



METRO COLLEGE
SUCCESS PROGRAM

Welcome to “Contract Grading as an Anti-Racist Practice”

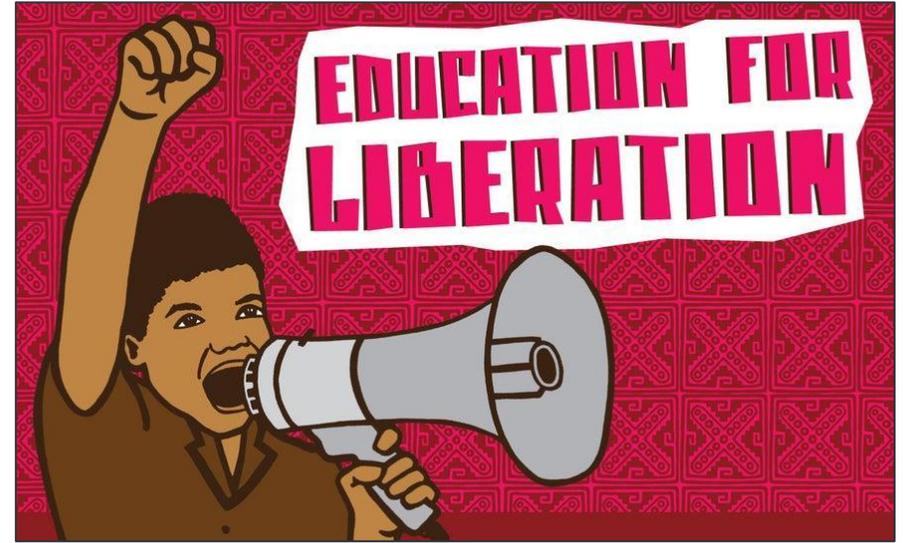
an in-service workshop for Cañada College

Tuesday, August 13, 2024

Tina Bartolome, Savi Malik, Virginia Schwarz
& w/ important contributions from Olive Mitra

Workshop Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
- What's so racist about grading?
- What is SFSU's Metro Program?
- Break Time :)
- So you wanna pilot an alternative to grading?
- How about hands on practice?
- Let's converse!



*Thank you for
being here*



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the land, labor and life of indigenous people past, present and future. Cañada College sits on the traditional land of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples, and we pay respects to past elders and honor the present community. As all of our liberation is tied together, we also acknowledge that this country was built up from labor of enslaved Africans. We pay respect to the Black and indigenous life, knowledge and skills stolen through violence and white supremacy.

We understand that education work is one of many ways to visibilize these truths and act in service of racial and social justice every day for the present and future generations to come.

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Welcome & Introductions

culture of access, hellos, framing...

Culture of Access

Health & Wellbeing First

- Come/go as needed for food, drink, care taking, breaks, phone calls, or anything else
- Email vschwarz@sfsu.edu at anytime to express access needs, suggestions for discussion, questions, concerns, or anything else in real time. Online chat.
- Look out for each other.

Participation

- Moments of reflection, writing, small group discussion
- Lots of expertise in the room!!
- Access this presentation and links now and later: <http://tinyurl.com/canadacollegegrading>
- Session Evaluation: <https://forms.gle/rjTbhBJvCzcsfSy96>

Hi, There!



Tina Bartolome

she/her

daughter of working class
immigrants

movement educator

#FreireTaughtMe



Savita Malik

she/her

woman of color

mother of 2 mixed-race children

educator for over 25 years

education for liberation



**Virginia "Gin"
Schwarz**

she/her

first-gen college student

#endCCstigma

#partypedagogy

#laborofundoing



& Olive Mitra

he/him

Indian Immigrant

20 years in public education

always take risks!!

Reflection

Assessment is...

- 1) A necessary evil imposed by institutions and our economic system.
- 2) Meh. Kind of a drag but whatever.
- 3) Super fun!! I love it.
- 4) An integral part of teaching and learning that reflects my authentic values.



#startassessmentwithassessment

Quiz adapted from Jessica Johnson, Portland Community College

The learning goal for this workshop is not necessarily to develop fluency in a classroom assessment tool (labor-based contract grading). Rather, the goal is to gain insight into how one equity and retention program piloted a program-wide initiative to push back on institutional grading structures.

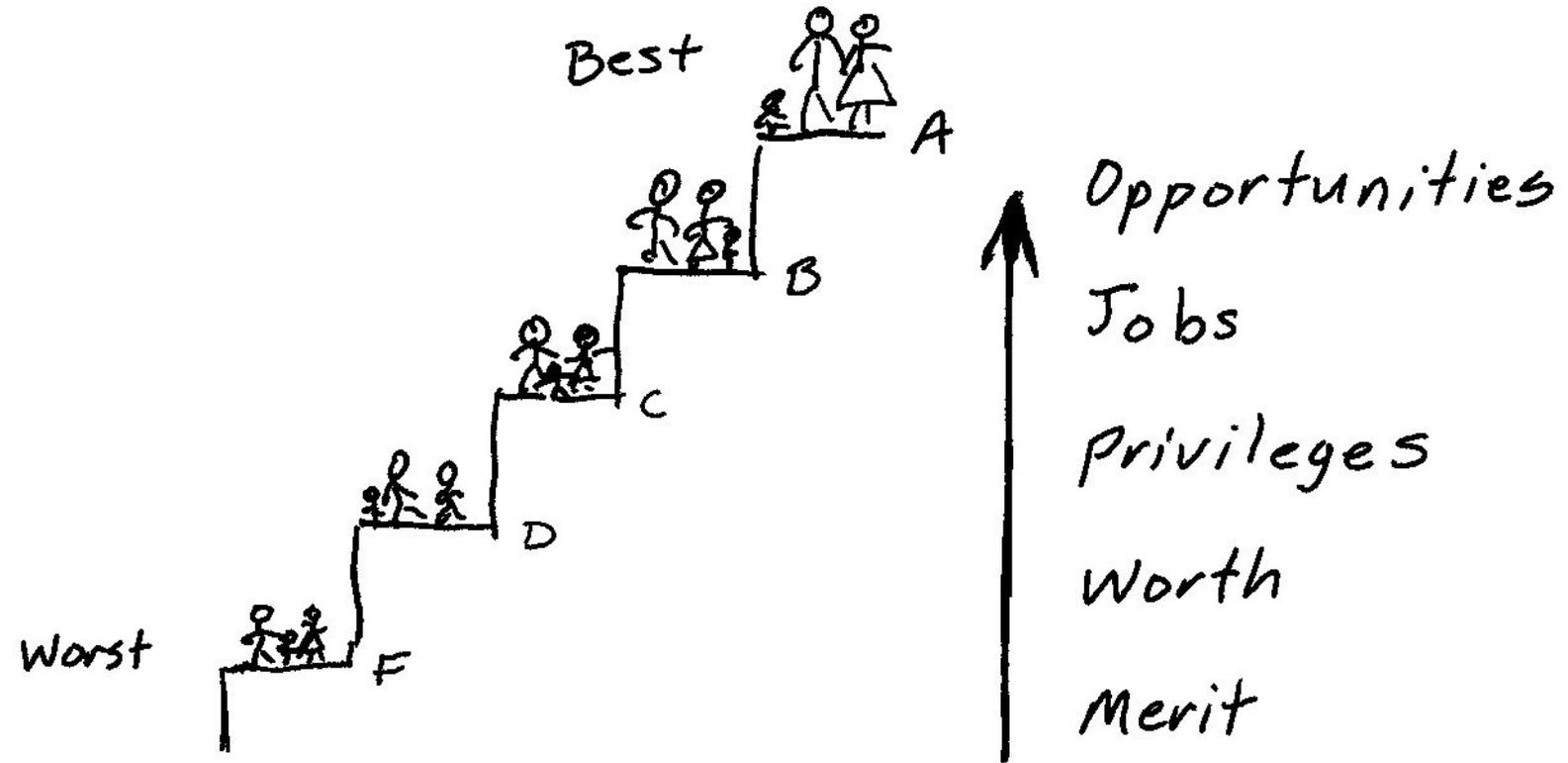


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What's so racist about grading?

history and context; naming the need for change

History of Grading in Higher Education



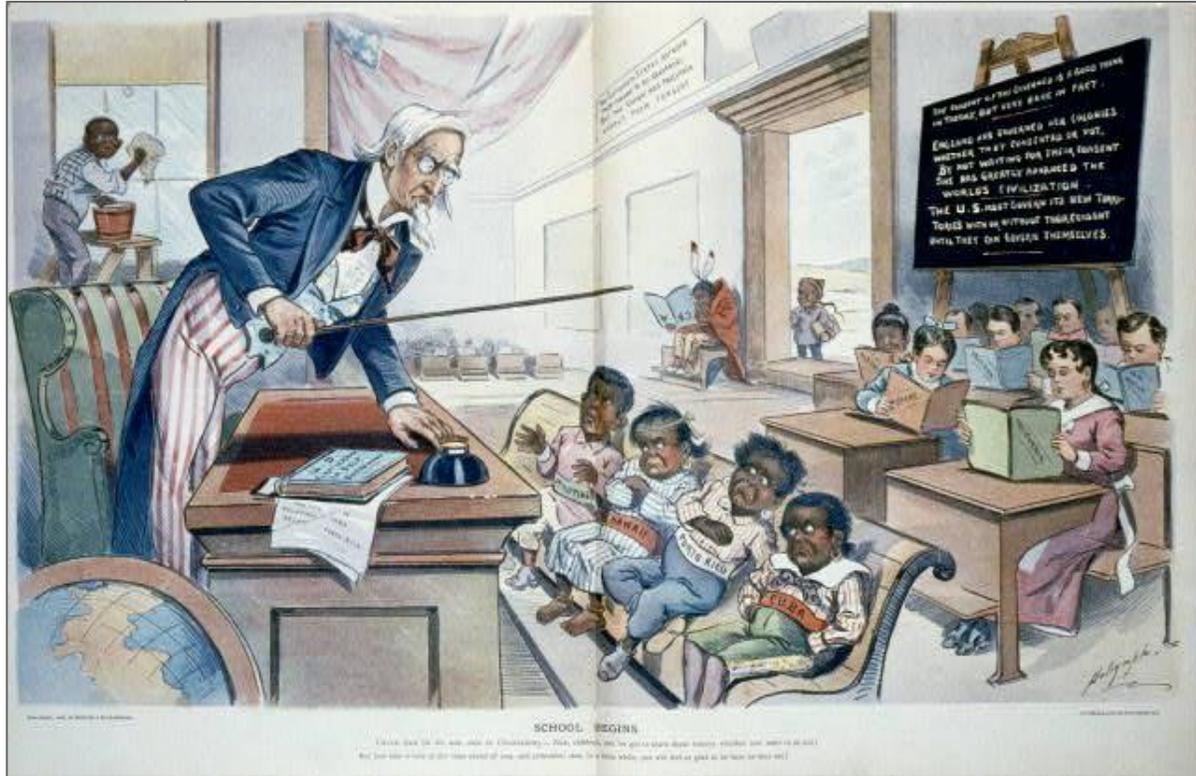
Grading remains a central feature of nearly every student's school experience. As such, it can be easy to perceive grades as both fixed and inevitable-- without origin or evolution. And the effect of this is that despite their limitations, grades are often accepted quite uncritically by all parties involved. (Schneider & Hutt, 2013)

For over 200 years at Harvard, the first college in the United States, grading students intended to rank and categorize groups of students on social worth or social standing of their families. (A. Inoue, 2021)

The first known instance of grading in the ways we do it today may have been in 1785, a four category scale similar to the A-F scale most schools use now created by Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale and a slave owner. The Yale scale was based on Latin terms:

- Optimi (best)
- Second Optimi (second best)
- Inferiores (lower)
- Pejores (the lowest)

(A. Inoue, 2021) (D. Yaffe-Bellany, 2016)



“School Begins” by Dalrymple, 1899

As nation-building continued through industrialization, state-sponsored genocide, dispossession, exploitation, imperialist expansion, etc. the U.S. needed a larger managerial class, a middle class, and more farmers and technicians. (A. Inoue, 2021)

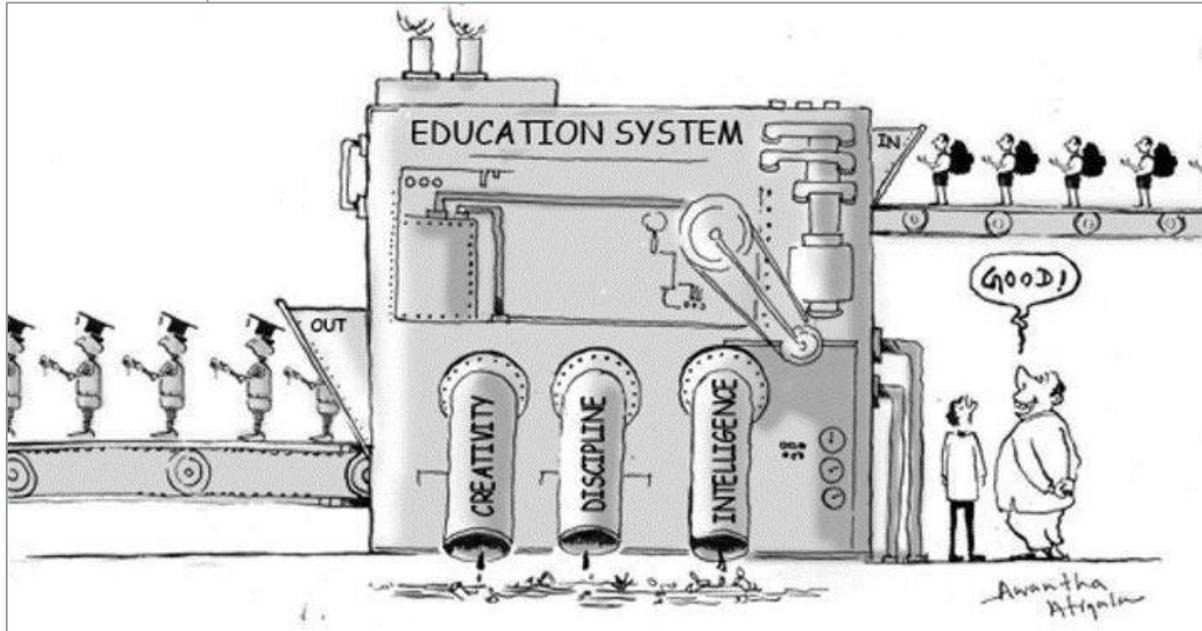
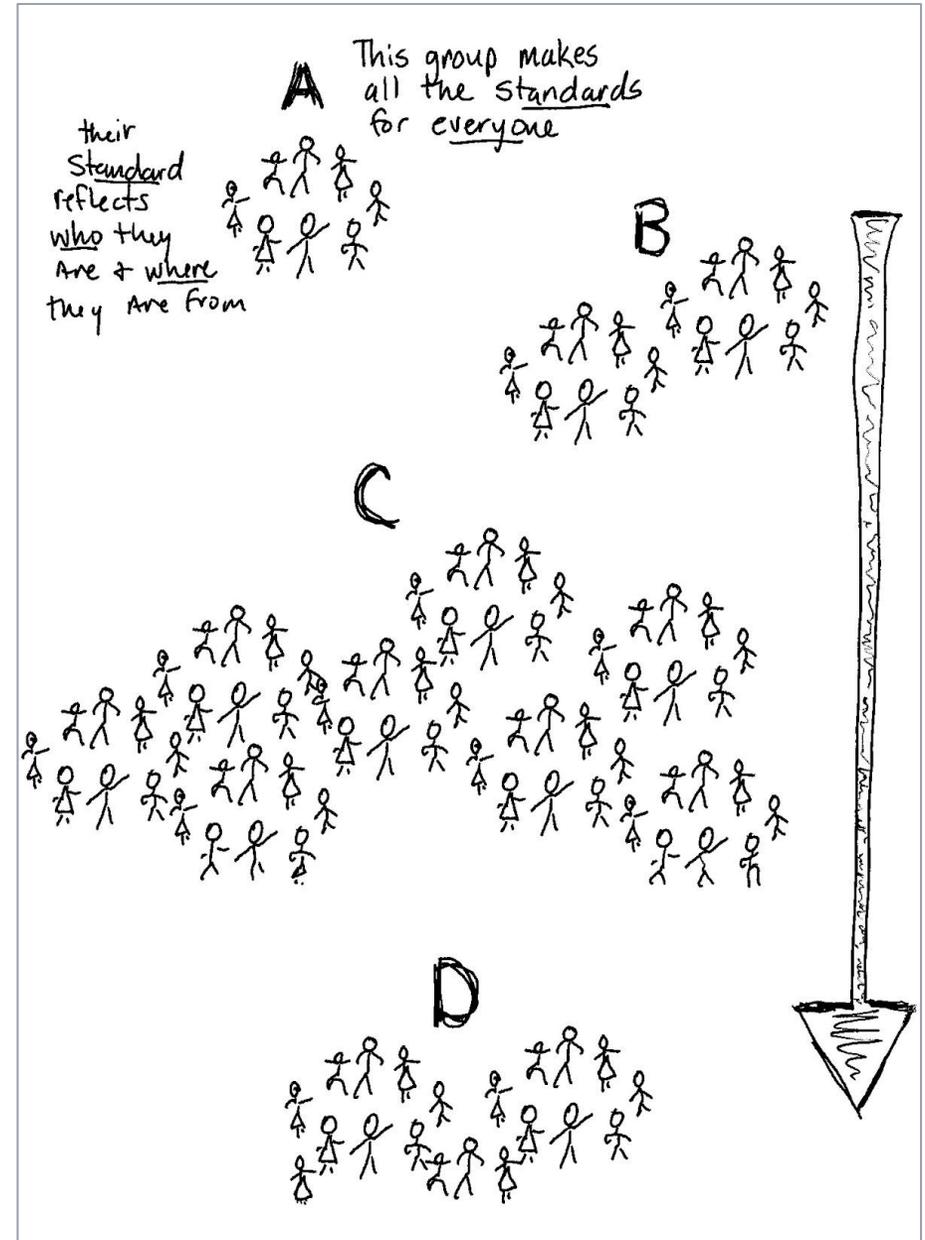


Image by Awantha Artigala

Our schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw products (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life. For these factories to produce such children, they required the elimination of waste and the continuous measurement of production.” (E. Cubberley, 1916)

At this moment in U.S. history...merit was in many ways synonymous with one's perceived race, language practices, and the values and characteristics that allegedly went along with those dimensions of people.

Grading was a way to manage and rank the growing diversity of students in ways that matched the elitist and racist biases of those doing the ranking and engineering of society. (A. Inoue, 2021)



“If we cannot identify racial inequity, then we will not be able to identify racist policies. If we cannot identify racist policies, then we cannot challenge racist policies. If we cannot challenge racist policies, then racist power’s final solution will be achieved: a world of inequity none of us can see, let alone resist.” — (I.X. Kendi, 2019)

“...it is crucial that critical thinkers who want to change our teaching practices talk to one another, collaborate in a discussion that crosses boundaries and creates a space for intervention.” (b. hooks, 1994)

Reflection

Turn to a person next to you and reflect on any/ all of these questions:

1. How do you think this history has shown up in your own education?
2. How did your ideas about grading form?
3. What unlearning do you feel you might need to do?





Break Time!
(2:00 pm)

3

What's SFSU's Metro Program?

where we are coming from in this work...



METRO COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAM

Our mission is to increase equity and excellence in college completion through engaging, supportive, rigorous, and socially responsive education.



Metro Serves Low-Income, Underrepresented, First-Gen Students

91% of Metro students are either low-income, first-generation college-going, and/or underrepresented

32% of SF State's first-year students are in Metro

46% of SF State's first-year URM students are in Metro



Metro's Equity Approach

- Curriculum challenges and supports
- Learning community for both students and faculty
- Metro students change systems



Programmatic Faculty Support



- Teaching Squares (weekly meetings in a 4-5 person faculty cohort)
- Events like trainings, 1-1 meetings, and “happy hours”
- Access to a variety of labor based grading contracts
- Document templates for customization
- One-on-one faculty support for integrating labor-based grading practices into class culture and supporting students as a whole class and individually

Metro's Contract Grading Pilot

Take it away, Olive!

[Contract Grading Through Song](#)
[\[click here\]](#)

<https://youtu.be/BGscO4vAYx8>
(or copy and paste)



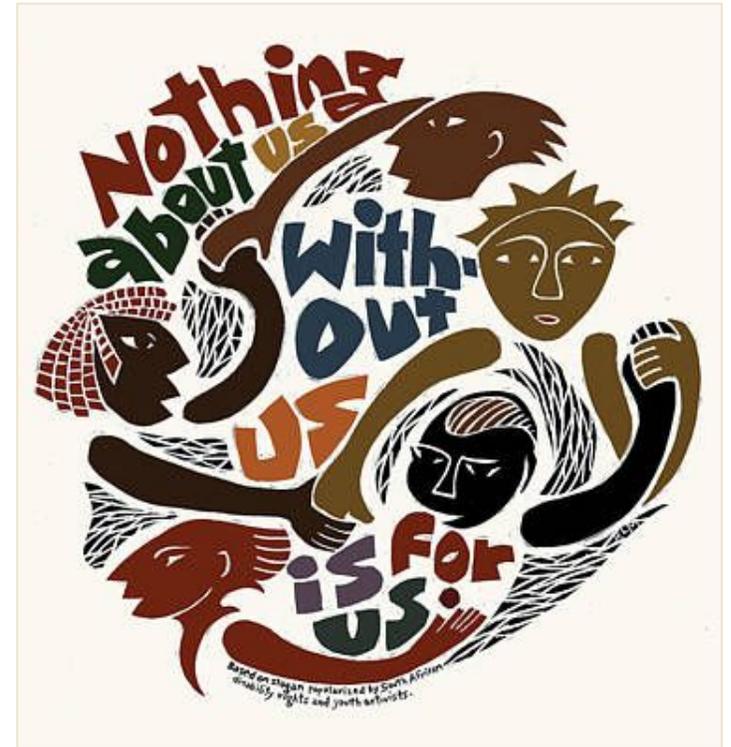
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So you wanna pilot an alternative to grading?

(one example from SFSU's Metro Program)

Labor as Basis For Assessment

- Student labor is the time students spend reading, writing, analyzing and wrestling with course content.
- Encouragement of effort and metacognition to develop a growth mindset. Learning > perfection.
- Basing assessment on labor (assignment completion + process steps) allows for grading based on agreed upon policies and procedures.
- There is so, so much variation in labor and contract grading itself as a practice (it's really a collection of practices)



A working definition...

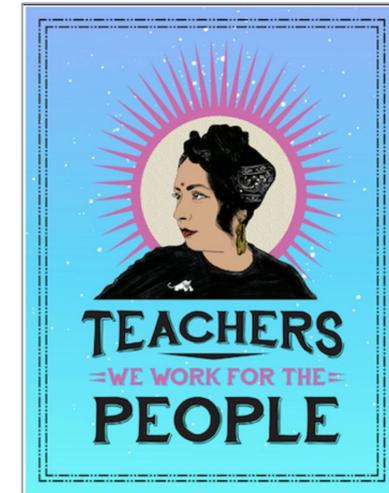


- Students complete x assignments/ learning tasks to earn y grade, rather than partial points for each project
- Process steps and behaviors may be incorporated
- Minimal grading increments (pass, no pass)
- Negotiation & choice aspects possible
- Hybrids possible ("quality," some graded/ some not)
- Usually no "grading" of individual projects.
- Lots and lots of feedback instead (formative vs summative)
- Yes, there's an "end grade" for the transcript

Barriers & Challenges

#1 Metro faculty and coordinators experienced initial trepidation around how much this model would impact the following:

- Time spent grading/ deadlines
- Existing classroom management and motivation practices
- Students need guidance to develop good self management procedures

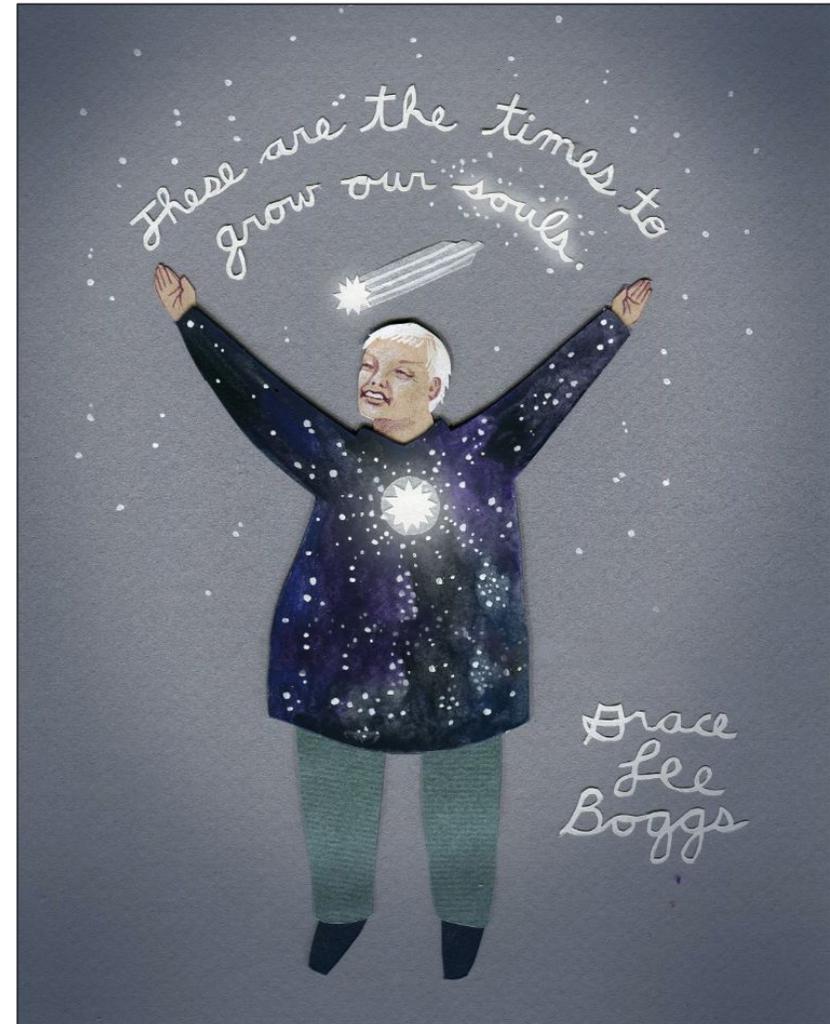


#2 There were no *program* level models of incorporating this learning ecology, especially across subjects and courses

Barriers & Challenges (continued)

#3 Unlearning Old Modalities

- Faculty and students have deeply rooted institutional relationships to racist grading practices.
- Breaking with what feels familiar is challenging.
- Education is a process. Transitioning to a different perspective of value in learning is also a process for faculty and students.

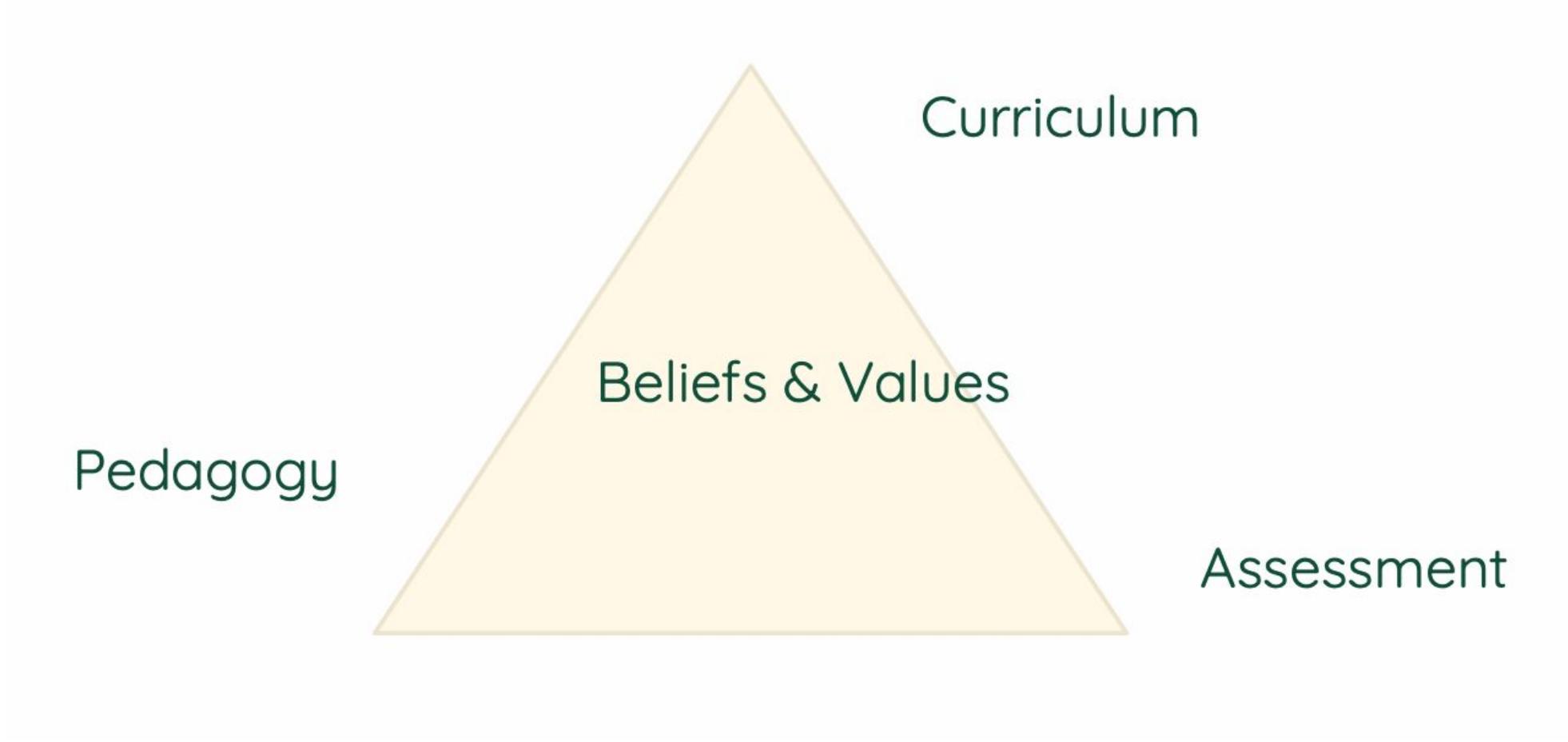


Assessment Narratives

“Assessment narratives are the stories we tell ourselves about grading and grades and how our own educational histories shape our beliefs and values to define our pedagogical choices (i.e., I teach the way I was taught). Assessment narratives are the ways in which we explore (or don’t explore) grading as a value-laden practice” (Schwarz, 2020).



Assessment as part of the larger picture...



Labor Based Grading as an Anti Racist Practice



- Challenges normative de/valuing systems in education
- Leads to thoughtfully and publicly articulated contracts, completion instructions, well scaffolded assignments, and tools for labor tracking/ process reflections
- Encourages a supportive, collaborative culture of negotiation and critical thinking/ reflection
- Allows for feedback on students' ideas without being tied to project grades (summative vs. formative assessment)
- Allows learning and assessment to become more student-serving and student- centered

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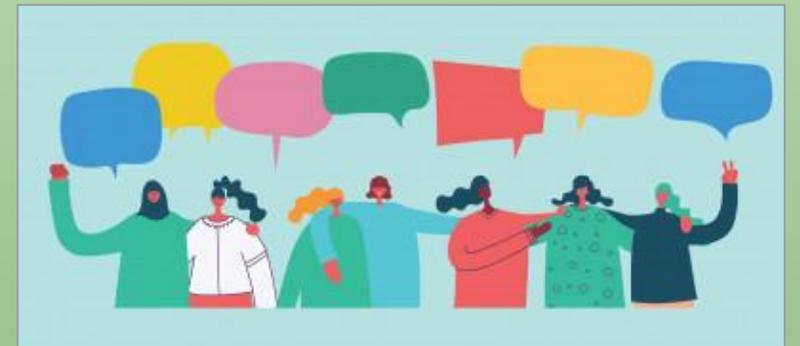
How about some hands on practice?

looking more closely at that one example...

Reflection

Take a few moments to skim [this contract example](#). Please note any/ all of the following:

1. Personal reactions while reading (like excitement, confusion, curiosity)
2. What is bringing up feelings of resistance for you as you read?
3. What is something you like?
4. Questions you have?



Discussion

(online) Padlet:

<https://padlet.com/savimalik/grading-contract-dfanngozyozkkfqie>

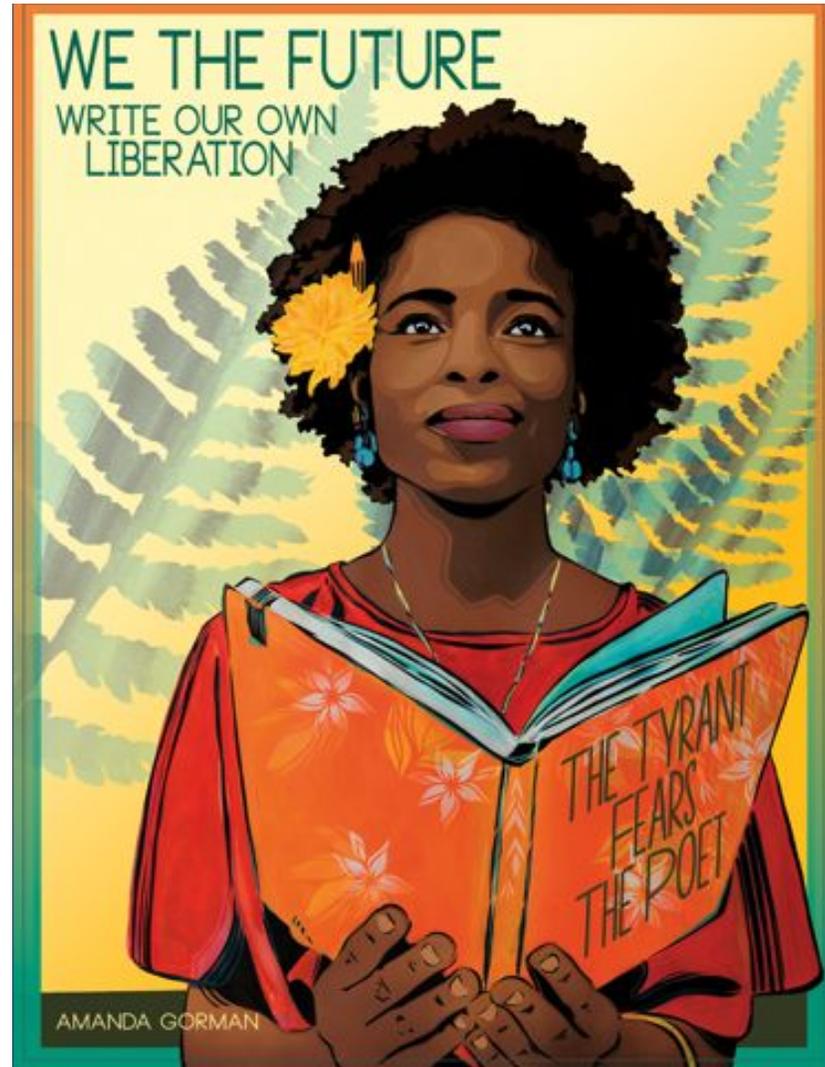
(in person) Whiteboard:

we got pens!!!



Building from today...

- What are you excited to rethink/ try out/ do differently in relation to grading this semester?
- What kind of support might you need?
- What is one take away you'll remember from today?



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End Materials

evaluation, contact info, & references

Workshop Evaluation

Please evaluate this session using the Google Form:

You may find this session by [clicking here](#) or using the purple QR code.

Thank you for your feedback. We really appreciate it!!

Feel free to geek out with us about grading anytime, and enjoy the rest of your flex day :)

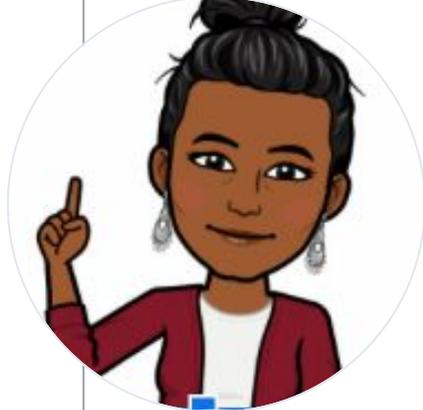


Thank you!!!

Goodie bag of resources [\[click here\]](#)



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st



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For more sweeeeet slides and images...

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template by [SlidesCarnival](#)
- Photographs by [Unsplash](#)

Thank you!!!

Happy Fall
2024 :)

