August 2021



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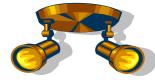
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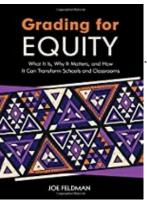
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Assessment Times

IN THE SPOTLIGHT~ Culturally Responsive Assessment

C. Jenise Williamson, MFA, Associate Professor Department of Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies

Feldman, J. (2019). Grading for equity: What it is, why it matters, and how it can transform schools and classrooms. Corwin, a SAGE Publishing Company.



When doing research to better understand culturally responsive assessment (CRA), one can find quite a few books written about practices in secondary schools. One example is the book *Grading for Equity* by Joe Feldman, which has many suggestions that are applicable to higher education. The reason is that both secondary and post-secondary education assessment practices are traditional. For instance, instructors use the same grading scale of zero to 100 and grade many of the same things such as attendance, class participation, and homework. While educators hope that student learning is continuous once students reach college, perhaps it is time to rethink how to handle adult learning and assessment practices that accommodate students' cultural backgrounds.

As one departure from traditional grading practices, Feldman believes in not grading student behavior, such as late or missing assignments, lateness to or absences from class, homework, class participation, and extra credit. He gives analogies to make his assertions reasonable. For example, true CRA, Feldman says, does not rely on the instructor's subjective understanding of how the student arrived at the assignment, in the same way the Department of Transportation does not grade the behavior of the student driver leading up to the test, but scores only the answers to the test and the test drive itself.

Feldman argues that "traditional grading hides information, invites biases, and provides misleading information" as well as "demotivates and disempowers" the student. Of course, college professors want students to behave like scholars, but Feldman suggests that these soft skills be taught, are required for learning, and are tied to academic success without putting them in the gradebook.

Throughout this thoughtful yet unapologetic book, Feldman discusses what he believes to be the three pillars of assessment: accuracy, bias-resistance, and motivation, each with a "driving principle" which undergirds his ideas. Additionally, he gives many suggestions to follow in order to create a culturally respectful learning experience and student assessment. Most of the book describes assessment practices that are "mathematically accurate…that value knowledge…and support hope and a growth mindset." It is about growing knowledge rather than controlling the student.

Grading for Equity is both an argument and a how-to-guide on equitable teaching and learning practices that honor students and their instructors by giving strategies to transform the path to greater academic success.



On The Horizon

BSU MSCHE Self-Study

Summer/Fall 2021

Aug. 19th: Link to draft Self Study document provided via Community Announcement

Aug. 26th: 8:30 am – 12 pm Virtual briefing and review of the Self-Study for all faculty and staff to provide feedback

SAVE the DATES

Nov. 7th—10th: Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Evaluation Team Virtual Visit

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\bigstar	"Invest in the human	☆
\bigstar	soul. Who knows, it	\bigstar
	might be a diamond in	☆
\bigstar	the rough."	☆
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Lessons from the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE) 11th Annual Conference

Sharon M. Wilks, Ph.D., RN, Asst. Professor, Department of Nursing

The virtual Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE) 11th Annual Conference convened June 7-11, 2021. The conference was an informationpacked, brain-storming event. Of the many relevant topics that were presented, two of those sessions will be the focus of this article. The first session focused on Blackboard assessment and accreditation. The second session focused on the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on student assessment.

The session entitled, *Blackboard Assessment and Accreditation Solutions: Providing Efficiencies, Robust Analysis, and Powerful Insights to Your Assessment Practices,* presented a step-by-step guide on using the features in Blackboard to assess student performance. One would ask, how does the assessment process begin? The process is outlined in four steps: Step 1 creates an academic assessment plan that answers the following questions: What should be assessed? Where should assessment occur? How should the assessment occur? Recommendations were to begin with the student learning outcomes (SLOs), mapped to class activities, and measured with specific tools. Step 2 moves the implementation of the assessment plan into Blackboard, where the student learning outcomes ("what to assess") are uploaded. Step 3 represents the student's work. Step 4 comprises the generation of reports by individuals among the academic chain of command, such as course instructors, assessment and program coordinators, department chairs, and institutional research. One could ask, how do instructors begin to assess students in a user-friendly manner? Using the aforementioned step-by-step process can provide a helpful guide for instructors as they develop a course assessment process.

The second session entitled, *How Learning Science Influences Assessment of Learning and Development*, focused on traditional methods of assessment, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The speaker opened the session relaying that optimal neural development occurs during the ages of 16-20 years old. She further referenced the limbic system within the brain, which is responsible for cognitive and emotional function, including memory and stress response. For the 16 to 20 year-old, the limbic system may have been over-exercised by the effects of the pandemic, which has affected the development in individuals within that age group (Ludvik, 2021). Furthermore, because of the pandemic, which the speaker categorized as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) for a 16 to 20 year-old, the connectivity and brain development of these students may have shifted. As a result, the speaker suggested, when assessing students within that age range, faculty may need to change their method of assessing those students. Faculty were advised to focus on inter-personal competencies, on self-reporting reflection, as well as on reviewing the learning analytics within the learning management system.

Keeping in mind the effect of the pandemic on students' emotional and stress response, the shift in assessment methods and focus on self-reporting reflection would emerge with faculty posing questions to students, such as "*what did it feel like when that wasn't working for you?*" This session offered a worthwhile perspective on the need for faculty to consider how to more fairly and effectively assess students during, and possibly after, the pandemic. There is no guarantee that the current teaching and learning environment will ever return to a pre-pandemic one. However, considerations as presented in this conference session could offer an important area of focus when evaluating and assessing students. Finding ways to improve how instructors effectively assess students is an ongoing endeavor. The synopses presented here are an effort to inform assessment practices that can positively affect student performance.

Ludvik, M. (2021). How learning science influences assessment of learning and development. *Live Concurrent Session*. Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education 11th Annual Conference.