

CETL

CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Ungrading by Susan Blum Book Club Discussion Synopsis

Part One: Foundations and Models

- How can we ungrade and still assess students' skills especially in fields with accrediting bodies and national exams for certification/licensure?
- Feedback to students is often ignored or unread - interesting to think about taking away the grade and only giving feedback to see if it is read
- How do we "ungrade" and still give a grade at the end of term because the system requires it?
- Grading is systemic and institutional so if we want to change the system, we have a lot to overcome with both systems and students who are used to the current system.
- Students may be nervous about changing expectations or assessment systems - how do we support them if and/or as we change? So, does ungrading alleviate anxiety or cause more anxiety because of the unknown?

- Some expressed disappointment (and hope that it's coming in the book) that the book isn't addressing what you do when students don't meet goals.
- Can we use some of these theories and apply them to parts of our class or practicum assessment and disregard others? It doesn't have to be all or nothing.
- Ungrading does not mean no assessment! Assessment can happen with lots of feedback and no "letter grade".
- Our experiences as students (currently or in the past) influence our feelings about some of this. We behave differently as students than as teachers.
- Trusting students and trusting the process may be the hardest part of switching our mindsets to "ungrading" types of assessment.
- Ungrading does not mean everyone passes. Students are still expected to participate and complete work and are assessed by the instructor, themselves, and/or each other.