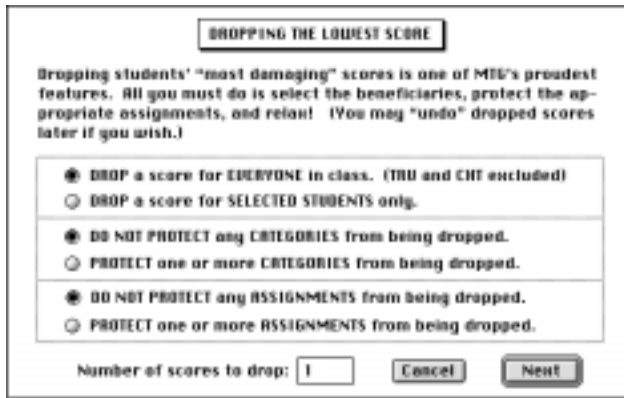
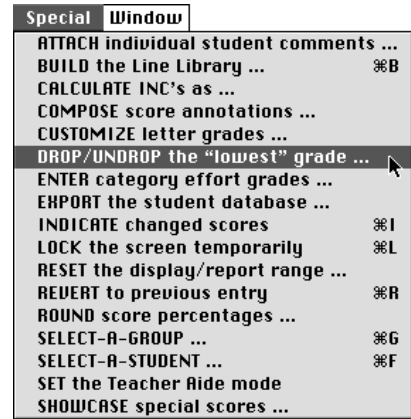
**Important:** If you're a teacher who prefers to work *exclusively* with a traditional letter grade system (A through F), all you must do is enter those characters in the first column at right, give them a brief definition, and then assign a computational value to each: EXC, INC, "0", or a single percentage. Then, every time you enter a "C," for example, your Mac will show that character on screen and in students' take-home reports and compute the mark behind the scenes as a 76% of the assignment's total value. Is that flexibility or what?

## ■ Dropping/Undropping the “Lowest” Grade

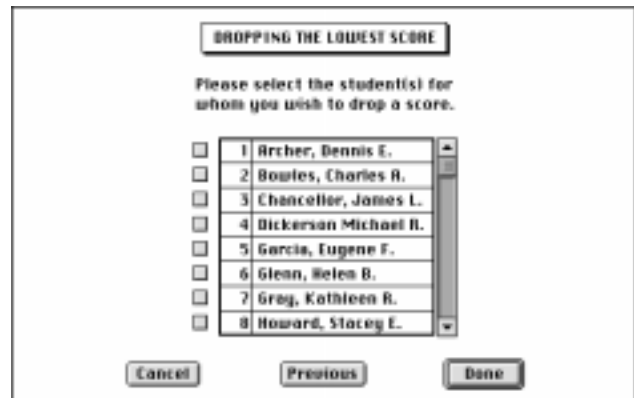
And now for your students’ favorite feature of *Making the Grade*! We all know that one of the most generous acts we can perform for our charges is to allow them to toss out one or more of their least productive scores within a grading period. Everyone has “one of those days” in a quarter or semester, so wouldn’t it be nice if we could quickly, easily, and with certainty forgive the most damaging score recorded for everyone? Of course! But a host of nagging questions immediately arises here: Exactly which score *is* the most damaging? Shouldn’t some **assignments** be protected from the dropping process? Shouldn’t some categories? **And just how much time and effort will all of this take?** The truth is that even with five or six classes containing 35 assignments and 35 students each, **about 15 seconds total**. That’s it!

**FYI:** A great many Macintosh gradebooks tout the ability to drop a student’s “lowest score.” In truth, such programs usually excuse the assignment with the lowest percentage, regardless of its relative influence within a student’s (possibly weighted) cumulative grade. *Making the Grade*, however, employs a true bubble sorting routine which drops each one of a student’s grades, recomputes the new overall score each time, and then decides which one was, in fact, the “most damaging.” And it does in under fifteen seconds what it would take an accountant several hours to do by hand. Imagine what you can do with the time you’ll save!

The process for excusing the most damaging scores is quite simple, involving only three decisions on your part. As shown in Screen 1 below, you must decide (1) whether **everyone** should receive the benefit of this process, (2) whether any **categories** should be protected from the dropping process, and (3) whether any specific **assignments** should be exempted.



Screen 1: Dropping the Lowest Grade Preferences



Screen 2: Selecting the Beneficiaries



Screen 3: Protecting Assignment Categories

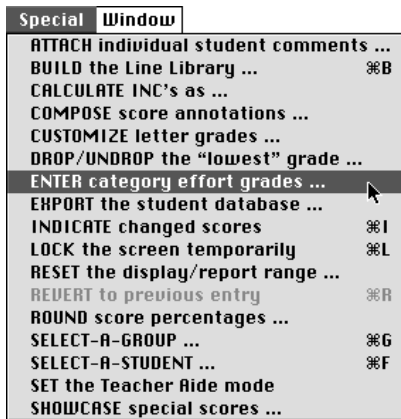


Screen 4: Protecting Specific Assignments

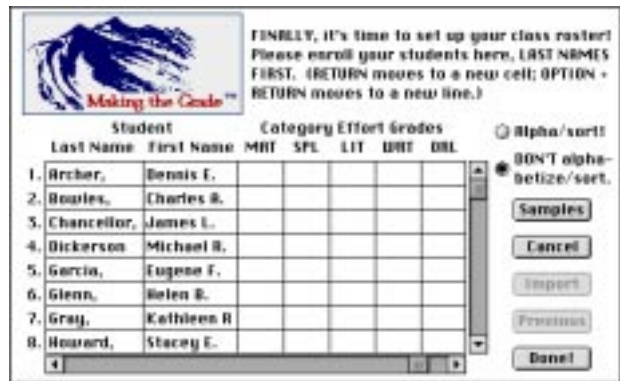
## Dropping the Lowest Grade RULES AND REGULATIONS:

1. You must have recorded at least **two** “droppable” assignments in a gradebook or weighted category before you may drop a most damaging score. This feature is designed to *raise* students’ grades, of course; and if only one eligible score is recorded, dropping *it* will effect an **N/A** (which we do not consider an improvement). By the same token, students will not receive a **DRP** if they have no scores which, when excused, raise their overall grade.
2. We will drop the most damaging score for a student only if that entry is a **numerical value** (including 0) or an **Incomplete**. We will *not* excuse the scores of **TRU** or **CHT** (for ethical reasons), nor **EXC**, **DRP**, or  $\surd$  for logical ones. By the way, you may wish to assure your students that no extra credit scores will ever be dropped in this process.
3. You may not manually enter a **DRP** in your gradebook—*Making the Grade* reserves that score exclusively for its automatic dropping feature. You may **REVERT** to a **DRP**, but not originate one. **EXC** serves the same function, of course, and you may utilize it at will. Our intent with the **DRP** score is to enable your students to differentiate between automated, coldhearted forgiveness and that emanating from your warm, loving heart!

## ■ Entering Category Effort Grades



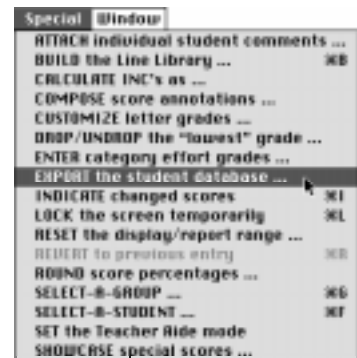
If you’re a primary school teacher who uses a single gradebook file for your class—with skill areas as category setups—you’ll recognize right away the purpose of this feature. Most school systems around the country require a separate effort grade for each discipline within an elementary class. Consequently, *Making the Grade* provides ten fields within the database for recording these marks and placing them in students’



progress reports later. The only restriction here is the three-character limit placed on each mark.

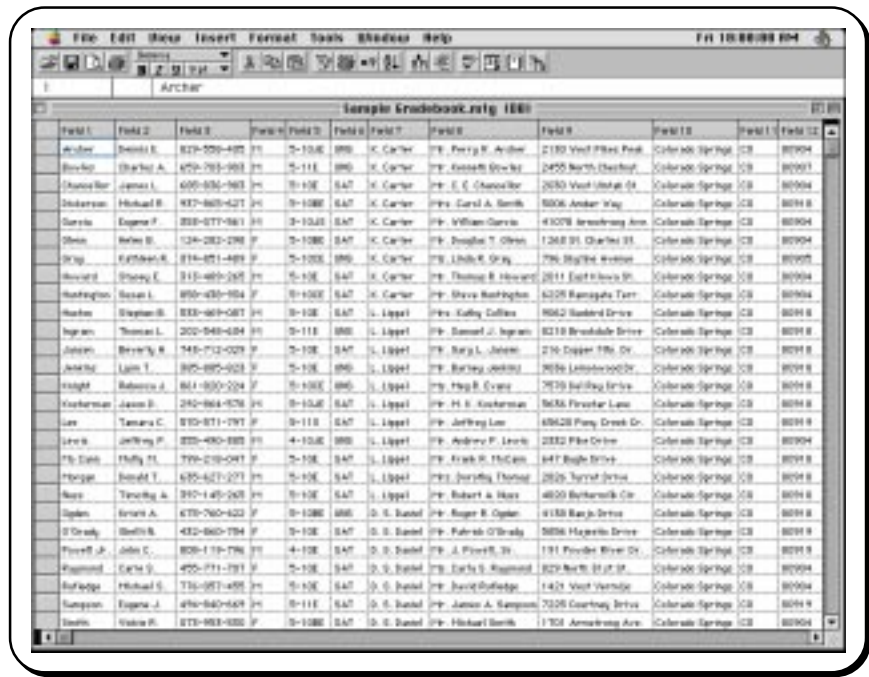
## ■ Exporting the Student Database

If ever there was a special feature in *Making the Grade* that reeked of raw reporting power, it is this one . . . the ability to “dump” the entire student database in raw ASCII form for import into the greater application of your choice. If you presently own Microsoft Works™, ClarisWorks™, FileMaker Pro™, or similar package, you will absolutely *adore* this feature, for with it you can create mailing labels, field trip notices, emergency notification cards, folder labels, and the like at the touch of a button (or two). Interestingly enough, this capability has always existed within *MtG* in the **Export student data** segment of the program (under **File**), but it involved too many mouse clicks and too much searching around in the 100+ fields listed there. With this new and improved interface, however, you can export the complete database for as many students as you wish, from as many 30



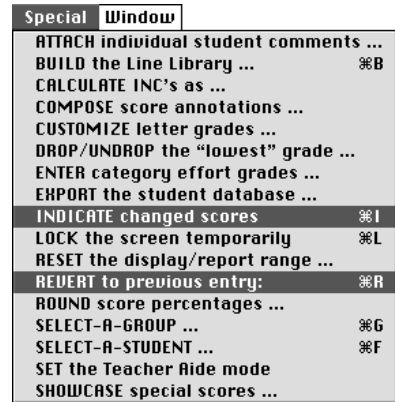
separate classes, any time you wish. The screen at right features a full class database opened in **Microsoft Works™**. With this or similar database tool you can manipulate student records and fields in whatever manner you may require, merging them later with your favorite word processor for hardcopy publication.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** If generating mailing labels is of particular interest to you, please keep in mind that the **Avery** company offers a remarkable series of Laser Labels and integrated software templates in such programs as WordPerfect™, Microsoft Word™, Lotus Word™, Lotus Ami Pro, Now Contact, and more. We use **Remove'Em™** all the time, and they're great!

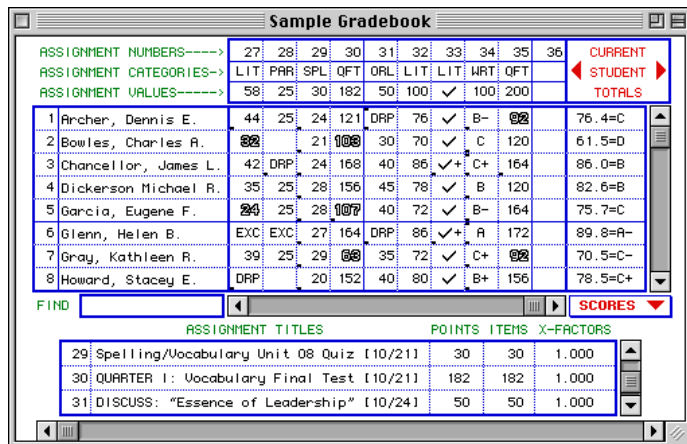


## ■ Indicating Changed Scores/Reverting to Previous Entry

These two features of *Making the Grade* could prove to be surprising upon first glance, because they reveal another *dimension* to our program, another *level* to its record-keeping ability that remains unique in the industry. Simply put, the gradebook for each of your classes possesses **two layers of scores**, not just the surface one you see on screen and paper. Every cell in the gradebook is capable of showing—and calculating—not only the current, active score, but also the one which preceded it. Every time you edit a score we store the previous entry behind the scenes, just in case you ever wish to peek at it —**or even revert to it**. Sounds great, but how can you tell exactly which of your scores have been changed? Just select the **INDICATE changed scores** function at right, and a **small black box** will appear in the lower left corner of any cell that has been edited. (See assignments 29 and 34 below.)



But then, you may ask, how do you know what the previous score for that assignment *was*? There are two ways, actually. First, click upon any edited score, and then select the **REVERT to previous entry** option shown above.



Immediately following the word **entry** you will find a colon and the previous score for that assignment. A second option is to type the “hot key” **Command + R** (for **REVERT**) and see what score appears in the cell. You can always toggle back and forth between old and new scores to see what effect the change has upon a student’s overall grade; as long as you don’t save the class to disk, no harm is done.

Consider the possibilities of this feature: If you pretest skill and content activities in your classes, you can now record such preliminary scores in your electronic gradebook—*without* adversely affecting students’ current overall grades. When you set up

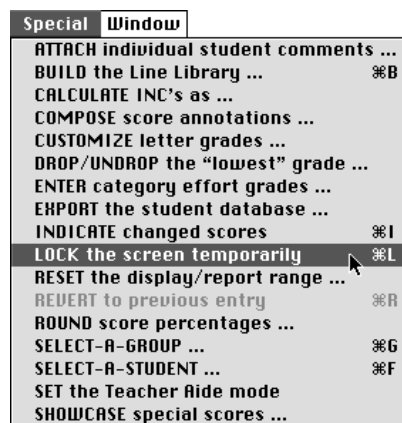
this new assignment entry, give it a point value of  $\surd$  and then enter your pretest data as usual. The check mark “neutralizes” the entire assignment column, as you know, and no one’s cumulative grade is affected in the slightest. Then, when it comes time to record post-test scores, change the value of the assignment from  $\surd$  to its real **Points Possible**, and enter your new scores right over the old ones. *Making the Grade* will remember the earlier pretest scores and present them for comparative analysis whenever you wish.

Likewise, it is this **REVERT** feature you must use to “undo” an edited score and replace it with its original. Keep in mind, though, that if you ever get off track entering a set of scores, any corrections you make will unavoidably create “previous scores” in the process. However, you can always hide the telltale little boxes again with the **Command + I** “hot key,” and no one will be the wiser.

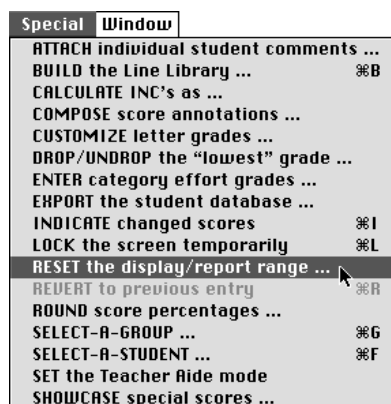
## ■ Locking the Screen Temporarily

Very little needs to be said about this special feature, of course, but its importance to the security of your gradebook cannot be overestimated—especially if you’re fortunate enough to have a desktop or portable Macintosh in your classroom. Every time you’re called away from your workstation the opportunity exists for a student or students to prowl around without supervision in confidential data . . . and that we cannot permit. So, a quick stroke of the **Command + L** keys will temporarily blank the screen, disable the program, and bring up the **PASSWORD** entry window. At this point all the usual rules and regulations for regaining full access to your program will apply.

**AS EXTRA SECURITY:** Even if a student “hacker” does a hard reset of *Making the Grade* or of the CPU itself, fear not . . . for in that scenario the opening password screen is still in the way of unauthorized browsing!



## ■ Resetting the Display/Report Range

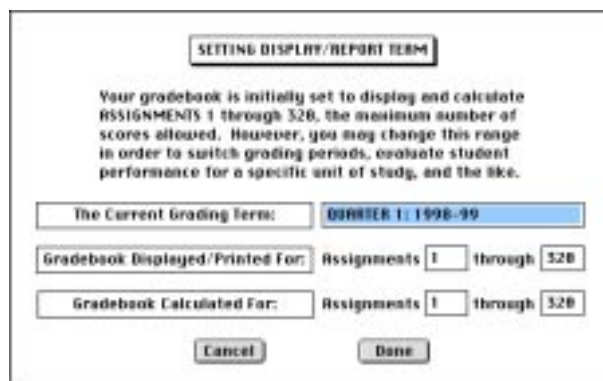


This *Making the Grade* feature was designed for those who like to start a new grading period with a fresh gradebook—but at the same time must keep student data close at hand for later computation. That is, when Quarter II arrives, you may be required to begin with a clean slate for everyone, knowing fully well that Quarter I’s scores will be factored into a final grade in another few weeks. Although this may appear to be a complicated process, starting over from “ground zero” when grading periods change is a simple two-step process requiring the modification of a maximum of five fields.

**Step 1:** When an official grading period changes, so should its official title (in all likelihood). All you must do is click in the highlighted box below to update the name of the current grading term,

keeping in mind that changing this entry *here* changes it internally everywhere else (including the first class setup screen).

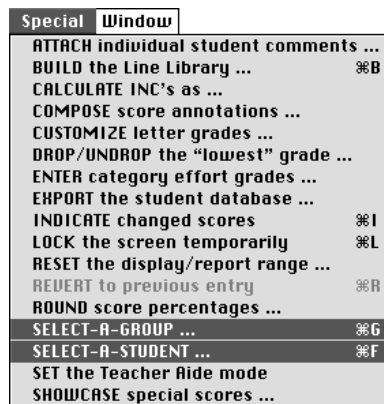
**Step 2:** You may modify any or all of these four values to reflect the parameters of the new grading period. Most likely, you’ll change only the first sets of numbers to indicate the new starting point of your gradebook. That is, if Quarter I contains 40 assignments, then Quarter II must begin with assignment 41.



## Setting the display/report range RULES AND REGULATIONS:

1. All new *Making the Grade* classes automatically default to the maximum display/report range of 1 through 320 assignments.
2. The number of the first assignment in the display/report range must be less than (but not 0), equal to, or only one greater than the **number of assignments** recorded thus far. That is, if you have recorded 40 assignments for Quarter I and wish to change the display/report range, you may enter any number between 1 and 41 as the starting point of your new gradebook. **We permit no columnar gaps in your official class record.**
3. The first assignment number in the display/report range must be less than or equal to the last assignment number in the range. That is, you may display assignments 40 through 80 or even 40 through 40 if you wish—but *not* 40 through 25. Down with *non sequiturs*!
4. Changes in the display/report range parameters take place immediately upon clicking the **Done** button. However, remember that no change is permanent until you save the class to disk once again.
5. Also keep in mind that even though your gradebook is being displayed and calculated for, say, assignments 40-80, assignments 1-39 are still “there,” just waiting to be activated again when the appropriate time comes. Nothing is ever erased or otherwise destroyed with this feature—it is only stored temporarily in a back room of sorts, awaiting your beck and call.

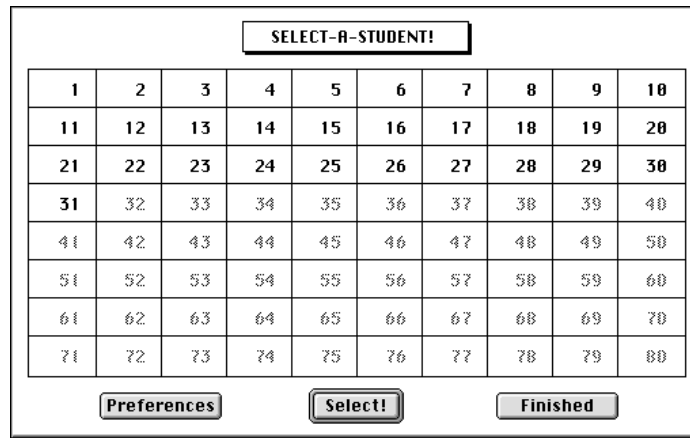
## ■ Selecting-A-Group and Selecting-A-Student



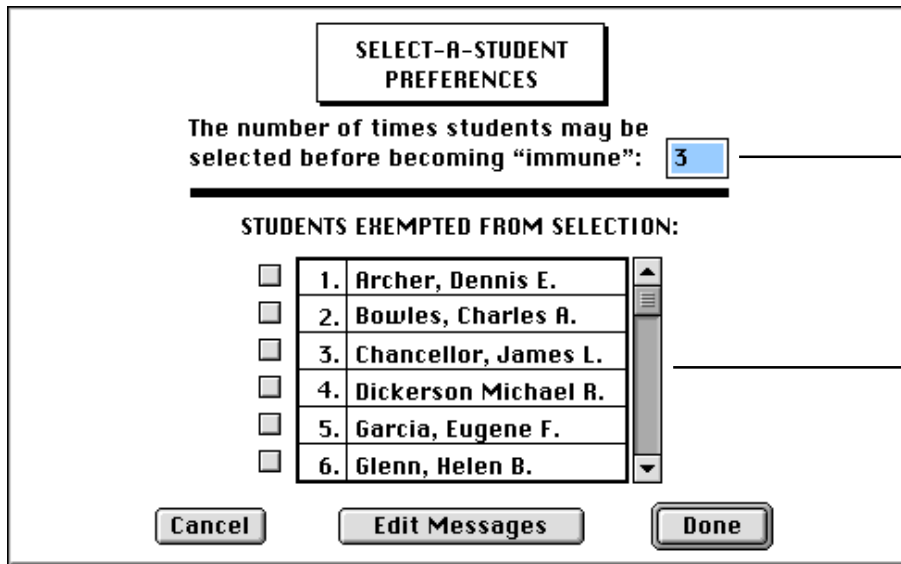
And now, two favorite features of *Making the Grade*! As the first official users of *Grade Busters Mac*, we can't tell you how much fun we (and even my students) had with these functions. In fact, sophomores and seniors alike became virtually addicted to them—so much so that almost no one would volunteer for anything—collectively or individually—without “Saggy and Sassy” (*their* nicknames, formed from the acronyms). I personally found both functions indispensable after a few uses, for they ably took the heat off my shoulders when it came to picking students for group or solo activities, placing it squarely on the circuits of a fair, disinterested microchip where it belongs!

To be sure, much consternation has been voiced recently, in both public and private circles, concerning the selection of students within cooperative learning situations. *Do* we tend to favor boys over girls as volunteers for math problems, say, and girls over boys when it comes to music and literature questions? Is it even *possible* to be impartial and unbiased in such an intricate, value-based selection process? **Yes, it is now!**





**SELECT-A-STUDENT:** You will notice on the first screen of this feature that only those roster position numbers representing **active students** are black and selectable—all absent or dropped students and empty roster slots are automatically dimmed and “out of play.” Before you click **Select!** and commence the **SAS** process, however, take a look at the **Prefs (Preferences)** box below:



You know how most students are—choose ’em once in a class discussion and they think they’re invisible for the rest of the period! Should they be? *You* decide here how many times **SAS** can elect your charges for participation before they become immunized.

Likewise, you may exempt anyone from the **SAS** process by clicking on his or her name here. Be sure to remove anyone who is absent or otherwise should not be chosen for personal, emotional, physical, or financial reasons.

Once you return to the main **SAS** screen and click **Select** (or press **Return**), you’ll hear a series of short musical tones as the computer moves the selection box around the grid. The chooser dramatically slows as it moves among still-active roster position numbers until the winner’s name finally appears!

The sample screen at right is identical for all selectees except for the **message field** below the student’s name. There you’ll see a series of customizable remarks which will, no doubt, raise your students to unheard-of levels of excitement and commitment to academic excellence! Two such comments:

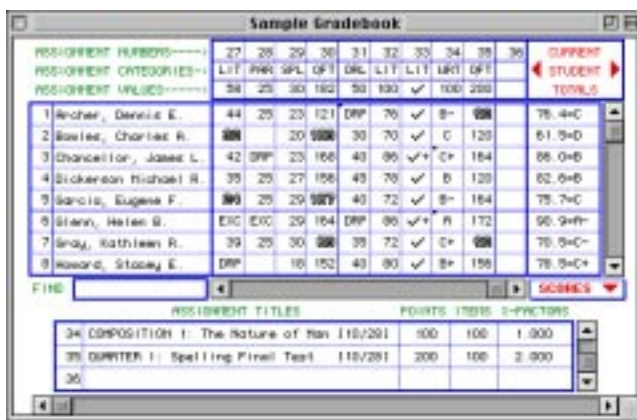
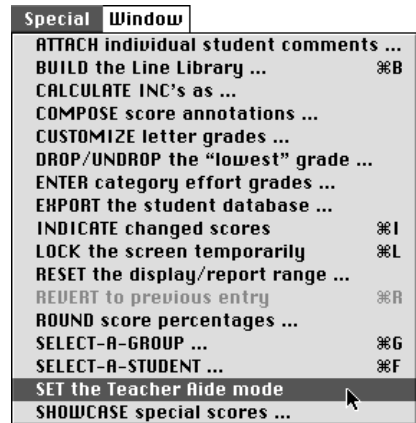
**You don’t have to wait a moment longer—the spotlight is all yours!**

**You have our permission to sit this one out . . . NOT!**



## ■ Setting the Teacher Aide Mode

Call it paranoia (or a heightened awareness of FERPA regulations), but it's difficult for many of us to permit students, paraprofessionals, secretaries, or other helpful souls to enter data—unsupervised—into our gradebooks and attendance records. First among many concerns, of course, is the issue of **accuracy**. We know *we're* not perfect—and we have a personal, firsthand involvement with such data! So how can we be comfortable with others' more casual involvement with our students' records? Other concerns lie in the areas of privacy and security. Should a third party be privy to sensitive and proprietary information and, hence, have virtually unrestricted editorial control over it? For all these reasons and more, most of us could never entertain the thought of a teacher aide—until now. Selecting the **Teacher Aide Mode** from the **Special** menu automatically transforms the “regular” gradebook screen below left into the “empty” spreadsheet seen on the right.



In the second sample screen above you'll notice that all student scores have momentarily disappeared and that the first available assignment column is now 36. And therein lies the beauty of this special function: Your aide will be completely free to enter **new assignment** information **only**, and he or she may not change, access, peruse, browse around in, print out, or otherwise examine any other data. Should your helper “accidentally” attempt to enter a restricted area, the familiar screen at left will appear, asking for your password as authority to see such information.

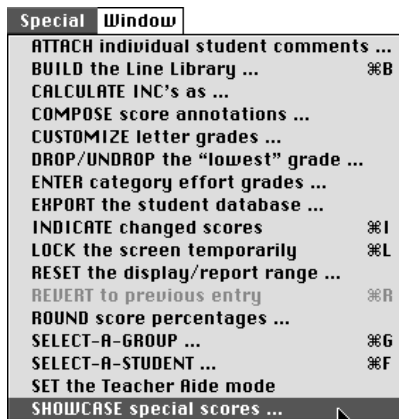


it too will be set to the restricted entry mode. Closing the program, relaunching it, and then opening another class effects the same result. There is simply no way to circumvent this security measure without your password, so guard your code carefully!

## ■ Showcasing Special Scores

Last, but certainly not the least, of the *Making the Grade* **Special** functions is the ability to highlight scores (or ranges of scores) in a special font within the gradebook screen. Entirely a display function, the **SHOWCASE special**

scores feature is intended to emphasize at a glance those student assignments you determine to be of a particularly noteworthy nature—good or bad. No doubt, you’ve noticed the **outlined** scores sprinkled throughout many of the sample gradebook screens earlier in the documentation. Finally you know *why* they’re displayed that way!



Sample Gradebook											
ASSIGNMENT NUMBERS----->											CURRENT
ASSIGNMENT CATEGORIES->											STUDENT
ASSIGNMENT VALUES----->											TOTALS
	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	
	LIT	PAR	SPL	QFT	ORL	LIT	LIT	WRT	QFT		
1	Archer, Dennis E.	44	25	23	121	DRP	76	✓	B-	00	76.4=C
2	Bowles, Charles A.	00		20	100	30	70	✓	C	120	61.5=D
3	Chancellor, James L.	42	DRP	23	168	40	86	✓+	C+	164	86.0=B
4	Dickerson Michael R.	35	25	27	156	45	78	✓	B	120	82.6=B
5	Garcia, Eugene F.	24	25	29	107	40	72	✓	B-	164	75.7=C
6	Glenn, Helen B.	EXC	EXC	29	164	DRP	86	✓+	A	172	90.9=A-
7	Gray, Kathleen R.	39	25	30	00	35	72	✓	C+	00	70.5=C-
8	Howard, Stacey E.	DRP		18	152	40	80	✓	B+	156	78.5=C+

ASSIGNMENT TITLES				POINTS	ITEMS	X-FACTORS
34	COMPOSITION 1: The Nature of Man	[10/28]		100	100	1.000
35	QUARTER I: Spelling Final Test	[10/28]		200	100	2.000
36						

### Showcasing the Down Side

The outlined scores shown above are those which resulted from the criteria entered at right—specifically, all scores having a value equal to or less than 59% of an assignment’s total points possible. With this setup one’s attention is drawn immediately to the failing scores within this class. Keep in mind that the whole numbers entered in these boxes will also include any and all decimal values attached thereto (59.99%).

### SHOWCASING SPECIAL SCORES

With this feature you may set a percentage range **above**, **below**, or **between** which student scores fall into a “special” area. For instance, if 60% is your lowest passing mark, scores less than that will be **outlined** to stand out.

Greater Than or Equal To %:   
 And Less Than or Equal To %:

Cancel

OK

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Greater Than or Equal To %:   
 And Less Than or Equal To %:

Cancel

OK

### Showcasing the Up Side

The screen at left reveals how easy it can be to highlight your students’ positive achievements, as well as their negative ones. Entering 100% in the first box (and leaving the second empty) will result in every perfect—and **extra credit**—score’s being outlined in your gradebook display. (Highlighted/outlined scores will appear in their regular font styles within student take-home reports. Once again, this is a display feature only.)