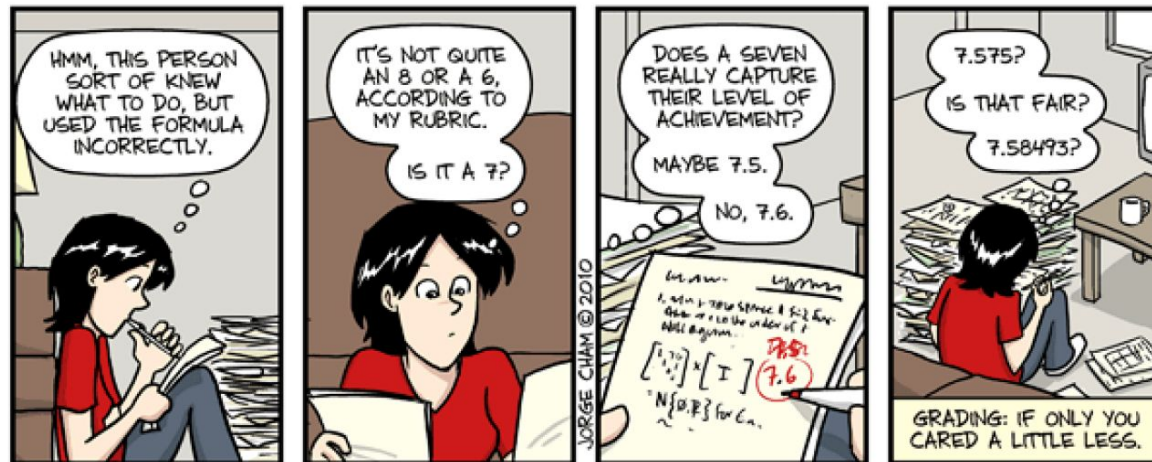


Alternative Grading & Assessment Practices as Universal Design for Learning

Piled Higher and Deeper by Jorge Cham

www.phdcomics.com



WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

title: "If only" - originally published 5/21/2010

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Agenda

1. Intros
2. Rationale
3. Definitions + examples
4. Case studies
5. Reflection + exercises
6. Resources

1. Introductions

in the chat . . .

what we should call you + pronouns

role at NU

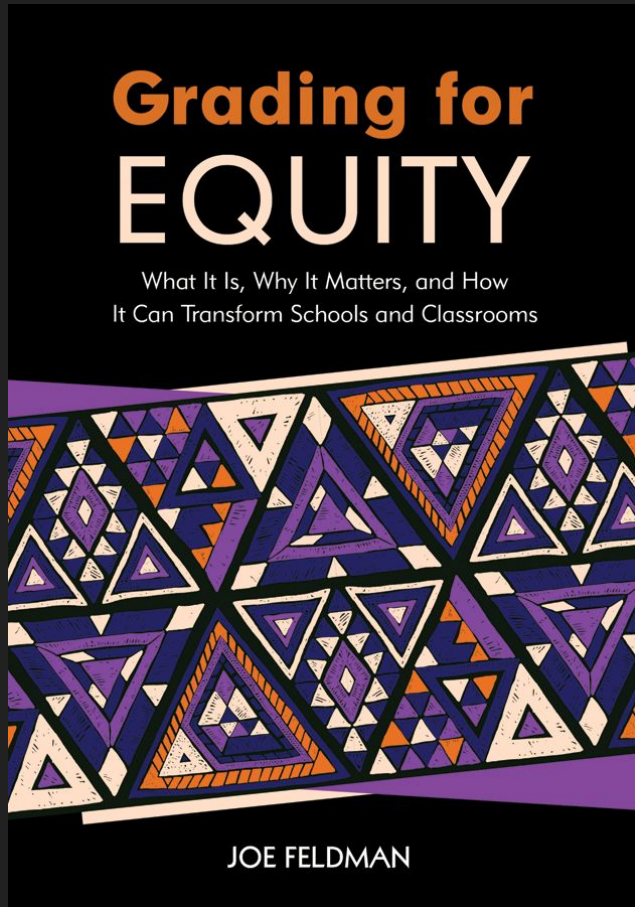
engagement with teaching

2 or 3 words to express how you
feel about grades and grading



2. Rationale

traditional grading systems
are inaccurate



- Identical academic performance can yield different grades
- variable academic (and behavioral) performance can yield identical grades
- omnibus grades hide individual performance
- group grades are inaccurate
- evaluation is subjective

Variable performance, identical grades

	Student A	Student B
Attendance and participation (25 points)	25	10
Homework (20 points)	18	15
Midterm (25 points)	21	25
Final (30 points)	17	30
TOTAL	80/100	80/100

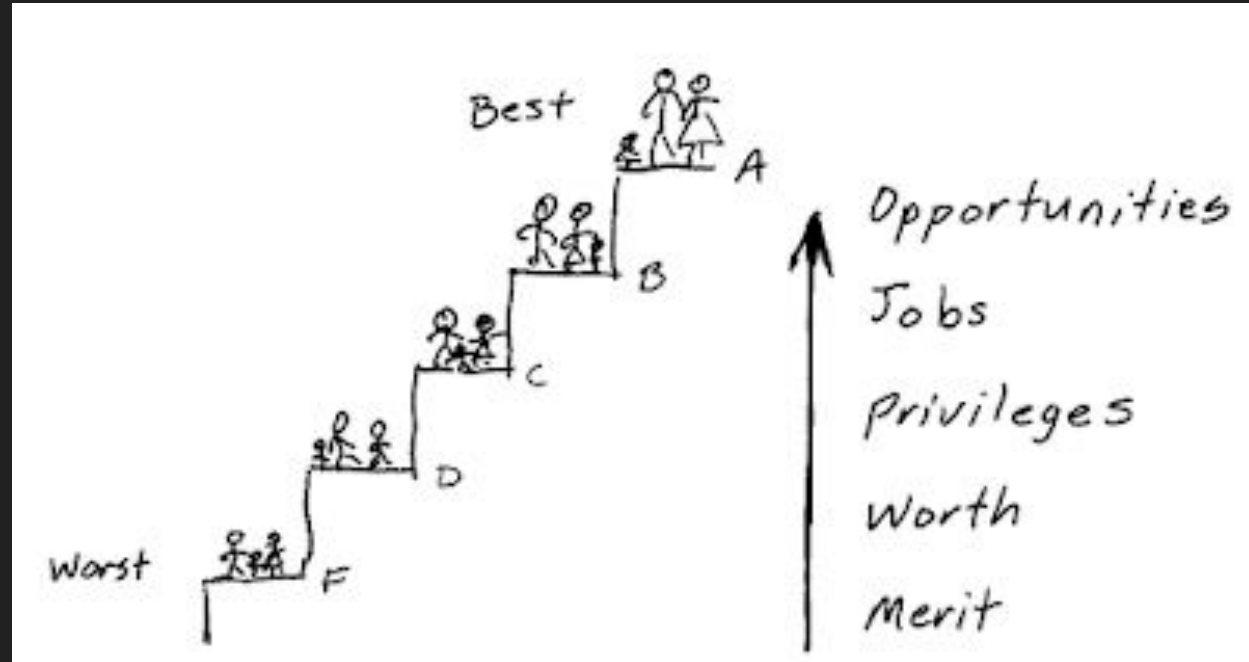
grades are bad for learning

bad for learning

- Grades decrease intrinsic motivation for learning
- Grades reduce quality in student thinking
- Grades are inconsistent
- Grades harm student/instructor relationship
- Grades create unhealthy competition between students
- Grades encourage cheating
- Grades stress students out

Blum, 2016, 2017; Brookhart et al., 2020; Inoue 2019; Kohn, 2011; Schinske & Tanner, 2014; Stommell 2020.

grades perpetuate structural inequities



structural inequities

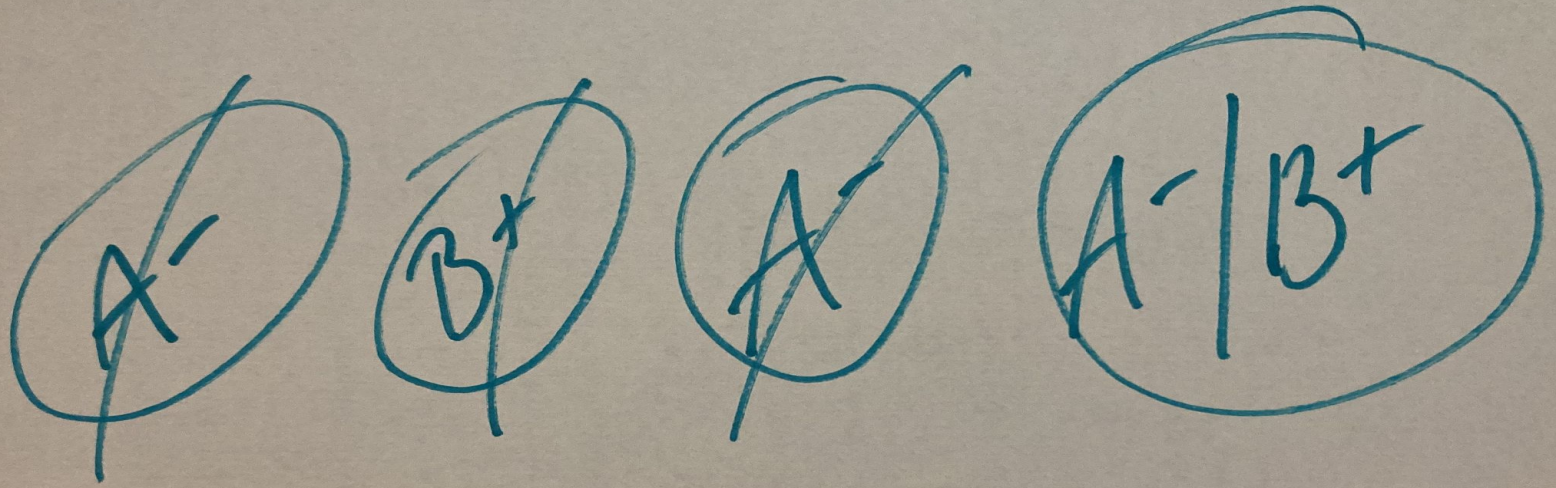
“[. . .] the ubiquity of whiteness in schools erroneously positions White Mainstream English-speaking students as academically prepared to achieve because their cultural ways of being, their language, their literacies, their histories, their values, and their knowledges are privileged in classrooms. From this assumption, linguistically marginalized students of color are falsely positioned as linguistically inadequate because their language practices do not reflect White Mainstream English”

(Baker-Bell 2020, p. 20)

structural inequities

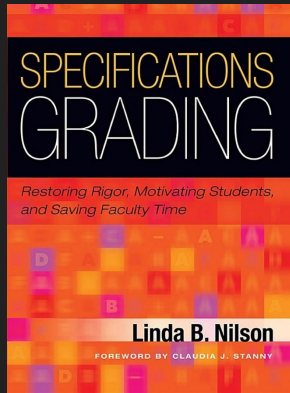
“design assessments that allow diverse students to demonstrate mastery in diverse ways”

National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) Standing Committee on Global Citizenship, statement on decolonizing the classroom (Seward, 2019)



3. Definitions + examples

specifications & competency grading



- no grading behaviors
- clear, detailed specs & models
- opportunities to revise, resubmit
- progress at their own pace
 - students can access more advanced material
- encourages growth mindset
- reduces implicit bias

ungrading

keep grades as far away from students for as long as possible

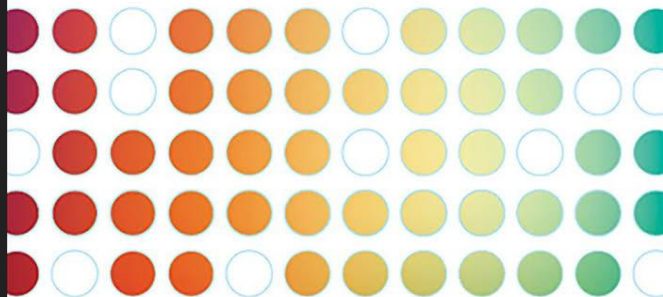
discuss grading and assessment with students

focus on qualitative feedback

focus on multiple kinds and sources of feedback (e.g. peer review, self-reflection, written feedback, individual conferences)

UNgrading

Why Rating Students
Undermines Learning
(and What to Do
Instead)



EDITED BY

Susan D. Blum

With a foreword by Alfie Kohn

Part I: Foundations and Models

1. How to Ungrade
Jesse Stommel
2. What Going Gradeless Taught Me about Doing the "Actual Work"
Aaron Blackwelder
3. Just One Change (Just Kidding): Ungrading and Its Necessary Accompaniments
Susan D. Blum
4. Shifting the Grading Mindset
Starr Sackstein
5. Grades Stifle Student Learning. Can We Learn to Teach without Grades?
Arthur Chiaravalli

Part II: Practices

6. Let's Talk about Grading
Laura Gibbs
7. Contract Grading and Peer Review
Christina Katopodis and Cathy N. Davidson
8. Critique-Driven Learning and Assessment
Christopher Riesbeck
9. A STEM Ungrading Case Study: A Reflection on First-Time Implementation in Organic Chemistry II
Clarissa Sorensen-Unruh
10. The Point-less Classroom: A Math Teacher's Ironic Choice in Not Calculating Grades
Gary Chu

Part III: Reflections

11. Grade Anarchy in the Philosophy Classroom
Marcus Schultz-Bergin
 12. Conference Musings and The G Word
Joy Kirr
 13. Wile E. Coyote, the Hero of Ungrading
John Warner
- Conclusion: Not Simple but Essential
Susan D. Blum

engagement & completion

focus on engagement in and completion of tasks (e.g. first draft, peer review, conference, final draft)

many ways to complete tasks (e.g. participation)

“grades” are complete/incomplete, credit/no credit

contracts

identify expectations/requirements for each potential grade

students acknowledge the contract and work toward the grade they want to achieve

indicate shared understandings of the assessment system

many are based on engagement/labor and completion

some combine engagement with accuracy- and standards-based assessment

independent learning plans

allow students to create
personalized learning goals in
collaboration with the instructor

help students track their learning
and growth over a longer period of
time

facilitate reflection on how their
goals for the course fit into their
larger educational, professional,
personal, and extracurricular goals

self-assessment & self-reflection

students evaluate their work in a course, making them (rather than the instructor) the experts of their learning

students reflect consciously and with intention on both the processes and products of their learning at various stages (i.e. first drafts, revisions, midterm, end of the course)

the process of self-reflection allows students to learn more deeply both about course concepts and about themselves as learners

Self-reflection can also improve equity in assessment

4. Case studies



ILP & self-assessment

Meaghan

asks students to “take stock” of where they are at the beginning, middle, and end of the course

allows students to create individualized learning goals within the overall learning goals of the course

empowers students to create a grading scale based on their goals and values

Specifications (with modifications)

Veronica

- **Constraints:** General chemistry lab courses have 150-450 students. TAs evaluate the assessments.
- Course components link to specific, transparent levels of mastery to earn each course grade
- Every student has the opportunity to make progress towards mastery of each specification individually
- Students are not compared to other students in grading

Post-lab elements

Element <i>How to measure your progress</i>	Assignment number *				My total...	matches letter...	Minimum requirement
	1/2	3/4	5/6	7/8			
Safety and Techniques ⓘ <i>Write E, G, or N for each</i>					E = G = N =		A = 3 E, 0 G, 1 N B = 2 E, 1 G, 1 N C = 1 E, 2 G, 1 N *See Grade Tracker FAQ on Canvas for full table
<i>Total E's, G's, and N's</i>							
Experimental Design ⓘ <i>Write E, G, or N for each</i>					E = G = N =		
<i>Total E's, G's, and N's</i>							
Presentation of Results ⓘ <i>Write E, G, or N for each</i>					E = G = N =		
<i>Total E's, G's, and N's</i>							
Data Analysis ⓘ <i>Write E, G, or N for each</i>					E = G = N =		
<i>Total E's, G's, and N's</i>							
Beyond the Course ⓘ <i>Write E, G, or N for each</i>					E = G = N =		
<i>Total E's, G's, and N's</i>							
Writing Focus - Content ⓘ <i>Write E, G, or N for each</i>					E = G = N =		
<i>Total E's, G's, and N's</i>							
Writing Focus - Style ⓘ <i>Write E, G, or N for each</i>					E = G = N =		
<i>Total E's, G's, and N's</i>							
Timeliness ⓘ/❌ <i>✓ if submitted by agreed-upon deadline, X if not</i>							A = 4 B = 3 C = 2
<i>Total # ✓</i>							

Grade Tracker

Students track their progress and build a “report card” for the skills they are working on

5. Reflection + exercises



1. What are you already doing toward the effort of equitable grading and assessment?
2. What is one change you might implement in the coming academic year to make your grading and assessment systems more inclusive?

6. Resources



Parking lot

[https://padlet.com/SearleCenter/
udlp_parkinglot_2023winter](https://padlet.com/SearleCenter/udlp_parkinglot_2023winter)

Identify what you've learned

Ask questions

Provide feedback on sessions

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