1

00:00:00,910 --> 00:00:02,620

Good afternoon, everyone.

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00:00:02,980 --> 00:00:12,610

We are delighted to have so many colleagues joining us today at our inaugural keynote for the Reimagining Assessment Practicum with Dr. Robert Talbert,

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00:00:12,940 --> 00:00:22,240

featuring his new book, Grading for Growth and Alternative Practices Guide to Promote Authentic Learning and Student Engagement in Higher Education.

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00:00:22,510 --> 00:00:26,830

I'm Jennifer Keys, senior director of the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching.

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00:00:26,890 --> 00:00:33,819

And on behalf of the Practicum Planning committees, including Associate Provost Miriam Sharon and Sean Reynolds,

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00:00:33,820 --> 00:00:38,050

VP and CIO and my co-chair on the Content Committee.

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00:00:38,050 --> 00:00:47,590

Michelle Guittar from NU Libraries. It's my pleasure to welcome you today and to share a few highlights about this exciting university initiative.

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00:00:48,340 --> 00:00:50,680

The practicum is now in its fourth year,

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00:00:50,920 --> 00:00:58,900

and it's part of a continuous effort to build institutional capacity for evidence based pedagogy that fosters student belonging and success.

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00:00:59,260 --> 00:01:03,640

It began in 2020 with the Foundations of Online Teaching Practicum,

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00:01:03,940 --> 00:01:12,910

which engaged over 700 instructors who were making the emergency shift to remote instruction and then building on that momentum and learning.

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00:01:13,540 --> 00:01:18,760

We then created the Inclusive Teaching and Universal Design for Learning Practicum.

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00:01:19,240 --> 00:01:25,120

It's been an incredibly vibrant and iterative process and collaboration is really the centerpiece.

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00:01:25,510 --> 00:01:28,780

The content is carefully curated by experts that hone

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00:01:28,780 --> 00:01:33,729

For each iteration. We also engage in rigorous assessment and evaluation.

16

00:01:33,730 --> 00:01:42,730

So after today's keynote, you'll receive a link to a very brief, just three minute survey, and your feedback is really invaluable to this process.

17

00:01:43,030 --> 00:01:53,170

In choosing new topics, we consider the contemporary context, and the pinch point that kept coming up for instructors was grading and assessment.

18

00:01:53,830 --> 00:01:59,229

Instructors were really curious about strategies that enable students to maximize learning

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00:01:59,230 --> 00:02:04,900

and growth and ways to make grading a more meaningful interaction with our students.

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00:02:05,290 --> 00:02:11,109

So the Reimagining Assessment Practicum will be a three week online experience designed for

21

00:02:11,110 --> 00:02:15,850

participants to learn more about and reflect on their assessment and grading practices.

22

00:02:16,270 --> 00:02:20,680

And the emphasis is on equitable approaches and alternative methods.

23

00:02:21,010 --> 00:02:25,870

So it's offered each quarter open to Northwestern University instructors at all levels,

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00:02:25,870 --> 00:02:31,630

Backgrounds and teaching contexts. It includes interactive synchronous sessions,

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00:02:31,630 --> 00:02:38,050

asynchronous learning activities and individual consultations, as well as optional learning labs.

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00:02:38,770 --> 00:02:44,230

Here's a QR code and a link if you'd like to register or learn more about the practicum.

27

00:02:44,590 --> 00:02:51,610

And as you can see from this list, the practicum infrastructure is built by the commitment units across the student learning ecosystem,

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00:02:51,610 --> 00:02:58,600

working together to advance the strategic imperative of ensuring that all students can thrive during their time at Northwestern.

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00:02:59,530 --> 00:03:08,470

So joining us today to celebrate the past successes and the launch of the Reimagining Assessment Practicum is Dr. Robert Talbert,

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00:03:08,590 --> 00:03:12,910

who received his Ph.D. in mathematics from Vanderbilt University.

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00:03:13,090 --> 00:03:17,950

He's currently a professor in the mathematics department at Grand Valley State University.

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00:03:18,340 --> 00:03:23,350

His book, recently published with Routledge and co-written with his colleague David Clark,

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00:03:23,710 --> 00:03:29,280

responds to our collective wonderment about whether they could be a fundamentally different approach,

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00:03:29,590 --> 00:03:36,400

something beyond traditional high stakes testing that we all experienced ourselves as students.

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00:03:36,850 --> 00:03:45,759

Alternative assessment and grading strategies that might move students towards deeper learning and liberate us from the emotional toll

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00:03:45,760 --> 00:03:53,830

of grade disputes and hours of providing extensive feedback that we don't always see students incorporating in their future work.

37

00:03:54,220 --> 00:03:59,140

So Robert will share some of his own journey, how he began experimenting with sex grading,

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00:03:59,380 --> 00:04:03,610

and how this transformed his teaching and his relationships with his students.

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00:04:04,120 --> 00:04:10,300

We really appreciate the richness in his book of the key studies across a broad range of disciplines

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00:04:10,630 --> 00:04:17,200

demonstrating new approaches based on the questions that participants submitted in advance.

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00:04:17,830 --> 00:04:21,460

That is what we are all open to exploring New possibilities.

42

00:04:21,940 --> 00:04:30,849

The Q&A feature in today's session will allow for anonymous posts and questions as well as an upvote button so that

43

00:04:30,850 --> 00:04:40,570

we can indicate what is most resonant with the audience and choose those for our half hour Ask Me Anything session.

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00:04:40,960 --> 00:04:48,279

So I'll rejoin Robert at the conclusion of his presentation and I would like to turn things over to you.

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00:04:48,280 --> 00:04:51,920

Robert. Welcome. All right. Thanks so much, John.

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00:04:52,280 --> 00:04:56,960

And thank you all for being here in the audience. It's really a great pleasure to be with you.

47

00:04:57,410 --> 00:05:02,230

The only thing that will make this better today is if I could actually be with you at Northwestern.

48

00:05:02,240 --> 00:05:05,120

I love the city of Chicago. It's one of my family's favorite places to go.

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00:05:05,510 --> 00:05:12,020

In particular, it's my 17 year old daughter's happy place and she is bound and determined to go to college in Chicago at some place or another.

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00:05:12,020 --> 00:05:17,179

Maybe it'll be Northwestern. Who knows? I want to specifically thank all the organizing team for putting this together.

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00:05:17,180 --> 00:05:22,550

You have done such an outstanding job, not only with just helping me get ready to do this talk right now,

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00:05:22,550 --> 00:05:27,620

but also the entire Reimagining Assessment Practicum, too. Sounds like a fantastic resource and what,

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00:05:28,040 --> 00:05:32,990

how fortunate you all are at Northwestern to have such a great team and great resources to tap into.

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00:05:33,890 --> 00:05:36,499

Before we get started, let me just reintroduce myself again.

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00:05:36,500 --> 00:05:41,570

My name is Robert Talbert and I'm a professor in the mathematics department at Grand Valley State University.

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00:05:42,170 --> 00:05:48,170

We're just across the lake from you all in near the Grand Rapids, Michigan, here in Allendale, right here.

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00:05:48,170 --> 00:05:55,100

If you know the trick about the hand in Michigan, we're a 23,000 student public university in the Grand Rapids area.

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00:05:55,100 --> 00:05:59,480

We have our campuses in Allendale, Michigan, and in Grand Rapids downtown.

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00:05:59,990 --> 00:06:02,210

And today, I want to speak with you.

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00:06:02,210 --> 00:06:09,230

From my experience at Grand Valley, I've been there for 12 years and I spent 14 years at small liberal arts colleges prior to being at Grand Valley.

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00:06:09,560 --> 00:06:13,009

And I want to share with you today and maybe get some discussion,

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00:06:13,010 --> 00:06:21,140

hopefully going with you about one of the most urgent and pivotal issues in higher education today, and that will be grades and grading.

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00:06:21,740 --> 00:06:26,149

Before I do that, though, before I launch, my staff will launch my slides.

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00:06:26,150 --> 00:06:33,300

Now I think I want to share some things with you. First screens, there is that.

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00:06:35,110 --> 00:06:40,390

Over in the- First of all, on your screens here and I'm going to put this in the chat just momentarily,

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00:06:40,600 --> 00:06:43,840

you'll see a a QR code and a link.

67

00:06:44,290 --> 00:06:48,310

That link goes to a resource page that I've set up for you.

68

00:06:48,310 --> 00:06:52,089

I'm just about to drop all of these links, several more there in the chat.

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00:06:52,090 --> 00:06:59,590

There you go. This resource page that I've set up for you is a Google document that has links to this talk.

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00:06:59,860 --> 00:07:05,019

It has links to David's and my book and a whole lot more, including course materials,

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00:07:05,020 --> 00:07:09,790

research papers for you to read more about, just anything and everything that I could

72

00:07:09,790 --> 00:07:14,319

think of and everything that I cite today in this talk is linked in the resource page.

73

00:07:14,320 --> 00:07:18,640

So please bookmark that, make a copy of it, Keep it for yourself.

74

00:07:18,640 --> 00:07:22,960

This is for you just to kind of refer back to during the talk and after the talk.

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00:07:23,380 --> 00:07:27,290

Secondly, there in the chat is a link to this presentation.

76

00:07:27,310 --> 00:07:31,090

You can see there, you can get to the slides and follow along too, now or later if you want.

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00:07:31,780 --> 00:07:39,220

Third, the third link there, much of what I'll be speaking about today comes from my new book, mine and David Clark's new book of Grading for Growth.

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00:07:39,430 --> 00:07:43,660

Again, coauthored with my great Grand Valley Math Department colleague David Clark.

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00:07:44,260 --> 00:07:48,399

This book just came out a couple of months ago, and again, I'll be referencing it quite a bit,

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00:07:48,400 --> 00:07:52,390

and I hope that each and every one of you purchases a copy for yourself and for your

81

00:07:52,390 --> 00:07:57,070

loved ones for Christmas. To help make that dream a reality on the resource page

82

00:07:57,280 --> 00:08:01,479

and there in the chat is there's a link to the Routledge catalog,

83

00:08:01,480 --> 00:08:06,970

and I'm pleased on the resource page to give you a code that'll give you 20% off that book.

84

00:08:06,970 --> 00:08:13,720

If you purchase it from Routledge's website, you'll find that code somewhere in the top third of the first page. And then, fourth,

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00:08:13,930 --> 00:08:17,350

David and I publish a blog also called Grading for Growth.

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00:08:17,530 --> 00:08:21,880

We don't get too creative with our titling schemes here. Everything is called Grading for Growth.

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00:08:22,540 --> 00:08:26,499

Our blog has new content every Monday about grades, grading assessments.

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00:08:26,500 --> 00:08:30,550

Sometimes it's big ideas, sometimes philosophical, sometimes it's very practical.

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00:08:31,120 --> 00:08:37,140

Our blog is a free substack publication. You can subscribe to it by going to gradingforgrowth.com.

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00:08:37,150 --> 00:08:43,150

There you see the link in the chat and you can get these new post delivered to your inbox every Monday.

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00:08:43,180 --> 00:08:49,239

We're currently featuring monthly guest posts from faculty from all over North America right now,

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00:08:49,240 --> 00:08:55,390

and we've had some booked out through August of next year with with guest posters from all walks of life in academia.

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00:08:55,540 --> 00:09:00,310

We are learning a lot from our guest posters, and we'd be really honored to have you among our subscribers.

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00:09:01,150 --> 00:09:09,520

So with all that, on to the main idea. Again, there is the the QR code and the link for the resource page that will remain in the chat.

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00:09:10,480 --> 00:09:13,810

If you any time you want to scroll up and get back to it.

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00:09:14,590 --> 00:09:16,900

So now on to the main idea about grades and grading.

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00:09:17,230 --> 00:09:25,270

I'm hesitant to do this because grading is one of those facts about academic life that people tend to want to think about as little as possible.

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00:09:25,750 --> 00:09:31,540

Right, Including students. Despite all appearances, students talk a lot about grades.

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00:09:31,540 --> 00:09:37,119

In fact, it seems to be the only thing they can think about. But maybe you get a little bit of ambivalence sometimes.

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00:09:37,120 --> 00:09:43,570

Maybe you see this show up, like when you have students who seem to underperform in a math class.

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00:09:43,810 --> 00:09:47,499

But suddenly when it comes to determining the statistics of trying to figure

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00:09:47,500 --> 00:09:51,159

out what grade they have to have on the next exam to get a B in the class,

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00:09:51,160 --> 00:10:01,810

they shoot up to PhD level analytical skills. Students seem to love those grades, but yet if you ask a student one on one off the record,

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00:10:01,930 --> 00:10:06,910

if you could eliminate all grades from your life right now, would you?

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00:10:07,360 --> 00:10:12,580

Most of the time, my experience is once the student has sort of processed what you're asking them to do,

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00:10:13,060 --> 00:10:17,650

you will almost always get a desperately enthusiastic yes.

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00:10:18,610 --> 00:10:25,690

So there's something about grades and the way we do grades and grading and higher education that is just deeply dysfunctional.

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00:10:26,770 --> 00:10:30,100

We can't live with them and we can't seem to live without them.

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00:10:30,580 --> 00:10:35,770

In fact, I'd say that if you look at any area of dysfunction in higher education today, and let's face it,

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00:10:35,770 --> 00:10:40,870

that means looking at any area of higher education today because it seems to be dysfunctional all over the place.

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00:10:41,920 --> 00:10:46,479

Student enrollment drop offs, the so-called enrollment cliff, student engagement,

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00:10:46,480 --> 00:10:52,060

the stifling of innovation in teaching, even the tenuous ness of contingent faculty labor.

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00:10:52,690 --> 00:11:00,489

Anywhere you find dysfunction in higher ed, you will find grades and grading either at the center of it or right next to it.

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00:11:00,490 --> 00:11:09,250

Adjacent to it. Grades and grading are a factory of dysfunction, working at the very center of this entire enterprise, hidden in plain sight.

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00:11:10,390 --> 00:11:12,699

And to just kind of share my own story about this.

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00:11:12,700 --> 00:11:21,460

Let me share with you how all this became suddenly very real to me a few years ago on set me off on the path that eventually has led me to you today.

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00:11:22,330 --> 00:11:26,980

So ten years ago, fall of 2013, in fact, I was teaching calculus at Grand Valley.

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00:11:27,010 --> 00:11:31,390

This is a subject I have taught hundreds of times, going back to my grad school days at Vanderbilt.

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00:11:31,910 --> 00:11:35,979

I felt like I was pretty innovative. I was using a flipped learning model, so that's cool.

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00:11:35,980 --> 00:11:41,740

And a lot of active learning, a lot of technology. But my grading system was kind of standard.

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00:11:41,740 --> 00:11:48,370

It was quizzes, tests, labs and homework. It was all graded with points, all these points accumulated over time.

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00:11:48,370 --> 00:11:51,399

And then they were transmuted somehow into a percentage,

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00:11:51,400 --> 00:11:56,970

which then got turned back into a letter that I fed to the registrar's office and, you know, all things,

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00:11:56,980 --> 00:12:01,960

etc. I figured I was doing a pretty hip and humane way of job of running my class,

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00:12:01,960 --> 00:12:07,720

and it represented my best efforts at creating a student focused learning environment at that time.

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00:12:08,260 --> 00:12:14,140

So again, I was teaching this course. I was using a basic structure when something terrible happened.

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00:12:15,130 --> 00:12:19,930

What happened was I had a student that was bright and enthusiastic about learning calculus.

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00:12:20,290 --> 00:12:25,390

That's not the terrible part. That student can learn better than most students I have ever known.

129

00:12:25,690 --> 00:12:31,050

But only if she had about 5 to 10 days longer than anybody else to do it.

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00:12:31,060 --> 00:12:32,800

It was the weirdest thing I've ever seen.

131

00:12:32,830 --> 00:12:40,150

She would grasp the most difficult concepts deeply, but not until we had been done with it for about a week to two weeks.

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00:12:40,600 --> 00:12:47,700

In other words, she took her time getting up to speed with a subject, but then she would just rapidly accelerate to master that subject.

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00:12:47,710 --> 00:12:52,480

I saw it in her classwork. I saw it in how she worked with groups.

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00:12:53,170 --> 00:13:00,160

But this became a huge issue with a fundamental component of the class, which was timed testing. Timed, one and done testing.

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00:13:00,940 --> 00:13:04,750

This testing happened on my schedule and not hers, and that was an issue.

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00:13:05,530 --> 00:13:10,989

She took her first test where about this time of the semester and it resulted in a grade

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00:13:10,990 --> 00:13:17,170

that was so low that it mathematically eliminated her from an A in the class in one stroke.

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00:13:18,610 --> 00:13:26,380

The second test is after that same story, she was eliminated from getting a B in the class after the third test, which had a similar result.

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00:13:27,130 --> 00:13:30,640

She vanished from the class entirely and I never saw her again.

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00:13:30,640 --> 00:13:35,619

And I should say leading up to that time, her her disposition in class just got worse and worse and worse.

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00:13:35,620 --> 00:13:39,130

And one point we were working in groups and she stopped to shout it out.

142

00:13:39,400 --> 00:13:42,220

I don't see why we should be working on this at all. I'm never going to get it.

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00:13:43,420 --> 00:13:48,520

And she turned from this really bright, enthusiastic student to just someone with real issues,

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00:13:48,520 --> 00:13:51,010

with real problems that were were messing up her life.

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00:13:51,040 --> 00:13:56,679

She ended up with an F in the course, and I had a front row seat to the whole thing watching my grading system.

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00:13:56,680 --> 00:14:04,330

Just crush her, slowly but surely. And I remember sitting in my office in Mackinac Hall at Grand Valley State

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00:14:04,720 --> 00:14:11,560

typing in that F into the course LMS at the final buzzer of the semester.

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00:14:11,800 --> 00:14:18,579

And I swore to myself that this would never happen again on my watch and that I don't know what it was going to take,

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00:14:18,580 --> 00:14:23,050

but I was going to completely throw out the way that I had done grading for 14 years,

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00:14:23,050 --> 00:14:28,300

15 years up to that point, and replace it with something else, even if I had to invent it myself.

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00:14:30,710 --> 00:14:33,890

So something is deeply broken with the way that we grade.

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00:14:34,580 --> 00:14:36,659

It's central or adjacent.

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00:14:36,660 --> 00:14:42,230

- Grading, that is - is central or adjacent to just about everything we can think that's going wrong with higher education today.

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00:14:42,530 --> 00:14:44,960

And it's not our fault and it's not our students fault.

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00:14:44,960 --> 00:14:50,870

There's just no point trying to lay blame on the right people, which so much of higher education media seems to want to do.

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00:14:51,470 --> 00:14:55,010

So what is it? What is it that's the matter with grading?

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00:14:55,160 --> 00:14:57,800

Is it fixable? What are we supposed to do about it?

158

00:14:57,800 --> 00:15:02,540

To help our students grow and become functioning learning human beings for the rest of their lives?

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00:15:04,290 --> 00:15:08,070

So here's the main message for today. Traditional grading is broken.

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00:15:08,730 --> 00:15:13,500

It might not be fixable, but it is replaceable.

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00:15:13,890 --> 00:15:18,270

And now's the time to start thinking about how to do it. Traditional grading is broken.

162

00:15:18,300 --> 00:15:24,180

It might not be fixable, but it is replaceable. And now's the time to start thinking about how to do it.

163

00:15:25,080 --> 00:15:29,390

Over the next 45 minutes or so, I'm going to try to unpack every part of this message.

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00:15:29,400 --> 00:15:31,290

So our roadmap for today is, first of all,

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00:15:31,290 --> 00:15:36,360

I'd like to talk a little bit about what I mean by traditional grading and give a sense of where it came from.

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00:15:36,690 --> 00:15:40,679

Then I'm going to lay out three particular issues with traditional grading that show just

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00:15:40,680 --> 00:15:45,540

how broken it really is and why continuing on with it in any form may not be an option.

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00:15:46,320 --> 00:15:50,670

And then I'll describe a framework for replacing traditional grades with alternatives

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00:15:50,670 --> 00:15:54,690

that serve students well and avoid all these issues that plague traditional methods.

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00:15:55,140 --> 00:15:58,079

And then I have some questions from you that you submitted beforehand.

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00:15:58,080 --> 00:16:04,490

Some of you submitted beforehand I want to address that actually are different from the AMA a session later on.

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00:16:04,500 --> 00:16:11,100

A lot of great questions and then I'll have some open time for questions. And of course we have an extended AMA Q&A session afterwards.

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00:16:11,730 --> 00:16:15,120

So again, while the talk is ongoing, I just want to echo what Jen said earlier.

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00:16:15,120 --> 00:16:20,819

If you have a particular question, I encourage you to stick it in either the chat or the Q&A feature on Zoom.

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00:16:20,820 --> 00:16:25,979

The Q&A feature in particular lets you see and upvote questions that have already been asked,

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00:16:25,980 --> 00:16:29,100

and this will help prioritize the questions that I get to later.

177

00:16:30,330 --> 00:16:34,530

Okay, So first of all, I've used this term traditional grading a few times.

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00:16:34,530 --> 00:16:39,780

So what do I mean by this? Well, I mean pretty much what we've experienced ourselves.

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00:16:40,050 --> 00:16:47,790

These are any system of evaluating student work where individual assignments are given some kind of numerical score, usually a numerical score.

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00:16:48,150 --> 00:16:55,320

And those assignments are typically, but not always one and done meaning you do the assignment and then you get a grade and there's no retakes.

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00:16:55,950 --> 00:16:57,090

Then those grades,

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00:16:57,330 --> 00:17:05,040

those individual scores are put through some kind of a statistical formula to arrive at a summit of numbers statistic for the course.

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00:17:05,040 --> 00:17:08,190

That's usually in the form of a percentage or a number between zero and 100.

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00:17:08,700 --> 00:17:15,540

And then the output of that gets mapped onto a letter ABCD or F, possibly with a plus minus modifier,

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00:17:15,540 --> 00:17:19,620

which then gets fed to the registrar's office, which goes to the transcript.

186

00:17:20,700 --> 00:17:27,330

Now, there's very basic variations on this theme, and not every college class is actually graded this way separated, pass, fail and so on.

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00:17:28,050 --> 00:17:34,560

But this by and large is the system we typically use, and it's probably what we ourselves experienced as students and what our professors

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00:17:34,560 --> 00:17:38,579

before us experienced when they were students and so on and so on and so on.

189

00:17:38,580 --> 00:17:41,640

Back through time, Back through time.

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00:17:41,640 --> 00:17:44,880

Though, you might wonder how far back does this system actually go?

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00:17:45,180 --> 00:17:48,569

Traditional grading is like any other tradition. It didn't just happen.

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00:17:48,570 --> 00:17:55,230

It's the conscious choice or an accumulation of conscious choices of a person or group trying to solve a problem.

193

00:17:55,680 --> 00:18:02,159

So it's instructive that to briefly look at the history of grades, which is a much more interesting subject than it sounds like.

194

00:18:02,160 --> 00:18:09,149

A trivia question for you first. Think about this question and type your answer in the chat, but wait for my signal to do it.

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00:18:09,150 --> 00:18:15,060

We'll do it waterfall style. So traditional A, B, C, D, F letter grade system.

196

00:18:15,330 --> 00:18:18,540

What year did that make its debut?

197

00:18:18,840 --> 00:18:28,860

Okay, now type it into the chat. Let's see what you think we're seeing in 1950, 1920, 1800, 1880, 1940s, 1940 and 1970.

198

00:18:29,310 --> 00:18:36,659

It's pretty interesting. It feels like we're getting either like really, really recent or much further in the past than any of those.

199

00:18:36,660 --> 00:18:38,880

So it's kind of an interesting idea.

200

00:18:38,880 --> 00:18:49,530

The answer, in case you're wondering, is kind of the average of everything you just said is 1896, 1896, which is just 127 years ago.

201

00:18:49,770 --> 00:18:54,509

Now I say just 127 years ago. That sounds like a long time ago.

202

00:18:54,510 --> 00:19:00,960

But when you think that the first university happened in, like, almost a thousand years ago,

203

00:19:00,960 --> 00:19:08,099

we're talking about roughly 7% of the total history of university had the grading system that we have.

204

00:19:08,100 --> 00:19:14,940

Now prior to 1800, there really wasn't any such thing as a grade or anything like it.

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00:19:14,940 --> 00:19:23,220

In higher education, university students would simply take a single oral exam at the end of their studies and they would get kind of a thumbs up,

206

00:19:23,220 --> 00:19:27,810

thumbs down, pass fail evaluation by a committee of experts.

207

00:19:28,050 --> 00:19:36,090

If that sounds familiar. Yeah, that's where we we still have that vestiges of that system in our doctoral thesis defense process.

208

00:19:36,300 --> 00:19:40,410

That was the way it always was. Like all degrees were conferred in this kind of way.

209

00:19:40,740 --> 00:19:47,670

It wasn't really until 1785 that we have the first recorded use of anything like a grade,

210

00:19:47,670 --> 00:19:51,510

and it was at Yale University, and it wasn't a number based system.

211

00:19:51,510 --> 00:19:56,909

It was three adjectives. Students were given one of three adjectives to describe their performance.

212

00:19:56,910 --> 00:20:07,260

Those adjectives were optimi, inferiores and perjores, which means best, not the best, but still okay.

213

00:20:07,260 --> 00:20:11,819

And worse. I feel like we can almost just get emojis if that's the case.

214

00:20:11,820 --> 00:20:17,760

Like happy face emoji, meh face emoji and poop emoji for for all those three different kinds of grades, there were still no numbers.

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00:20:17,760 --> 00:20:21,960

There's no letters, there's no GPA. In the 19th century,

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00:20:21,960 --> 00:20:28,740

there are all these various experiments with grade structures that ranged everywhere from looks kind of familiar to truly bizarre.

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00:20:29,370 --> 00:20:33,120

Yale, for example, had a brief flirtation with a point scale.

218

00:20:33,360 --> 00:20:41,040

Nobody knows what the top end of the scale was, but 225 was considered passing like just a completely made up number.

219

00:20:41,040 --> 00:20:48,659

Right? And finally, in 1896, we had the first appearance of what we now recognize is a traditional grading system at Mount Holyoke College.

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00:20:48,660 --> 00:20:54,090

All these New England schools introduced a system where student work was graded using percentages.

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00:20:54,090 --> 00:21:01,110

Those percentages were translated into the letter grades, the letter grades A, B, C, D, and E.

222

00:21:01,860 --> 00:21:07,050

Have you ever wondered what happened to the E in a grading scale? Like why do we have A, b, c, D, f?

223

00:21:07,800 --> 00:21:13,679

Well, if you think about it, it's probably what you expect. The students all felt thought that E was supposed to stand for.

224

00:21:13,680 --> 00:21:19,499

Excellent. And the word got really confusing, which doesn't make any sense to me because A, B, C, and D don't stand for anything.

225

00:21:19,500 --> 00:21:22,590

Why should E stand for something anyway? It is what it is.

226

00:21:22,590 --> 00:21:26,430

And they switched at Mount Holyoke the E to F in 1898.

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00:21:26,430 --> 00:21:33,320

And here we are today pretty much. We have not had that system change one bit since 1896.

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00:21:33,830 --> 00:21:39,080

One thing that has changed is the word grade that was not used in 1896.

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00:21:39,080 --> 00:21:45,110

That didn't come along until the 20th century when we experienced the Industrial Revolution and a

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00:21:45,110 --> 00:21:52,460

cultural obsession in the 1910s and 1920s with measuring and optimizing every process known to man.

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00:21:52,790 --> 00:21:59,390

This is where we got things like the IQ test, for example, and the term grade was appropriated from agriculture.

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00:21:59,390 --> 00:22:02,810

Or think of grade a beef or high grade flour.

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00:22:03,470 --> 00:22:06,470

And without much evolution, that gets us to where we are now.

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00:22:07,840 --> 00:22:13,660

So that sounds pretty bad, doesn't it? What can you take away from this little lesson here?

235

00:22:14,260 --> 00:22:17,410

Well, I want you to take a take away a few things from this.

236

00:22:17,830 --> 00:22:20,110

Again, this is well worth a more - a deeper study.

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00:22:20,110 --> 00:22:27,880

And we go into it in our book quite a bit that traditional grading is an invention of administrators and faculty meetings.

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00:22:28,060 --> 00:22:32,620

This is where it all came from and we all know how well these go - sometimes go.

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00:22:32,800 --> 00:22:36,050

I'm on faculty senate at Grand Valley. I'm in the midst of it.

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00:22:36,070 --> 00:22:39,340

We all know that the craziest ideas come from these two sources.

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00:22:39,670 --> 00:22:47,140

And by the way, most of it - most of these people making these inventions at that time were white men of privilege in a certain niche,

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00:22:48,100 --> 00:22:52,560

making decisions that were designed to solve administrative record keeping problems.

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00:22:52,570 --> 00:22:56,680

They're not designed to solve learning problems or growth problems.

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00:22:57,400 --> 00:23:06,280

Traditional grading is also steeped in the industrial revolution and the ideas of Taylorism and relentless quantification of everything.

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00:23:07,780 --> 00:23:11,109

Traditional grading is not inherently part of higher education.

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00:23:11,110 --> 00:23:20,980

It's a relatively recent invention. If you hear somebody say that traditional grading is a time tested process or it has stood the test of time,

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00:23:21,220 --> 00:23:26,020

take another look at the actual timeline and let's think again about that.

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00:23:26,080 --> 00:23:34,870

And then finally, and maybe most importantly, traditional grading as we know it is not some kind of time tested research backed

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00:23:34,870 --> 00:23:39,580

best practice that evolved out of decades of careful study and improvement.

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00:23:39,940 --> 00:23:42,610

It is the result of wild guesses.

251

00:23:42,730 --> 00:23:50,590

Weird experiments, one of which the one we happened to have a day happened to stick for reasons that nobody is really sure of.

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00:23:52,300 --> 00:23:57,729

So you could really stop right there and be convinced maybe that it's time to move on from traditional grading.

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00:23:57,730 --> 00:24:05,260

But it actually gets considerably worse because even if traditional grading had been the result of decades of mindful,

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00:24:05,260 --> 00:24:11,080

student-focused research-backed evolution and practice like you're trying to learn about in the Reimagining Assessment practicum,

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00:24:11,500 --> 00:24:18,040

it still would have three serious issues that make it fundamentally and possibly unfixable broken.

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00:24:18,970 --> 00:24:24,940

Before we look at those, I wanted to center ourselves on how significant learning actually really works.

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00:24:25,510 --> 00:24:29,460

If you look at research on learning or just look to your own experiences,

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00:24:29,470 --> 00:24:35,890

you will realize that all significant learning happens through engagement with a feedback loop like this.

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00:24:36,790 --> 00:24:40,080

We want to learn something. We do something, we try something.

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00:24:40,090 --> 00:24:42,220

We get feedback from a trusted source.

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00:24:42,940 --> 00:24:50,230

And that information we take and we try to figure out what it means and then we incorporate it into another iteration around this loop.

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00:24:50,650 --> 00:24:57,670

And this loop keeps cycling through until we have learned it quote unquote, well enough according to whatever standard is appropriate at the time.

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00:24:58,520 --> 00:25:04,090

You know, sure, we can learn some things about feedback loops. For example, my birthday is July 10th.

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00:25:04,660 --> 00:25:11,140

You just learned this and you do not require any feedback to learn it, but to learn something really significant to you.

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00:25:11,170 --> 00:25:16,360

Like think about your favorite hobby, like something you do that you enjoy doing more than anything.

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00:25:16,370 --> 00:25:20,649

If you saw if you see my face right now, you see bass guitars hanging from the back of my wall.

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00:25:20,650 --> 00:25:26,920

And that's like, that's a fundamental part of my identity that required a lot of feedback loop.

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00:25:26,920 --> 00:25:29,500

It cannot just be received knowledge.

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00:25:29,920 --> 00:25:35,230

The knowledge that you do receive has to be run through this feedback loop until you can turn it into something meaningful.

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00:25:36,310 --> 00:25:41,410

Feedback loops are not only the only way people learn anything significant, they're also fun.

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00:25:42,350 --> 00:25:43,579

Fun is okay, right? I mean,

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00:25:43,580 --> 00:25:52,580

working through and with feedback and seeing yourself get better at doing something hard is immensely pleasurable and it's satisfying to human beings.

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00:25:53,060 --> 00:25:57,980

In fact, if you think about games, all games are predicated on feedback.

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00:25:57,990 --> 00:26:03,410

I play Wordle for example, that game on your phone where you guess the word every morning and it's based on feedback

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00:26:03,770 --> 00:26:07,929

and you know what would make that game really dull and boring and uninteresting?

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00:26:07,930 --> 00:26:15,440

You want to know how to take any challenging and engaging task and deliberately redesign it to minimize the amount of fun people get out of it?

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00:26:16,100 --> 00:26:23,810

Take the feedback loop away. When you disconnect the feedback loop from a process, you're not going to learn anything and it's not fun.

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00:26:25,420 --> 00:26:32,530

So I want you to keep this idea of the feedback loop in mind. It is a centerpiece of how grading could actually work.

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00:26:32,540 --> 00:26:36,640

But let's talk about the three big, big issues with traditional grading, first of all.

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00:26:37,330 --> 00:26:44,140

One, the first big issue with traditional grading is that traditional grades lack a construct of validity.

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00:26:44,740 --> 00:26:54,130

Construct validity is simply the idea that the measure measures what you think it measures. Lacking construct.

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00:26:54,460 --> 00:26:58,030

It means that grades just simply don't measure what we think they do.

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00:26:58,570 --> 00:27:03,130

I think we often think that grades measure learning or what?

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00:27:03,220 --> 00:27:06,640

Or maybe we don't have an idea what they measure, and that's possibly even worse.

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00:27:06,650 --> 00:27:10,750

But to illustrate this point, think about two students. So call them Alice and Bob.

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00:27:10,960 --> 00:27:18,249

They're in a traditionally graded class and the grade the course grade in the class ABCD comes from three

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00:27:18,250 --> 00:27:25,900

100 point exams and those exam scores are averaged together and we assign the grade based on the average.

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00:27:26,080 --> 00:27:32,560

So Alice, as you can see here in the grade book, got a zero on the first exam and an 80 on the second and a 100 on the third.

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00:27:33,340 --> 00:27:37,420

Bob is consistently mediocre and got 60 on each.

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00:27:37,990 --> 00:27:45,390

So water Alice and Bob's grades in the class. And you can do the math here 180 divided by three is a 60.

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00:27:45,910 --> 00:27:51,880

So both Alice and Bob receive a 60%, which is barely passing, if at all.

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00:27:51,880 --> 00:27:55,419

Depends on how your institution measures a D versus an F.

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00:27:55,420 --> 00:28:00,910

But it's not good, whatever it does. But what does the 60% tell us about Alice and Bob?

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00:28:00,920 --> 00:28:03,970

It doesn't really distinguish between their stories, right?

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00:28:04,210 --> 00:28:08,800

What is that 60% anyway? Is it a measure of how much material they've mastered?

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00:28:09,160 --> 00:28:15,520

Does it mean that they know 60% of the material really well and the other 40% not really well?

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00:28:15,850 --> 00:28:21,220

Or do they understand 100% of the material at a quote unquote 60% level?

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00:28:21,970 --> 00:28:30,069

Do Alice and Bob have the same overall level of knowledge or mastery in the subject, or for that matter, why did Alice get a 0% on the first exam?

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00:28:30,070 --> 00:28:33,070

Was is because she truly didn't understand any of the material.

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00:28:33,340 --> 00:28:40,480

Or maybe was it because she was sick or had to miss class to take care of a family member or work at a job?

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00:28:41,500 --> 00:28:49,420

We really don't know. With a traditional grade, we really cannot tell what any of these numbers mean in any real sense.

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00:28:49,900 --> 00:28:53,620

They lack construct validity and that's pretty bad.

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00:28:53,710 --> 00:29:01,690

But it actually gets worse than that because numerical grades themselves, although usually numbers, are not numerical data.

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00:29:01,840 --> 00:29:06,640

And so all the statistics we usually do on them don't have any meaning at all.

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00:29:07,630 --> 00:29:16,479

So just because something is a number does not mean it is what we call numerical data in the statistical sense. Something that might be a measurement.

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00:29:16,480 --> 00:29:22,120

For example, like zip codes, For example, a zip code is a number, but is it a numerical data?

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00:29:22,270 --> 00:29:25,840

Well, let's think about this here. You see in front of you a map of the state of Michigan.

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00:29:26,800 --> 00:29:32,739

The Michigan dot gov website has a spreadsheet on it that has all the zip codes currently in use in Michigan.

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00:29:32,740 --> 00:29:39,130

So you can take that spreadsheet and run an average on it. And if you average all the zip codes in Michigan, you get that number.

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00:29:39,130 --> 00:29:44,620

You see there are 48982.7354. Okay, let's round it up to 48983.

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00:29:44,830 --> 00:29:49,930

That looks nice. And it was computed correctly. The problem is there's nothing there.

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00:29:50,470 --> 00:29:55,480

There is no location or office or anything in the state of Michigan that has that zip code.

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00:29:56,050 --> 00:30:01,539

The average doesn't tell you, for example, the center of population. That would be in that town

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00:30:01,540 --> 00:30:04,630

right there 48857 I think it is in Michigan.

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00:30:05,350 --> 00:30:09,489

It doesn't tell you the center of government, which is Lansing 48933,

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00:30:09,490 --> 00:30:14,410

although that's awfully close to the to the average zip code, but it's not equal to it.

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00:30:15,250 --> 00:30:19,899

So these the average of zip codes is computable. It's an average like anything else.

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00:30:19,900 --> 00:30:27,100

But it doesn't mean anything because it doesn't tell you any information about locations in Michigan.

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00:30:27,610 --> 00:30:34,960

The reason is, is because zip codes, while numbers, are not numerical data, they're just labels that happen to be numbers.

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00:30:35,830 --> 00:30:39,460

That's what a zip code is. It's simply a shorthand for a location.

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00:30:39,460 --> 00:30:43,420

We could have used words or colors or some any other kind of label.

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00:30:43,870 --> 00:30:48,970

We call those kinds of data categorical data in statistics, because all they do is categorize.

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00:30:48,970 --> 00:30:52,180

They're just labels, they don't measure anything,

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00:30:52,630 --> 00:30:57,099

and no statistics performed on them will change the fact that they are merely

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00:30:57,100 --> 00:31:02,440

labels and doing statistics that are supposed to be used on numerical data.

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00:31:02,830 --> 00:31:07,750

When you do not feed numerical data into the formulas, do not give you sensible answers.

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00:31:08,380 --> 00:31:13,660

And if I could just pop back up a second to Alice and Bob's picture here.

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00:31:13,840 --> 00:31:17,620

You see those numbers there? They don't measure anything.

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00:31:17,680 --> 00:31:23,170

Okay, This is excuse me, they're numbers, but they're not measurements in any reasonable sense.

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00:31:23,440 --> 00:31:31,550

Alice is 80%. On test two. That wasn't the result of being hooked up to some sort of rigorously calibrated scientific instrument,

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00:31:31,550 --> 00:31:35,180

like an EEG that measures learning on a scale of 100.

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00:31:35,840 --> 00:31:39,020

All it is really it's it's a label, it's a zip code.

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00:31:39,170 --> 00:31:46,510

It's a zip code. It's a value that represents the professor's best professional judgment of her work on that exam.

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00:31:46,520 --> 00:31:51,649

Or perhaps it's the professor's best professional judgment of individual exam problems.

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00:31:51,650 --> 00:31:57,620

And you add them up doing statistics meant for numerical data on data that aren't numerical. It's simply wrong.

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00:31:58,340 --> 00:32:05,420

Now, I want to say there is nothing wrong with faculty giving their best professional judgment on student work and communicating it through a label.

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00:32:05,510 --> 00:32:11,540

In fact, the role of the faculty member us in providing that professional perspective is critical.

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00:32:11,540 --> 00:32:15,980

It is central to the higher education experience as it functionally works.

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00:32:16,490 --> 00:32:17,240

What is wrong?

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00:32:17,240 --> 00:32:24,700

And I think what's misleading and maybe even unethical is to pretend that these numerical point values that result from these evaluations

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00:32:24,710 --> 00:32:32,270

is judgment calls or scientific measurements on an objective scale and are therefore valid candidates for statistical processes.

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00:32:32,900 --> 00:32:38,120

They're not. Again, we think that numerical grades are objective, but it's just objectivity theater.

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00:32:38,240 --> 00:32:45,840

And we just need to we need to admit this. So finally, a major problem that we have with traditional grading is motivation.

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00:32:46,080 --> 00:32:48,780

Grades are what we call extrinsic motivators.

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00:32:48,780 --> 00:32:55,560

Extrinsic motivation refers to being motivated not because of the thing itself, but because of some reward we get for doing it.

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00:32:56,250 --> 00:33:02,550

Research tells us that extrinsic rewards are the chief source, for example, of academic dishonesty in higher education.

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00:33:02,550 --> 00:33:07,550

Today, this paper here by Anderson and others, which is linked on your resource page, by the way,

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00:33:07,550 --> 00:33:11,789

you can go download it yourself, looked at several studies on academic motivation and cheating,

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00:33:11,790 --> 00:33:15,960

and they found that students are more likely to cheat if they hold extrinsic goals

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00:33:15,960 --> 00:33:21,480

or perceive that extrinsic rewards like grades are the main point of the class.

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00:33:21,990 --> 00:33:29,130

To remedy this, they strongly recommend that we accept or adopt policies to promote mastery rather than performance,

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00:33:29,130 --> 00:33:32,430

and to provide scaffolding to those students as they do it.

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00:33:33,340 --> 00:33:36,520

This is very much unlike how traditional graded courses are set up.

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00:33:36,520 --> 00:33:40,929

Of course we have one and done assessment and all of these point based grades as the norm.

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00:33:40,930 --> 00:33:44,020

And the only thing that students can seem to talk about is grades, grades, grades.

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00:33:44,020 --> 00:33:53,060

And yet we wonder why cheating is such an issue, particularly today, especially as generative A.I. becomes easier to access.

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00:33:53,080 --> 00:33:57,160

I know AI is one of the main topics that you all are thinking about in this practicum here.

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00:33:57,490 --> 00:34:02,410

You know, we can blame AI or worry about it for a resurgence in academic dishonesty.

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00:34:02,410 --> 00:34:04,030

But you know, quite simply,

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00:34:04,030 --> 00:34:13,030

the easiest way to mitigate academic dishonesty is to stop putting points on things and dethrone grades from the center of our classes.

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00:34:13,540 --> 00:34:21,880

A.I. is not the issue here. So traditional grading is broken, in my practice and in my research.

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00:34:21,880 --> 00:34:27,160

Throughout all my career, I have neither found nor have I been able to come up with myself.

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00:34:27,370 --> 00:34:32,979

Any variation on traditional grading that is still traditional grading,

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00:34:32,980 --> 00:34:39,250

but avoids all these problems of construct validity, statistical problems and motivation at this point.

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00:34:39,250 --> 00:34:45,100

And I don't mean to be cynical and I can always be wrong. I don't really believe you can fix traditional grading.

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00:34:46,150 --> 00:34:52,420

I think what you can do and I think what we must do at this point is replace it with something different.

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00:34:52,480 --> 00:34:58,840

Repeal and replace. And now I'd like to speak with you for a few minutes about what some replacements might look like.

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00:35:01,360 --> 00:35:09,040

I also have to warn you that if you were hoping for a deep dive into any one particular model of alternative grading, like, for example,

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00:35:09,040 --> 00:35:11,860

you may have heard of ungrading or specifications grading,

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00:35:12,190 --> 00:35:17,980

you might be a little disappointed here because I'm actually not going to get into the weeds of any particular model today.

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00:35:18,010 --> 00:35:24,700

Maybe you've heard of these particular models. They certainly get a lot of airplay, especially ungrading is talked about a lot.

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00:35:25,100 --> 00:35:33,339

But when we were writing our book, David and I interviewed dozens of university faculty who are using nontraditional approaches to grading

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00:35:33,340 --> 00:35:38,229

already and just picked their brains about what are they doing and what their syllabi look like,

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00:35:38,230 --> 00:35:42,850

and what kinds of issues are they running into and all that. And we have 17 of those case studies.

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00:35:42,850 --> 00:35:46,750

And as the heart of our book and even more, that didn't make it into the book because of length.

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00:35:47,720 --> 00:35:51,460

And what we found was that nobody does one thing.

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00:35:51,520 --> 00:35:57,130

Nobody uses only one model. What people do, like real life professors do,

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00:35:57,130 --> 00:36:02,560

is they pick and they choose elements of different models and stitch them together

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00:36:02,560 --> 00:36:06,070

in a particular way that fits them and their students and their courses.

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00:36:06,550 --> 00:36:10,359

Some of them borrow from upgrading and a little bit from specs grading,

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00:36:10,360 --> 00:36:14,740

a little from contract grading, and sometimes people just make things up and it's something brand new.

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00:36:15,160 --> 00:36:21,640

Some people borrow for models without even knowing that the model had a name like they were doing standards based grading,

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00:36:21,640 --> 00:36:25,060

but they had never even heard of the word standards based grading, it turned out.

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00:36:25,720 --> 00:36:30,450

These are individual models that you see here, and there are dozens more possible.

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00:36:30,460 --> 00:36:34,670

They're they're models. They're options, not religions.

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00:36:34,720 --> 00:36:44,109

You don't have to declare yourself to be an adherent of ungrading and then do only ungrading. You, as a person, as a professor or as a faculty member,

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00:36:44,110 --> 00:36:49,810

Have permission to borrow remix recombine from many different approaches.

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00:36:49,810 --> 00:36:57,729

And you probably should, honestly, because one model is usually not big enough of a size to fit everything that you need in your class.

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00:36:57,730 --> 00:37:01,930

And this is how real life people use alternative grading on a day to day basis.

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00:37:02,890 --> 00:37:10,540

And because of that, because this is how it plays out in real life, Dave and I ask as a fundamental question as we were putting our book together,

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00:37:10,810 --> 00:37:16,930

what do all alternative grading practices that are working have in common?

392

00:37:17,280 --> 00:37:24,580

Like if you see an alternative grading practice that a professor is doing and it seems to really be helping students grow, look at them all.

393

00:37:24,610 --> 00:37:26,680

What common elements do they have?

394

00:37:26,690 --> 00:37:34,390

We asked that question and did quite a bit of work on this and came up with a framework that we call the four pillars of alternative grading.

395

00:37:34,750 --> 00:37:37,870

In this model, the four pillars model alternative,

396

00:37:38,290 --> 00:37:46,179

all alternative grading systems that you might choose to use that seem to work well with students have four things in common four characteristics.

397

00:37:46,180 --> 00:37:51,310

They have clearly defined content standards. They use helpful feedback.

398

00:37:51,850 --> 00:37:57,880

They give marks that indicate progress, and they allow re attempts without penalty,

399

00:37:58,360 --> 00:38:03,550

Clearly defined standards, helpful feedback markers that indicate progress, and re attempts without penalty.

400

00:38:04,150 --> 00:38:07,990

The little vertical line between the third and fourth pillars is just a graphical artifact.

401

00:38:07,990 --> 00:38:14,700

By the way, that doesn't mean anything. And all these four pillars hold up this roof of the feedback loop.

402

00:38:14,820 --> 00:38:18,220

All of these are in service to engagement with a feedback loop.

403

00:38:18,240 --> 00:38:24,840

Okay. Remember, that's the center and the source and what the model for all significant learning experiences.

404

00:38:25,530 --> 00:38:29,420

So let me unpack each of those four pillars just briefly. By clearly defined standards,

405

00:38:29,430 --> 00:38:36,600

what I mean is the grading system should make it clear exactly what students are going to need to do to demonstrate their learning.

406

00:38:37,350 --> 00:38:41,760

We can only assess what we can observe. That doesn't mean what we can measure.

407

00:38:41,790 --> 00:38:46,380

Some things are observable, but not quantifiable. But we can only assess what we can observe.

408

00:38:46,800 --> 00:38:55,500

So we ask ourselves what actions will students do to produce observable evidence that they are learning what we want them to learn?

409

00:38:55,740 --> 00:39:03,990

And we're going to make that clear both for ourselves and for our students, because they can't hit a target that they can't see. By helpful feedback,

410

00:39:04,560 --> 00:39:08,850

that just means remember that all significant learning happens through engagement with a feedback loop.

411

00:39:09,090 --> 00:39:13,470

And in fact, the loop drives not only the learning but the engagement itself.

412

00:39:13,470 --> 00:39:18,090

Remembering feedback loops are fun. People like to do feedback loops in general.

413

00:39:18,990 --> 00:39:23,320

And so that loop really begins with the feedback that students get from us.

414

00:39:23,400 --> 00:39:28,680

So we want to give feedback that is truly helpful. It's easy to give feedback.

415

00:39:29,040 --> 00:39:32,099

It's easy to give feedback. We give feedback all the time.

416

00:39:32,100 --> 00:39:33,750

But how often is it really helpful?

417

00:39:34,320 --> 00:39:42,000

Really helpful feedback means that we give students feedback that shows not only what they might have done wrong and where,

418

00:39:42,330 --> 00:39:45,780

but also why it was it was substandard.

419

00:39:46,260 --> 00:39:50,890

Helpful feedback also is informative and it doesn't humiliate the student.

420

00:39:50,910 --> 00:39:54,960

Instead, it invites collaboration to solve a problem.

421

00:39:56,100 --> 00:39:59,620

And this is true of any feedback you have ever gotten that is helpful.

422

00:39:59,640 --> 00:40:06,659

Think about tenure procedures or submitting a journal article to the Journal. Review or two, bleeds

423

00:40:06,660 --> 00:40:10,350

red all over your paper and calls you an idiot. But that's not really helpful.

424

00:40:10,410 --> 00:40:12,060

Right. It doesn't help you write a better paper.

425

00:40:12,330 --> 00:40:20,850

What's helpful is when someone kindly points out the issues and invites you and gives you ideas for improving upon it.

426

00:40:20,880 --> 00:40:25,470

That's helpful feedback. By marks that indicate progress?

427

00:40:25,490 --> 00:40:32,300

First of all, let me explain the word mark. The word mark is a Canadian sort of non-American way of saying grade.

428

00:40:32,300 --> 00:40:38,060

The word grade is kind of ambiguous. It can mean something we give to an individual assignment.

429

00:40:38,060 --> 00:40:43,330

It can mean a course grade. It could even mean like a level of schooling, like fifth grade as a.

430

00:40:43,460 --> 00:40:47,960

So we tend to use the word mark to refer to whatever label it is we put on.

431

00:40:47,960 --> 00:40:52,729

Students work once it's evaluated. Mark in traditional grading is a number,

432

00:40:52,730 --> 00:41:00,140

but it doesn't have to be. If you give marks at all in an alternative grading system - and it's possible not to put marks on things,

433

00:41:00,140 --> 00:41:03,919

that's what upgrading is about, work doesn't get marks,

434

00:41:03,920 --> 00:41:10,820

It gets only feedback, anyway - If you give marks at all, they should be clear guideposts of a student's growth.

435

00:41:11,510 --> 00:41:12,499

These might be numbers.

436

00:41:12,500 --> 00:41:21,350

For example, if I have ten levels of mastery in a class and a student has reached level six, I can give that student a mark of six.

437

00:41:21,350 --> 00:41:25,050

And it doesn't mean, you know, 60% of the items were done correctly.

438

00:41:25,050 --> 00:41:32,540

It just means you're at level six and you have four levels to go. Or a mark might just be adjectives like Yale used to use.

439

00:41:33,260 --> 00:41:40,460

The mark that you give on a paper leans into rather than away from its categorical nature as data.

440

00:41:40,730 --> 00:41:44,870

And it describes what the student can do and what else they could work on.

441

00:41:45,740 --> 00:41:50,630

And then finally, by re attempts without penalty, this is often controversial, but let me explain.

442

00:41:50,630 --> 00:41:54,740

In order to close the feedback loops that students are hopefully engaged in,

443

00:41:54,950 --> 00:42:00,169

they've got to be allowed to revise or re attempt assessments that don't meet our quality standards,

444

00:42:00,170 --> 00:42:05,270

whatever those are, and however they're defined now. Re attempts could be a number of things.

445

00:42:05,270 --> 00:42:11,150

It could be a second or third draft of an initial submission like our friends in the humanities have been doing for ages,

446

00:42:11,760 --> 00:42:13,130

way ahead of the STEM people.

447

00:42:13,520 --> 00:42:20,210

Or it might be a new version of a task that has the same overall objective, but it's got different specifics this time around.

448

00:42:20,810 --> 00:42:27,619

Whatever it is, students should be allowed to reinvent work that is not quote unquote good enough with helpful

449

00:42:27,620 --> 00:42:33,380

feedback until it is quote unquote good enough without being penalized for it.

450

00:42:33,380 --> 00:42:36,380

For example, I used to back in my traditional grading days,

451

00:42:36,440 --> 00:42:42,079

have traditionally graded exams and I would allow students to redo a test out of

452

00:42:42,080 --> 00:42:46,430

100 points and I would grade the test using the same rubric and that's awesome.

453

00:42:46,430 --> 00:42:48,620

But then I would refund them half the points.

454

00:42:48,680 --> 00:42:54,290

So if they got an 80 the first time around and a 90 the second time around, I give them five points back.

455

00:42:54,500 --> 00:42:59,780

That's sort of a penalty. It's not full credit for the re attempt.

456

00:42:59,780 --> 00:43:05,570

So re attempts without any penalty at all. Because feedback loops involve being wrong a lot.

457

00:43:05,990 --> 00:43:09,920

If you're a musician, you know this, if you are learning a sport, you know this.

458

00:43:09,920 --> 00:43:13,249

You have to really be bad at some stuff pretty horribly until

459

00:43:13,250 --> 00:43:20,180

you are good. And we don't want to penalize people for past badness just because they are going through a perfectly human process.

460

00:43:21,110 --> 00:43:26,569

So those are the four pillars of any functioning alternative grading system, clearly defined standards,

461

00:43:26,570 --> 00:43:30,080

helpful feedback, marks that indicate progress, and re attempts without penalty.

462

00:43:31,370 --> 00:43:39,019

Now, what does this look like concretely? So I'm definitely eating my own dog food here, as it were, because I, I practice.

463

00:43:39,020 --> 00:43:43,520

I mean, I'm just an everyday in the trenches, classroom faculty, you know,

464

00:43:43,520 --> 00:43:48,140

I teach three classes or teach two classes a semester and have some release time to work in the president's office.

465

00:43:48,530 --> 00:43:54,319

Ordinarily, I'd be teaching three classes a semester, and I have research, you know, just I'm just an ordinary faculty member.

466

00:43:54,320 --> 00:43:58,460

Nothing. Nothing special. And I practice these principles every day in my own teaching.

467

00:43:58,460 --> 00:44:03,010

And I try to. So right now I'm teaching a class called Discrete Structures for Computer science.

468

00:44:03,020 --> 00:44:07,130

I'm going to copy that link here and throw it over in the chart so you can have it for yourself.

469

00:44:07,130 --> 00:44:11,479

Here. There is this is a class that I love.

470

00:44:11,480 --> 00:44:16,130

It's my favorite class to teach. It is. I teach this semester.

471

00:44:16,130 --> 00:44:22,550

I'll be teaching it next semester. If you follow this link or go to the QR code, you'll be taken to the syllabus for this course.

472

00:44:22,550 --> 00:44:29,150

And on the resource page there's links to other course materials from this class, including sample assessments and so on.

473

00:44:29,870 --> 00:44:36,860

I'm not going to give a full rundown of the course design here, but although I would love to talk with you about that later, maybe one on one.

474

00:44:37,220 --> 00:44:41,419

But I do want to show you some places where these four pillars are instantiated in my course.

475

00:44:41,420 --> 00:44:49,580

And I'm not going to claim these are unimprovable because definitely there are always issues that I uncover every time I roll out a course.

476

00:44:50,540 --> 00:44:54,830

But here's what the pillars look like, for better or for worse in real life right now for me.

477

00:44:55,760 --> 00:45:01,399

So first of all, this course is about the mathematical foundations of computer science,

478

00:45:01,400 --> 00:45:04,250

and it's taken by most students in their first and second year.

479

00:45:04,250 --> 00:45:10,700

So it is a combination of a lot of basic skills, along with applications of those basic skills.

480

00:45:11,720 --> 00:45:16,549

I have the grading system set up to assess students along those two axes.

481

00:45:16,550 --> 00:45:22,750

They have to demonstrate mastery not only of the basic ideas and concepts, but also that they have learned how to use

482

00:45:23,070 --> 00:45:27,430

Those basic concepts. Two interesting problems. On the basic skills side.

483

00:45:27,450 --> 00:45:32,010

I've set up 15 what I call learning targets that spell these out.

484

00:45:32,130 --> 00:45:36,149

Here you can see the first four. The other 11 are in the appendix A in the syllabus.

485

00:45:36,150 --> 00:45:37,980

You can get right there by clicking that link.

486

00:45:38,700 --> 00:45:47,010

They are phrased in very simple action oriented, first person tasks that explain exactly what students should be able to do.

487

00:45:47,940 --> 00:45:53,520

And you can see how these are phrased. Then the ones that are labeled core number two and three.

488

00:45:53,700 --> 00:45:57,330

These are considered essential topics. There are eight of those throughout the course.

489

00:45:58,050 --> 00:46:00,060

The other seven are kind of like nice to haves.

490

00:46:00,060 --> 00:46:06,810

It would be cool if you could learn this, but, you know, you really have to learn the eight core ones or or you'll see what happens if they don't.

491

00:46:07,830 --> 00:46:15,620

So the standards are clearly stated, and I go so far as to actually write these standards out on the quizzes where I assess them.

492

00:46:15,630 --> 00:46:20,040

These are assessed on a weekly basis by quizzing, of your in-class quizzes.

493

00:46:20,280 --> 00:46:23,880

And each quiz problems focus on one learning target only.

494

00:46:23,880 --> 00:46:25,349

And here on the bottom of the slide,

495

00:46:25,350 --> 00:46:32,190

you can see a sample quiz problem for learning target number three and right below there it says Learning Target number three.

496

00:46:32,190 --> 00:46:38,940

I am writing, literally learning target number three. Just to remind students, this is what you are trying to be trying to demonstrate.

497

00:46:39,330 --> 00:46:44,580

The goal here is to demonstrate skill on your ability to do the following things do a conditional statement,

498

00:46:44,580 --> 00:46:51,660

and then no surprise, the quiz problem itself is to do the things it says to the conditional statement.

499

00:46:52,710 --> 00:46:58,560

So the idea here is to have no guesswork and no surprises on quizzes.

500

00:46:59,130 --> 00:47:03,840

Clear standards, clear targets to maximize the students chances of hitting it.

501

00:47:04,080 --> 00:47:07,950

And if they don't hit it, it's not because they misunderstood the target. That's that's important.

502

00:47:07,950 --> 00:47:12,180

It's because of a legitimate issue with their skill on the concept.

503

00:47:12,520 --> 00:47:15,720

Okay. So we get a clear signal and not a lot of noise.

504

00:47:17,170 --> 00:47:21,430

We also have a series of problems, problem sets, I should say, in the course.

505

00:47:21,730 --> 00:47:29,240

They're called application extension problems or reps for short, where students apply those learning targets to interesting problems.

506

00:47:29,260 --> 00:47:34,600

These are not simple. They're actually pretty difficult, extended, like, many projects.

507

00:47:34,900 --> 00:47:38,680

They don't have the easily quantified outcomes like the learning targets do.

508

00:47:39,280 --> 00:47:46,840

They involve a lot of writing and explanation. Here's a recent sample of a student response to one of these that was just turned in last week.

509

00:47:47,500 --> 00:47:51,170

We have this document in the course called Standards for Student Work.

510

00:47:51,190 --> 00:47:58,840

You can find that link on the resource page. It spells out in precise terms what a successful solution to one of these problems looks like.

511

00:47:59,230 --> 00:48:06,730

Do the following things, generally speaking, and you should be okay. So just to have clearly defined standards again, with this kind of assignment,

512

00:48:07,570 --> 00:48:11,650

the students work was okay, but it didn't really address the core issue.

513

00:48:12,340 --> 00:48:17,260

This is - the student was tasked with explaining why a process of decrypting

514

00:48:17,260 --> 00:48:21,280

an encrypted message that used this particular method should always work.

515

00:48:21,310 --> 00:48:27,310

I didn't feel like they really did this. And was it, nothing I said here was wrong, but just didn't really kind of address the issue.

516

00:48:27,700 --> 00:48:34,410

So anyway, these are submitted. Students submit their work on a course LMS on Blackboard Ultra, and this is the feedback that I gave.

517

00:48:34,930 --> 00:48:42,100

So it's nothing out of the ordinary. It's nothing like extraordinarily, you know, life changing or anything, but I'm just simply trying to be helpful.

518

00:48:42,370 --> 00:48:47,470

I just really get in my brain that I want the student to succeed at this task.

519

00:48:47,470 --> 00:48:53,829

I'm not trying to play gotcha with students by catching them not succeeding, okay?

520

00:48:53,830 --> 00:48:57,700

I want them to really be good at the stuff. So I'm going to tell them like, okay, here's what you did.

521

00:48:57,700 --> 00:49:02,110

Well, most of it is good. The last item, number five wasn't specific enough.

522

00:49:02,200 --> 00:49:05,260

Try some examples. Here's what your general explanation should look like.

523

00:49:05,680 --> 00:49:11,380

I also include this mainly to show you that helpful feedback doesn't have to be lots of feedback.

524

00:49:11,470 --> 00:49:16,959

Okay. You might be wondering how am I going to fit this into my schedule? Just keep it short, keep it brief, keep it clear.

525

00:49:16,960 --> 00:49:20,070

Clear is short, and short is kind.

526

00:49:20,080 --> 00:49:24,410

I think a couple of sentences is usually enough. Okay.

527

00:49:24,430 --> 00:49:29,610

Thirdly about marks. Nothing in the class uses points at all.

528

00:49:30,480 --> 00:49:34,680

Students work gets a label that explains the outcome of their work and suggests

529

00:49:34,680 --> 00:49:38,580

what they should do next. On pre class activities, because it is a flipped class,

530

00:49:39,570 --> 00:49:45,090

Students are marked success or incomplete Success means you turn it in on time.

531

00:49:45,360 --> 00:49:48,660

There's nothing left blank and you got at least half the items right.

532

00:49:48,870 --> 00:49:53,310

That's success. Incomplete means failure of success.

533

00:49:54,360 --> 00:49:58,829

The checkpoint quiz problems are either graded successful or not,

534

00:49:58,830 --> 00:50:07,110

and level one means you have demonstrated skill successfully on a learning target once level two means you've done it twice.

535

00:50:07,260 --> 00:50:11,550

So it's literally just tells you how many times you've demonstrated skill.

536

00:50:11,550 --> 00:50:19,350

Usually to master a skill. I want students to demonstrate learning twice in two separate instances just to help me triangulate my data.

537

00:50:19,770 --> 00:50:23,490

And then the problem sets are success, retry or incomplete.

538

00:50:23,730 --> 00:50:27,510

You're successful, you're done. Otherwise it's a verb. You need to retry this thing.

539

00:50:28,260 --> 00:50:33,150

And here's what it looks like in the LMS so you can rig up most modern LMS's to,

540

00:50:33,480 --> 00:50:38,700

they have to accept numerical input, but you can program them to produce text output.

541

00:50:39,390 --> 00:50:43,209

I can go into the weeds on that if you like. This is Blackboard Ultra.

542

00:50:43,210 --> 00:50:46,780

I'm using what's called a schema. Okay.

543

00:50:46,820 --> 00:50:51,260

So that's marks that indicate progress. And then finally, I should say,

544

00:50:51,260 --> 00:50:56,570

the marks that indicate progress in these clear standards all come together in this document called Standards for Student Work.

545

00:50:56,810 --> 00:51:04,609

I mentioned that before, and this is what it looks like. This is the section of the standards for student work that explains exactly what success means,

546

00:51:04,610 --> 00:51:08,659

what a retry means, or what an incomplete means, because we're trying to be very clear.

547

00:51:08,660 --> 00:51:16,430

And if students are going to mess something up, it's going to be because of a legitimate failure to understand a concept, not because of the system.

548

00:51:17,450 --> 00:51:20,689

So what happens if a student doesn't meet the content standards, you might ask?

549

00:51:20,690 --> 00:51:25,010

Well, quite simply, they get to retry it. That's why the label says retry.

550

00:51:25,820 --> 00:51:33,470

Except for pre classwork, every item in the class can be retried if it doesn't meet our content standards. For problem sets,

551

00:51:34,430 --> 00:51:40,430

AEPs, that just means submitting a new draft and with the items in the feedback addressed for learning targets,

552

00:51:40,970 --> 00:51:49,819

they're marked either successful or unsuccessful. The basic skills, those are assessed on weekly quizzes and those quizzes are cumulative.

553

00:51:49,820 --> 00:51:57,470

So each one contains not only a few new targets, but also all the targets that were previously quizzed upon.

554

00:51:57,530 --> 00:52:03,440

So if you try a learning target problem and it doesn't work out, you just practice it and then try again next week.

555

00:52:03,950 --> 00:52:07,009

And here's a schedule of how these accumulate over time,

556

00:52:07,010 --> 00:52:15,620

a full schedule for the entire semester with some extras that are built in at the end for just those who need to do attempts on earlier stuff.

557

00:52:15,620 --> 00:52:21,290

The core learning targets stay on the quizzes all semester long.

558

00:52:21,290 --> 00:52:25,310

The ones that aren't core rotate off after three attempts,

559

00:52:25,310 --> 00:52:33,200

so you get three tries to get two successful attempts and it's pretty rigorous if I'm allowed to use that word.

560

00:52:34,340 --> 00:52:36,770

And then finally, how this all comes together in a course grade.

561

00:52:36,770 --> 00:52:45,410

We still do give grades at GVSU like everybody else, and this is the way that all that stuff maps on to a grades of ABCD and F this table.

562

00:52:45,710 --> 00:52:47,630

It's basically a checklist. In fact,

563

00:52:47,630 --> 00:52:55,759

I have a checklist version of this that I give to my students and they're going to be filling that out for midterms next week. Earning a C,

564

00:52:55,760 --> 00:53:02,930

for example, you would need to complete all of the items in the C row 16/25 class

565

00:53:02,930 --> 00:53:09,620

preps, about two thirds of the class preps done level two, two demonstrations of skill on all eight of the

566

00:53:09,620 --> 00:53:15,829

core targets and one demonstration of skill on any two others of your choice and two out of eight problems

567

00:53:15,830 --> 00:53:24,260

sets done successfully. Okay. And you can see as you go up in grades, it's everything that the previous row was, plus a little bit more.

568

00:53:24,260 --> 00:53:27,410

So it feels like concentric circles kind of radiating outwards.

569

00:53:28,430 --> 00:53:32,400

Now I want to just mention here to end this part off here,

570

00:53:32,420 --> 00:53:38,060

students are first a little curious and maybe a little wary about the system because it's a little different,

571

00:53:38,480 --> 00:53:44,330

especially the fact that you might have surmised that there's no partial credit involved in anything.

572

00:53:44,330 --> 00:53:50,360

I mean, partial credit is not even a concept that makes sense in this class because there's no numerical credit on anything.

573

00:53:50,840 --> 00:53:59,060

So there's no partial credit and there's no way to sort of average out bad performance on one thing by getting better performance on some other thing.

574

00:53:59,870 --> 00:54:04,910

If you, in a traditional class, if you blow it on a test, maybe you can just do extra well on the quizzes.

575

00:54:05,180 --> 00:54:09,950

And I don't think that's good practice because tests and quizzes are different, trying to measure different things.

576

00:54:09,950 --> 00:54:17,479

And so apples and oranges, in some ways. I really insist on consistent excellence across the board on everything

577

00:54:17,480 --> 00:54:23,870

if you want an A or B in the class. Students are a little wary about this, but two things eventually win them over.

578

00:54:23,910 --> 00:54:29,870

Number one is the revision process and nothing in the class over the class prep is one and done.

579

00:54:29,870 --> 00:54:35,210

You can make mistakes and as long as it's a good faith effort, you can come back and repair them.

580

00:54:35,450 --> 00:54:43,880

A bad day is not the end of the story as it was for Alice from earlier in the talk, or for my calculus student from earlier in the talk.

581

00:54:44,920 --> 00:54:54,580

And the second thing is that the fact that they realized this pretty quickly, that once you earn a particular grade in the course, you can't go down.

582

00:54:54,700 --> 00:54:59,200

Your grade never goes down in the system and only goes up or stays where it is.

583

00:54:59,590 --> 00:55:06,760

So if you earn all the requirements for a C, the floor for you in the class is a C.

584

00:55:06,850 --> 00:55:12,010

You could drop, you could walk away from the class right at that moment and still have a C.

585

00:55:13,450 --> 00:55:17,409

Some people debate whether that's a bug or a feature.

586

00:55:17,410 --> 00:55:19,780

I think it's a feature, but that's another debate we can have.

587

00:55:20,530 --> 00:55:25,630

And for me, I feel like I'm holding higher academic standards in this class than I ever have because,

588

00:55:25,630 --> 00:55:33,789

You know, I don't have to put up with subpar work. If I feel like a student has done like the first four items on a problem set, perfectly well.

589

00:55:33,790 --> 00:55:37,989

But there's one thing that's really bugging me about that fifth one. I'm not going to give them 80%.

590

00:55:37,990 --> 00:55:41,170

I'm just going to say, take this back and redo it. I feel like you can really get this right.

591

00:55:41,170 --> 00:55:45,250

I have faith that you are able to get this right. I'm going to invite you to do it.

592

00:55:46,720 --> 00:55:49,689

If I feel that student work doesn't meet standards for whatever reason,

593

00:55:49,690 --> 00:55:54,370

I'm just going to put retry on it along with my feedback and just put the ball back in the student's court.

594

00:55:54,370 --> 00:55:58,689

And this is okay because I'm not dooming anybody's future here.

595

00:55:58,690 --> 00:56:03,250

I'm just asking them to make a quick revision on something that takes maybe 10 minutes to do.

596

00:56:04,390 --> 00:56:08,739

So anyway, I hope you can see from this how the four pillars are working themselves out.

597

00:56:08,740 --> 00:56:15,940

And you might think about this too. The four pillars are actually like the physical embodiment in some ways of that feedback loop.

598

00:56:16,420 --> 00:56:24,190

By having clearly defined standards, students know what they're supposed to do, and so they are better able to do something helpful.

599

00:56:24,190 --> 00:56:31,089

Feedback gives good information for students to act upon, the marks that indicate progress, help them interpret what to do next,

600

00:56:31,090 --> 00:56:38,380

and the re attempts without penalty close and enable this whole loop here. And every system of implementing alternative grading,

601

00:56:38,680 --> 00:56:45,400

whether it's ungrading or specifications grading or standards based grading or whatever grading, works like this.

602

00:56:46,300 --> 00:56:49,570

And that brings up the question, what now?

603

00:56:50,290 --> 00:56:55,380

What are you going to do now? Maybe you listen to this for the last 40 minutes or so and you might

604

00:56:55,430 --> 00:56:58,450

just kick traditional grading to the curb and just do something different.

605

00:56:58,930 --> 00:57:04,600

Or maybe you're skeptical and that's okay. Or maybe you're curious or some combination of curious and skeptical in height.

606

00:57:05,350 --> 00:57:11,050

Well, I'll say one thing first. If you're one of the latter two, some combination of skeptical and curious,

607

00:57:11,410 --> 00:57:17,590

I would just ask you to please read either David's and my blog or our book or both.

608

00:57:17,890 --> 00:57:21,699

You might still be skeptical at the end. For all I know, you might be more skeptical at the end.

609

00:57:21,700 --> 00:57:25,960

I don't know. You've got to make up your own mind on these things, but hopefully you'll learn some things.

610

00:57:25,960 --> 00:57:31,450

You'll see how people are doing things and making this work for themselves. And many of the questions you might have are addressed in there.

611

00:57:32,050 --> 00:57:35,140

But if you're thinking, Yeah, I'm ready, I'm ready to go with this,

612

00:57:35,140 --> 00:57:39,850

this is a good idea and it's right for me and I'd like to try this out, but you're not really sure what to do.

613

00:57:40,120 --> 00:57:43,479

I have three things to say to you. So hear me now.

614

00:57:43,480 --> 00:57:46,720

Believe me later. Possibly. First of all, keep it simple.

615

00:57:46,810 --> 00:57:53,830

This in our book is what David and I call the Prime directive. Keep everything as simple as humanly possible in your class.

616

00:57:54,490 --> 00:57:56,890

Really, whether you're doing alternative grading or not,

617

00:57:57,160 --> 00:58:04,960

the tendency we academics have is to concoct these wildly complex systems to solve basically simple problems.

618

00:58:05,320 --> 00:58:07,540

And simplification is really hard work.

619

00:58:07,540 --> 00:58:15,190

We don't want to remove stuff, but if you don't do it, whatever system you end up with is going to be way too hard for students to grasp,

620

00:58:15,580 --> 00:58:19,630

is going to be way too hard for you to grasp, and it's going to be too much work for everybody.

621

00:58:20,170 --> 00:58:27,010

For example, when I first launched my very first specifications grading system, after that student experience that I had,

622

00:58:27,250 --> 00:58:31,659

I had a class that had 63 learning objectives listed out,

623

00:58:31,660 --> 00:58:38,560

and each one of those 63 learning objectives required multiple levels of reassessment on different kinds of assessment.

624

00:58:39,190 --> 00:58:44,520

And I thought it was the most awesome thing ever at the time. And I quickly found out that was a terrible idea.

625

00:58:44,540 --> 00:58:49,930

Like just it was way too complicated and I didn't even see the light of day for an entire semester.

626

00:58:50,410 --> 00:58:53,990

So don't be like me, okay? Just simplify things.

627

00:58:54,250 --> 00:58:59,440

Remember what Michaelangelo said that simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication.

628

00:58:59,620 --> 00:59:01,060

Or maybe that was Da Vinci. I'm not sure.

629

00:59:01,810 --> 00:59:09,280

And also something that I think is true, that most problems that we have can be removed by - can be solved by removing something.

630

00:59:10,510 --> 00:59:15,729

The second thing I want to really encourage you and make sure you share is that you don't have to do it all.

631

00:59:15,730 --> 00:59:19,480

In fact, trying to do everything all at once will kind of drive you a little crazy.

632

00:59:19,900 --> 00:59:26,770

For example, you don't have to convert your entire class over to ungraded or all of your classes over to ungrading,

633

00:59:26,770 --> 00:59:35,140

for example, to reap the benefits of ungrading. You can weave in bits and pieces and philosophies of ungrading in partial ways,

634

00:59:35,470 --> 00:59:39,460

like for example, ungrading a single assignment and just seeing how it goes.

635

00:59:40,150 --> 00:59:44,320

But some people in the alternative grading community are passionate and that's great, but some.

636

00:59:44,340 --> 00:59:51,149

Times the passion gets to the point of like religious zealotry and you'll hear things like I do ungraded

637

00:59:51,150 --> 00:59:56,340

because I really care about my students and I don't doubt that those people care about their students.

638

00:59:56,340 --> 01:00:01,829

But the implication is that if you don't go all in, if you are not totally sold out for ungraded,

639

01:00:01,830 --> 01:00:05,310

that you don't really care about students, that's not true.

640

01:00:05,310 --> 01:00:10,980

It's not helpful because a lot of y'all might be in situations where you just can't do it all.

641

01:00:11,430 --> 01:00:16,350

There's no way you could implement a specs grading system in a class, for example, for whatever reason.

642

01:00:16,800 --> 01:00:21,300

And you know, that reason, it's probably not just resistance or laziness or whatever.

643

01:00:21,300 --> 01:00:27,400

It's probably real. Okay, so the encouragement I'm going to give to you is that you don't have to go all in.

644

01:00:27,420 --> 01:00:33,570

You can do little things, like if you don't want to undergo a complete course redesign, you don't have to.

645

01:00:33,930 --> 01:00:37,040

In fact, I would - if you try to.

646

01:00:37,050 --> 01:00:40,619

You're just going to make everybody unhappy again. And I guess me, too.

647

01:00:40,620 --> 01:00:48,070

The third thing I want to say, and that is, you know, the four pillars are a great model for doing partial things and getting small wins.

648

01:00:49,830 --> 01:00:51,750

If you're thinking about using alternative methods,

649

01:00:51,750 --> 01:00:59,780

but you're not sure if it would work in your situation because you have a huge class, because you have a coordinated lab section,

650

01:00:59,790 --> 01:01:07,170

you don't have the creative freedom to do what you want to do or you're contingent faculty member and you're a little worried about blowback,

651

01:01:07,620 --> 01:01:11,460

Okay, So I would encourage you to do this. Look at the four pillars.

652

01:01:11,790 --> 01:01:15,180

Pick one pillar and do one thing, okay?

653

01:01:15,210 --> 01:01:19,199

Pick one of the four pillars and do one thing to move in a positive direction.

654

01:01:19,200 --> 01:01:24,390

On that one axis, for example, maybe you can just write out your learning targets.

655

01:01:24,390 --> 01:01:30,630

What are your learning objectives for your lesson? And tell students what standard is being addressed on each problem in your next exam.

656

01:01:31,590 --> 01:01:38,220

Maybe you can improve, work on your feedback, maybe really strive to give feedback that's more helpful if you can just do that.

657

01:01:38,220 --> 01:01:46,109

I mean, that's a major win. Maybe this semester or next semester you can switch from points to labels that indicate progress.

658

01:01:46,110 --> 01:01:50,010

And if you must, you can take that label and convert it back into points if you need to.

659

01:01:50,850 --> 01:01:56,640

Maybe you might try giving some limited re attempts, like limited, but without penalty.

660

01:01:56,640 --> 01:02:00,299

On one or more of your assignments this semester. You don't have to do it all.

661

01:02:00,300 --> 01:02:08,189

And if all you can manage in your situation is positive motion on one thing, on one pillar, that is good enough, folks.

662

01:02:08,190 --> 01:02:09,540

It's more than good enough.

663

01:02:09,540 --> 01:02:17,670

It's a massive win for you and for your students and we ought to be happy with. We got to be satisfied with small wins in this in this business.

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01:02:19,170 --> 01:02:26,040

So that is the end of my talk. Before I kind of wrap it up here, let me just reiterate the main message for traditional grading.

665

01:02:26,250 --> 01:02:33,330

We've seen many different ways in which traditional grading is completely broken, and I think it's broken to the point you just can't fix this anymore.

666

01:02:33,870 --> 01:02:41,279

But it is replaceable. And we have every right and every opportunity to replace traditional grading with something better if we want to.

667

01:02:41,280 --> 01:02:44,550

It's a it's a relatively new addition to higher education.

668

01:02:44,550 --> 01:02:50,159

It's not a centuries old tradition. And I think now might be the time to start thinking about doing this,

669

01:02:50,160 --> 01:02:54,540

given all the challenges we face and as professors and faculty and shared

670

01:02:54,540 --> 01:02:57,570

governance and all the other things that our students are dealing with as well.

671

01:02:58,840 --> 01:03:01,840

So I hope that you get something out of this before I kind of wrap it up.

672

01:03:01,870 --> 01:03:06,130

Finally, I want to just hit some questions here that were submitted to me before the talk.

673

01:03:06,130 --> 01:03:11,650

All the questions were great. These really rose to the top because they were asked more than once or because I feel like they're very important.

674

01:03:12,790 --> 01:03:21,759

First of all, there were several questions along the lines of how do you make this work in blank, Like in a large lecture class,

675

01:03:21,760 --> 01:03:31,150

in a humanities class, in a language, class, in a music class, in a STEM class, in a coordinated lab section, class in an online asynchronous class?

676

01:03:32,140 --> 01:03:35,620

Rather than try to reiterate all this, I'm just going to point you to our book.

677

01:03:35,950 --> 01:03:43,060

Okay. I, of course, I, I would I deeply appreciate your buying our books, but even if you just borrow it from somebody, it's all good.

678

01:03:44,150 --> 01:03:47,950

This. This is our index of case studies in the book.

679

01:03:47,950 --> 01:03:50,950

And you can see it's coming from all over the place.

680

01:03:51,280 --> 01:03:56,800

We have large classes, small classes, face to face, online classes, synchronous online classes,

681

01:03:56,800 --> 01:04:03,669

hybrid classes, STEM classes, humanities classes, and not shown here are size of institutions.

682

01:04:03,670 --> 01:04:06,880

I mean, these are big. Some are institutions like Northwestern.

683

01:04:06,890 --> 01:04:10,479

Some of them are small liberal arts colleges. All of them by real life

684

01:04:10,480 --> 01:04:12,250

Faculty members who are making this work.

685

01:04:12,550 --> 01:04:21,700

Somehow I'm at a loss to if I were ever slotted into a 200 person history of art class like Gretchen Bender was, I think I would probably panic.

686

01:04:22,180 --> 01:04:25,000

But she's making this work really, really well and you should read about this.

687

01:04:25,060 --> 01:04:28,210

So I would just really point you to, if you're looking for specific instances,

688

01:04:28,480 --> 01:04:35,380

check it out in the book and also pay attention to the blog because once a month we have guest posters blogging their process with us.

689

01:04:36,290 --> 01:04:42,250

Okay. Another question that was asked is, I thought I might have noticed this popping up in the Q&A, too.

690

01:04:42,490 --> 01:04:45,580

How do you address pushback from people who think initiatives like this,

691

01:04:45,580 --> 01:04:50,530

water down the rigor of the program and will result in less well-prepared students?

692

01:04:51,550 --> 01:04:54,069

Good question, because you do get some pushback about this.

693

01:04:54,070 --> 01:05:02,410

Sometimes it seems like we're being very permissive with students in this in this process of alternative grading.

694

01:05:03,970 --> 01:05:08,860

But in fact, it's actually ... and I also have questions about the word rigor.

695

01:05:08,890 --> 01:05:16,089

Like, what exactly does that mean? Does that mean just like, you know, sometimes rigor can be a synonym for toxic masculinity?

696

01:05:16,090 --> 01:05:22,240

To be perfectly honest, it could be just being a jerk. I'm going to be rigorous means I'm going to just try to crush you at every moment with my test.

697

01:05:22,480 --> 01:05:27,610

If we take a more - I mean at its best, it means, like, the course, it has an appropriate difficulty level.

698

01:05:27,700 --> 01:05:32,829

Okay, well, we're going to put the best instruction possible on that. Well, in an alternative grading system,

699

01:05:32,830 --> 01:05:39,030

one of the highlights of any functioning system is that students are producing real evidence of learning.

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01:05:39,040 --> 01:05:44,739

It's not sort of like approximated evidence that's mediated by a test they're creating.

701

01:05:44,740 --> 01:05:49,870

Things are doing they're solving real problems that they're giving concrete evidence of

702

01:05:49,870 --> 01:05:54,999

learning of clearly defined content standards are producing a portfolio that I can point

703

01:05:55,000 --> 01:05:59,860

back to and say the student got an A because they put in all this work and here it is,

704

01:05:59,860 --> 01:06:03,820

Here's the work. If I got their permission, I could even hand the portfolio over to somebody.

705

01:06:04,510 --> 01:06:08,620

It's not un rigorous if it's backed up, it's not grade inflation.

706

01:06:08,620 --> 01:06:17,320

if it's not backed up. Okay. And I would say as the professor of an alternative graded course, you get to decide what the standards are.

707

01:06:17,350 --> 01:06:23,229

You can probably - it might not be a bad idea to consult with students on that at some point and keep them in mind.

708

01:06:23,230 --> 01:06:26,410

You know, don't make standards wildly inaccessible,

709

01:06:26,830 --> 01:06:32,710

but you get to decide what an A means and you don't have to water down at all if you don't feel like it.

710

01:06:32,830 --> 01:06:39,880

Okay. And as long as you're willing to give helpful feedback and allow re attempts without penalty, you can create high standards if you want to.

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01:06:39,880 --> 01:06:44,319

And then if somebody gives you pushback in this point on the scoreboard and say, you know,

712

01:06:44,320 --> 01:06:51,610

the student demonstrated skill twice on 14 out of 15 learning targets like that's that's way better than getting a 90 on a test.

713

01:06:52,240 --> 01:06:58,330

So I would just the pushback that I get from people is to say, look at the evidence, look at the data,

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01:06:59,920 --> 01:07:05,170

rather than looking at statistical data that was sort of corrupted by the fact

715

01:07:05,170 --> 01:07:08,200

that the points you're using aren't really numerical data to begin with.

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01:07:09,070 --> 01:07:13,510

Actually look at concrete evidence that students provide that directly connects them to their learning.

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01:07:13,810 --> 01:07:21,879

That's what alternative grading allows you to do. Another question, I thought this was unique because I didn't know until just recently

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01:07:21,880 --> 01:07:25,569

that you all at Northwestern on the quarter system and this is an interesting question,

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01:07:25,570 --> 01:07:29,230

how can you, basically on the quarter system, you have a SHORTENED time scale.

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01:07:29,470 --> 01:07:32,730

How do you deal with it? This is a really interesting question.

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01:07:32,740 --> 01:07:36,550

I deal with this sometimes when I teach summer classes that are six weeks long.

722

01:07:37,030 --> 01:07:38,980

So it's really, really highly accelerated.

723

01:07:39,760 --> 01:07:47,710

You can still do alternatively graded courses and I think that one of those case studies might have been a short scale ten week class possibly.

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01:07:47,710 --> 01:07:51,280

I have to check me on that. I'm going to blog about that pretty soon.

725

01:07:51,670 --> 01:07:58,090

Just my own experiences of this very question. But I would also say, you know, you have to be a little.

726

01:07:58,140 --> 01:08:02,219

Mindful that you're on a short time scale, you've got to be very clear with assessments,

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01:08:02,220 --> 01:08:07,270

and it also helps to give students multiple ways to demonstrate mastery.

728

01:08:07,290 --> 01:08:10,680

Like right now in my Discrete Structures course, we have weekly quizzes.

729

01:08:11,130 --> 01:08:16,259

Weekly quizzes probably would not be sufficient in a ten week or 12 week a quarter system course.

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01:08:16,260 --> 01:08:24,390

I would probably add some flexibility into that system by having weekly quizzes, but also allowing students to come to,

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01:08:24,390 --> 01:08:30,360

say, oral exams in the office or make a video of themselves working out a quiz question or something like that,

732

01:08:30,750 --> 01:08:35,760

or finding a way finding a system like an auto graded computer system that would do some of this work for me,

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01:08:35,760 --> 01:08:41,100

assessment work for me, build in flexibility for students because they're going to need it in that narrow time frame.

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01:08:41,100 --> 01:08:42,180

But it can still be done.

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01:08:42,660 --> 01:08:51,000

And be mindful, though, of the workload that you place on students, because every time you give an assessment, it's work for students to do.

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01:08:51,000 --> 01:08:54,390

And if you have reassessments on that, it's more work for students to do.

737

01:08:54,870 --> 01:08:58,050

So, you know, you have to keep the scale in mind.

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01:08:58,050 --> 01:09:03,600

But so flexibility is good, letting students choose different ways of demonstrating the same kind of mastery.

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01:09:04,620 --> 01:09:11,370

A couple more questions here and then I'll be done. These are two questions that are kind of the same basic feel to them.

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01:09:12,180 --> 01:09:17,830

Not everybody can get an A. How can you give lower than all A's without demoralizing them?

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01:09:17,850 --> 01:09:23,370

Or how can you give a lower grade without demoralizing the student? And how do you allay the anxieties of students about grading?

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01:09:23,550 --> 01:09:33,899

I mentioned before that two features of the the specifications grading style that I use in discrete structures is, you know, everything can be redone.

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01:09:33,900 --> 01:09:37,110

Nothing is the last word until the final buzzer of the course.

744

01:09:37,290 --> 01:09:40,440

And I think that gives students some hope here. Okay.

745

01:09:40,950 --> 01:09:46,350

Helpful feedback does a lot of good with counteracting demoralization.

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01:09:46,770 --> 01:09:47,970

You can say like, okay,

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01:09:47,970 --> 01:09:54,060

so this wasn't quite up to our standards and here's why I'm going to invite you to do a re attempt on this and here's what you should do.

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01:09:55,160 --> 01:09:59,120

Okay. So it tells you. And so, yeah, you messed up. It's okay. We expect that.

749

01:09:59,180 --> 01:10:06,830

Okay. It'd be weird if you didn't. And so we're going to set up a system where you can redo stuff without penalty if it doesn't meet our standards.

750

01:10:07,130 --> 01:10:13,369

And the other thing that students really latch themselves onto is the idea that their grade never goes down in the course.

751

01:10:13,370 --> 01:10:19,530

It just keeps going up or stays the same. And so that helps them feel like I'm actually climbing up a ladder here.

752

01:10:19,550 --> 01:10:27,229

I'm actually accomplishing something as I as I go through this interesting experience of a class, and then just being open,

753

01:10:27,230 --> 01:10:30,920

you know, communicating with your students early and often about how they're doing.

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01:10:31,310 --> 01:10:38,449

What is it like, what questions do you have? And just being very open about communicating with them about their experiences in the course.

755

01:10:38,450 --> 01:10:46,249

A lot of times you can head off student problems simply by communicating with your students and it shouldn't be a revelation to us.

756

01:10:46,250 --> 01:10:49,399

But for a lot of faculty it's just like, Wow, communicate with your students. That's crazy.

757

01:10:49,400 --> 01:10:53,930

That's so crazy it might just work. Okay, that's it.

758

01:10:53,930 --> 01:10:57,440

That's it for me, y'all. We're going to transition into an AMA time here.

759

01:10:57,440 --> 01:11:03,319

But I just want to say, first of all, thank you for your attention and thank you for your work at Northwestern University,

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01:11:03,320 --> 01:11:08,870

one of our premiere universities in the United States. And I love the city of Chicago, and I kind of wish I could be over there with you right now,

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01:11:09,710 --> 01:11:14,839

but I would love to continue this on even after the AMA is over with.

762

01:11:14,840 --> 01:11:23,450

My email is there. You can reach me on Twitter or whatever it's called these days at that handle, on LinkedIn as well.

763

01:11:23,450 --> 01:11:28,130

And my main website is rtalbert.org. Our blog is gradingforgrowth.com

764

01:11:28,340 --> 01:11:33,080

There is the cover of our book with that cool minimalist sprout thing happening there.

765

01:11:33,710 --> 01:11:34,940

Love for you to read that book.

766

01:11:35,120 --> 01:11:41,420

We're very happy with the way it turned out, and then the QR code there is to the resource page, which has links to all this stuff here.

767

01:11:42,080 --> 01:11:48,560

So again, thank you so much. I'm going to turn it back over to Jen, or whoever is in charge next and we'll take it from there.

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01:11:49,790 --> 01:11:53,479

Thank you, Robert, for such a thought provoking keynote.

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01:11:53,480 --> 01:11:57,110

I'm just going to get my notes pulled up here.

770

01:11:57,920 --> 01:12:01,910

I'll start by sharing a comment that was submitted in advance.

771

01:12:02,450 --> 01:12:06,439

So I just want to learn everything I can to be the best for my students.

772

01:12:06,440 --> 01:12:11,450

And I'm wondering if you're finding in your speaking if that's a common sentiment.

773

01:12:13,970 --> 01:12:21,340

That's a great sentiment to have. And I really I really am grateful for whoever it is made that comment, because I hope that's true for all of us.

774

01:12:21,560 --> 01:12:27,439

You know, our students are really putting themselves out there to learn with us and from us,

775

01:12:27,440 --> 01:12:32,780

and we owe it to them to be to just continuously improve upon this practice that we have.

776

01:12:33,800 --> 01:12:36,529

I find that wherever I go, you know,

777

01:12:36,530 --> 01:12:44,090

it's very rare that I just find professors that are uninterested in growth, like their own, or their students', or any such thing.

778

01:12:44,420 --> 01:12:50,320

I do think it's more common than people realize. It's sometimes a little disincentivized to talk that way.

779

01:12:50,330 --> 01:12:53,210

I feel like it's weird that it is, but I don't know.

780

01:12:53,930 --> 01:13:00,530

Yeah, I find faculty everywhere are, first of all, very unhappy with the way that grading works right now.

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01:13:00,710 --> 01:13:05,180

There's a, I get this really deep, unexpressed.

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01:13:05,300 --> 01:13:12,350

Hard, too hard to put words to it, Dissatisfaction, like an existential dissatisfaction with the way grades have been done.

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01:13:12,590 --> 01:13:16,460

Much the way that I was dissatisfied after my student experience,

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01:13:16,760 --> 01:13:22,250

I was like I had this cancerous growth on my teaching and I never even realized it for 14 years.

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01:13:22,700 --> 01:13:26,650

I got to get rid of this thing. And that's, there's sort of an urgency in that sense.

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01:13:26,660 --> 01:13:33,190

And so learning about how to do this, yeah, you're you're not alone if you're in that position, and you're in exactly the right place,

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01:13:33,200 --> 01:13:36,259

you know, as a professional, if that's if that's your that's your field.

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01:13:36,260 --> 01:13:39,740

I mean, we're all we're professors, right? And it's our job to learn things.

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01:13:39,900 --> 01:13:45,310

That's, that's, that's what it's all about. And so if we're not learning about our own professional practice. then what are we even doing?

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01:13:45,320 --> 01:13:49,010

So. Good on you for having that. There's a lot of people like you out there.

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01:13:50,280 --> 01:13:56,750

Let's talk about something that's very timely right now and on a lot of people's minds around generative A.I.

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01:13:57,080 --> 01:14:02,630

So we've got some questions about how we can leverage the use of generative AI and assessments.

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01:14:02,630 --> 01:14:08,510

And one participant added that they personally don't think that banning AI is productive.

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01:14:08,900 --> 01:14:15,020

So what might be some possible benefits of incorporating it into our assessment practices?

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01:14:15,590 --> 01:14:18,350

Yeah, this is a I'm right there with all of y'all on this.

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01:14:18,350 --> 01:14:23,720

I'm just trying to kind of keep my head above water with what ChatGPT can do and can't do and all that.

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01:14:25,220 --> 01:14:30,500

But I would just like to say, I mean, I remember when I was in graduate school in the nineties in math,

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01:14:30,830 --> 01:14:34,040

we had our period of our history, what's known as the math wars.

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01:14:34,760 --> 01:14:40,070

Some of you may know what I'm talking about. It was a period of time where technology was beginning to really ramp up.

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01:14:40,700 --> 01:14:47,329

Graphing Calculators were becoming a very affordable handheld graphing calculator that would do symbolic calculations.

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01:14:47,330 --> 01:14:50,300

And these same questions were coming up back then.

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01:14:50,420 --> 01:14:56,020

You know like well if we're if I have a calculator that can factor a polynomial, then what am I supposed to be doing it for?

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01:14:56,420 --> 01:14:59,930

And what am I here for? So that's exactly it. What are we here for? And the answer

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01:14:59,930 --> 01:15:05,630

Back then they kind of got us up to now was we we really can't focus on those kinds of skills.

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01:15:05,630 --> 01:15:11,659

We can assess them if we want to. But we also have to keep in mind that we live in the real world and this technology exists,

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01:15:11,660 --> 01:15:17,510

and banning it is just sort of a pointless task after a certain point.

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01:15:17,510 --> 01:15:25,550

I mean, in isolation, maybe, for example, when I give my learning target assessments in discrete structures,

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01:15:25,550 --> 01:15:29,119

they are in class assessments because I want it to be kind of a controlled environment.

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01:15:29,120 --> 01:15:37,939

These are real simple, you know, But in in when it's time to use to do more sophisticated problem solving, I'm saying anything goes.

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01:15:37,940 --> 01:15:39,580

I mean, you can you can use whatever you want.

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01:15:39,590 --> 01:15:47,419

I mean, I'm trying to try to be creative to create assessments that are as personalized as possible to the students.

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01:15:47,420 --> 01:15:54,350

I think to me that's the key thing to kind of keep AI on the good guy side, right?

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01:15:54,350 --> 01:15:59,030

Or AI could be used as a tool for learning and not as a replacement for it.

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01:16:00,050 --> 01:16:09,110

Like, for example, that little snippet I showed in the talk was you have to encrypt a certain message using a certain method,

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01:16:09,320 --> 01:16:13,250

but all the students have to do all you have to do to really kind of get past the

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01:16:13,250 --> 01:16:17,900

AI or try to get past the AI is to have students make up their own message.

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01:16:18,230 --> 01:16:23,490

And it turns out that actually it's not easy to type that in correctly as a prompt into a chat.

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01:16:23,990 --> 01:16:30,950

I tried it and I made sure that it was pretty AI proof. Personalizing assessments whenever possible is a good idea,

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01:16:30,950 --> 01:16:33,020

generally speaking, especially in the role they are.

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01:16:33,230 --> 01:16:41,270

Another thing you might do is you can create assessments that ask students to really critically evaluate the

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01:16:41,270 --> 01:16:47,239

results. One of the things that's coming down the road for us in this particular class is a particular

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01:16:47,240 --> 01:16:51,740

kind of problem where you have to count the number of complex arrangements of something like the number

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01:16:51,740 --> 01:16:56,570

of ways you can get a straight flush in a poker hand that's like complicated counting problems.

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01:16:56,960 --> 01:17:07,099

And I, just for fun, gave ChatGPT one such problem and Bard, another AI, same problem like tried four different AIs and gave them the same problem.

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01:17:07,100 --> 01:17:10,040

I got four completely different answers, none of which were correct.

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01:17:11,090 --> 01:17:18,410

And so this is an interesting opportunity to say like, okay, I gave all these AIs this problem, but you have to have these four different answers.

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01:17:18,800 --> 01:17:22,250

Which one, if any, of them is correct and why. Okay, so an AI,

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01:17:22,400 --> 01:17:28,580

Not yet anyway, I mean, maybe in ten years, who knows in which case I'll be retired to deal with it.

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01:17:29,330 --> 01:17:35,210

But AI, at this point, cannot distinguish between the flawed outputs of other AIs that I know of.

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01:17:35,210 --> 01:17:42,800

I can be wrong about that. But that's a that's actually a very high level Bloom's taxonomy kind of evaluation task,

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01:17:42,860 --> 01:17:46,070

I think is really appropriate for classes at the university level.

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01:17:46,820 --> 01:17:53,930

So the further up you go, Bloom's taxonomy, too, the easier it is to keep as a tool, not as a crutch.

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01:17:55,100 --> 01:17:59,929

Well, thank you for those ideas. You just mentioned personalized assessments.

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01:17:59,930 --> 01:18:07,340

And earlier you talked about the opportunities for regrading, which sounds great for students, but what about faculty workload?

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01:18:07,350 --> 01:18:12,319

So we had a question in the chat that was asking about pushback.

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01:18:12,320 --> 01:18:20,900

So I think you really effectively address pushback around rigor, but what about a department colleagues feeling like they don't have time to regrade?

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01:18:21,710 --> 01:18:29,029

Well, it's understandable. It sounds like a ton of work. And I would say it certainly was for me when I wasn't simplifying everything.

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01:18:29,030 --> 01:18:33,470

First of all, remember, keep it as keep everything as simple as humanly possible.

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01:18:34,100 --> 01:18:38,180

One way, what I had to learn for myself. I'll just share those, what I had to learn for myself.

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01:18:38,210 --> 01:18:43,189

I am to a point where my grading, I mean, it's about, it's not any worse than it's ever been.

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01:18:43,190 --> 01:18:48,919

I mean, you know, it's not especially more grading than traditional grading courses.

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01:18:48,920 --> 01:18:53,600

It's different in quality, but not necessarily in quantity, if that makes sense.

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01:18:53,840 --> 01:18:58,490

I find that with my two, I teach two classes, 30 students each, so take it with a grain of salt.

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01:18:58,790 --> 01:19:01,939

But if I grade for an hour a day, it's enough. Okay.

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01:19:01,940 --> 01:19:07,999

So the way I tend to make that work, and it's on a small scale, I know if you're teaching 200 students, this may not apply to you.

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01:19:08,000 --> 01:19:09,920

I would say, go read our book and see what they do.

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01:19:10,850 --> 01:19:18,040

But on a on a scale like that, what I found to be useful is, first of all, don't assign so much stuff in the first place.

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01:19:18,040 --> 01:19:24,710

So that's that was my big problem as I was. You know, every time you give an assessment, you are committing to multiple.

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01:19:25,140 --> 01:19:29,190

You know, the hours and hours and hours of work grading and regrading an assessment,

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01:19:29,490 --> 01:19:32,670

Really, when you're building the course before the semester starts,

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01:19:32,670 --> 01:19:36,720

really be honest with yourself about whether it's worth it.

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01:19:37,660 --> 01:19:42,180

Like every assessment you give can give you useful information about student learning,

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01:19:42,180 --> 01:19:46,230

but that doesn't mean you have to give every single assessment you can think of.

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01:19:46,590 --> 01:19:52,020

Some assessments might not really be worth the effort it takes to grade them.

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01:19:52,020 --> 01:19:56,190

Like you get some information about student learning, but it's a tremendous amount of effort.

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01:19:56,640 --> 01:20:00,690

If I find that one of my course syllabi, I cut it, I just cut it and don't look back.

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01:20:00,960 --> 01:20:07,500

I would rather have fewer assessments and less information than so much information that I can't process at a grading session.

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01:20:08,010 --> 01:20:17,280

So cut it off at the source whenever possible. And secondly, remember that feedback doesn't have to be extensive to be good.

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01:20:17,970 --> 01:20:22,430

The research that we see in the data and I studied about effective feedback, you know,

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01:20:22,500 --> 01:20:28,110

sometimes it's like one sentence of something that went really well, one sentence of something that needs fixed and that's it.

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01:20:28,110 --> 01:20:31,560

That's it, that's enough. And anything more than that is just sort of redundant.

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01:20:31,980 --> 01:20:35,520

And sometimes maybe students don't read our feedback because we're giving so much of it.

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01:20:35,580 --> 01:20:42,120

It seems like it's just information overload, but if you keep the signal to noise ratio down and really target the feedback,

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01:20:42,510 --> 01:20:44,880

then it's less of it is less work to give it.

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01:20:45,300 --> 01:20:50,580

Sometimes it's the same feedback being given over and over again, in which case I have text snippets set up for that.

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01:20:51,790 --> 01:20:57,510

Certain things like, if I, sometimes I'll give a problem set and I know half the students are going to make the same mistake over and over again.

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01:20:57,720 --> 01:20:59,610

Well, I'm not going to type that out over and over again.

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01:20:59,630 --> 01:21:07,680

I'm going to fire up my text expander program and program a little snippet for it and do a shortcut and it just pops it right in.

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01:21:08,490 --> 01:21:15,330

The advantage of doing things electronically, that's sort of a life hack, I guess you can also find in some places.

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01:21:15,810 --> 01:21:21,870

There's quite a few questions that I think are seeking life hacks so that related to,

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01:21:22,550 --> 01:21:27,320

you know, providing this verbal feedback that let students know exactly where they went wrong.

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01:21:27,330 --> 01:21:32,130

So I think what I hear you saying is that you have some kind of standardized responses,

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01:21:32,130 --> 01:21:37,650

that you're able to do a kind of customized copy and paste so that the feedback

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01:21:37,800 --> 01:21:43,980

is providing a lot of useful information about target areas for improvement.

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01:21:44,550 --> 01:21:48,720

Mm hmm. Yeah, I think we all do this when we grade.

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01:21:48,970 --> 01:21:57,090

We're grading student work and we tend to notice that things cluster together or those student issues tend to kind of crop up.

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01:21:57,180 --> 01:22:00,540

Not always. I mean, every student kind of makes mistakes in their own way,

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01:22:00,540 --> 01:22:09,800

but they there are often times when there's a category of mistake and you can globally describe it and then give some specific feedback.

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01:22:09,810 --> 01:22:15,690

Anything that is typed out more than once becomes a text snippet for me because I just refuse to type anything twice.

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01:22:16,020 --> 01:22:22,040

I'm just extremely lazy in that way. One of things that I think everybody ought to realize is I want to work as little as possible.

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01:22:22,050 --> 01:22:27,180

That's that's my whole goal in life. I have music to play, besides grading.

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01:22:27,660 --> 01:22:35,220

And so my my goal is to make my grading informative and growth oriented and useful, but also limited.

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01:22:35,880 --> 01:22:44,399

One thing that I would also really make sure that everybody hears this is when I say we attempts without penalty.

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01:22:44,400 --> 01:22:47,480

That doesn't mean we attempts without limits. Okay.

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01:22:47,910 --> 01:22:55,080

So, for example, it is totally okay to put reasonable boundaries around re attempts in your class.

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01:22:55,740 --> 01:22:57,870

You don't want to penalize students for re attempts,

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01:22:57,870 --> 01:23:04,350

but if you only want students to submit two resubmissions a week, total of anything, that's that's okay.

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01:23:04,650 --> 01:23:09,530

Or if you want to give an assessment that says you can resubmit this as often as you want,

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01:23:09,540 --> 01:23:16,710

only in seven days time or something like that, where it puts a limit, puts a boundary around student re attempts.

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01:23:17,100 --> 01:23:25,170

That is okay, as long as it's a reasonable boundary, you know, for that it might check points with a small learn small scale learning targets.

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01:23:25,590 --> 01:23:31,020

Those are on weekly quizzes. Okay. And also anything that's not a core target rotates off after three attempts.

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01:23:31,020 --> 01:23:34,980

So you've got three chances to get this right. By the way, you've got to wait till November to try it again.

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01:23:35,820 --> 01:23:40,410

For the problem sets, students are allowed to submit two problem sets a week.

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01:23:40,410 --> 01:23:44,910

That's two new ones or two re attempts or one new one and one re attempt.

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01:23:44,910 --> 01:23:48,690

And that's it. When it gets to the end of the semester, you don't get to do three.

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01:23:48,690 --> 01:23:54,360

It's two. So it keeps it on a steady drip and that makes it predictable.

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01:23:54,360 --> 01:23:59,880

I'm never going to have more than about 50, so I'm never going to have more than 100 of those things to grade in a week.

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01:23:59,880 --> 01:24:03,870

And that would be a really bad week if I had 100 to grade. But it would never be more than that.

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01:24:04,890 --> 01:24:08,339

It would have never been that. It's never been even close to that much.

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01:24:08,340 --> 01:24:13,319

So because students get it, I mean, students get it that there are limitations and they agree with those limitations.

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01:24:13,320 --> 01:24:14,550

I mean, it's only sensible.

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01:24:14,940 --> 01:24:24,540

And so they they tend to, my statement to them is like, just do it in consistent small steps throughout the semester.

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01:24:24,610 --> 01:24:28,690

If you try to stick it at the end of semester and do it all at once, it's not going to work.

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01:24:30,010 --> 01:24:33,790

My colleague is letting us know that we have about 3 minutes left and Robert's

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01:24:33,790 --> 01:24:38,019

been extremely generous in providing additional video responses to questions,

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01:24:38,020 --> 01:24:41,440

so we'll make sure he receives everything that we haven't covered yet.

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01:24:42,010 --> 01:24:45,940

Along the tips and techniques line of inquiry.

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01:24:46,090 --> 01:24:48,600

What about grading class participation?

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01:24:48,720 --> 01:24:56,810

You know, we want to find ways to incentivize students coming to class, having done the readings, we want them to contribute to the class discussion.

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01:24:57,370 --> 01:25:01,270

But how do we make that more than just us showing up for attendance grade?

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01:25:01,750 --> 01:25:06,860

And third of all, I do want to mention that I took several of these questions offline.

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01:25:06,890 --> 01:25:12,660

I have a video link to the resource page like 35 minutes long that's got some of these questions answered.

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01:25:12,670 --> 01:25:18,190

This is one of them. But I think it's worthwhile, too. I'll I'll answer it again and see if it agrees with the answer to the video.

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01:25:18,190 --> 01:25:21,970

How about that? So attendance. First of all, you might choose not to.

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01:25:21,970 --> 01:25:25,599

grade attendance. Okay. It's not a given that you must grade attendance.

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01:25:25,600 --> 01:25:29,590

And just again, just because you graded attendance doesn't mean that you guarantee good attendance.

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01:25:30,250 --> 01:25:34,870

I would say I'd say be really clear with yourself. What is it that you're trying to assess when you grade?

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01:25:35,140 --> 01:25:42,549

Attendance or participation is all just part of that clear standards Pillar Like what constitutes good participation?

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01:25:42,550 --> 01:25:45,010

Do you want people just to show up? Do you want people to -

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01:25:46,150 --> 01:25:50,230

What is it you're wanting people to do and what is it that you're trying to trying to assess here?

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01:25:50,890 --> 01:25:55,470

Some people would say that you shouldn't do participation or attendance because it's not equitable.

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01:25:55,480 --> 01:25:58,930

Like different people might have different standards,

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01:25:58,930 --> 01:26:04,450

cultural standards or life situations that mitigate against what we normally think of as participation or attendance.

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01:26:04,450 --> 01:26:08,080

So I don't know. You got to really be really clear about that with yourself and your students, first of all.

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01:26:08,290 --> 01:26:10,600

And you might decide, I don't think I'm going to do this anymore.

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01:26:12,070 --> 01:26:20,290

But if you do, you know, you want to make it so that it's got that students also know what it is they're supposed to be doing.

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01:26:20,290 --> 01:26:27,849

Okay. If you want to have a substantive, I'm going to mark you as having participated if you have a substantive comment in today's class discussion.

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01:26:27,850 --> 01:26:31,839

Well, okay. What is a substantive comment?

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01:26:31,840 --> 01:26:36,490

And what if I just can't get to it? I mean, how am I can I demonstrate my learning in some other way?

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01:26:36,880 --> 01:26:40,110

What you're trying to do there is promote substantive discussions.

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01:26:40,120 --> 01:26:47,439

So that's what you're trying to do. And again, ask yourself, does grading it actually promote it or does it make it sort of superficial?

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01:26:47,440 --> 01:26:56,200

Possibly? Sometimes it does. This is a situation, I think, too, where a little flavor of ungrading might actually go quite a ways.

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01:26:56,410 --> 01:27:02,560

Like, maybe you can just lay out what the standards are and you can say, ask students to grade themselves on this and say,

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01:27:02,560 --> 01:27:06,789

okay, at the end of the class, take a little Google Form survey on as an exit ticket.

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01:27:06,790 --> 01:27:11,439

And do you feel like you participated substantively today?

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01:27:11,440 --> 01:27:15,640

Did you meet our participation standards today? If so, tell me what you did.

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01:27:15,670 --> 01:27:19,480

If not, tell me why not and what you might need to be better next time.

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01:27:19,800 --> 01:27:23,619

Each place. We're kind of telling students what they did, sticking a mark on it.

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01:27:23,620 --> 01:27:27,490

Maybe that or not, that indicates their progress and inviting them to do better.

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01:27:28,420 --> 01:27:33,310

Thank you for those ideas. I think that helps us all be more intentional in our practices.

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01:27:33,580 --> 01:27:41,470

I just, as a teaser for next week's course, I think one is a panel conversation with more real world examples,

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01:27:41,470 --> 01:27:49,149

scenarios and experiences with what is challenging and even controversial about alternative grading.

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01:27:49,150 --> 01:27:54,610

And we will again follow up with the survey for feedback on Robert's talk.

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01:27:54,760 --> 01:27:57,490

We hope that you'll recommend it to your colleagues.

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01:27:57,730 --> 01:28:04,930

We have the recording available as well as the additional resources that Robert has shared with us,

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01:28:04,930 --> 01:28:07,940

will make those available on the Searle Center website.

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01:28:07,960 --> 01:28:12,760

So thank you so much for your generosity of time and these engaging ideas today.

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01:28:13,270 --> 01:28:14,920

Thank you so much for having me. It's been great.