



Assessment Times

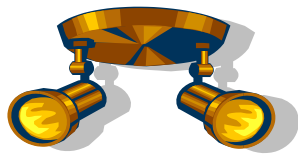
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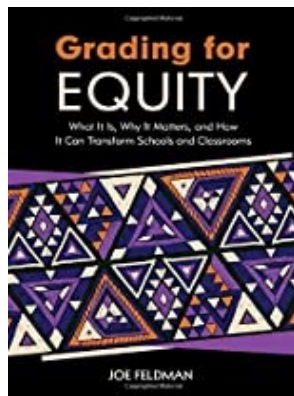
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IN THE SPOTLIGHT ~ Culturally Responsive Assessment

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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 in order to move from century-old traditions to 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.

