

Grades unfair reflection of knowledge

Today marks the end of the fourth week of the semester; 11 to go. By the time you read this column, I will be sweating through my fourth hour exam of the week. And with those hour exams come dreaded letters called grades, which accumulate to form grade reports.

There are several things that I despise about the grading process here. The first is the fact that they send the report cards to my parents instead of me. That's a cheap shot. I then end up racing the mailman hundreds of miles home to the mailbox before Mom or Dad get the first



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peek. I am very disappointed in UNL for not trusting in me to truthfully report my grades to my parents. I really would tell them.

The other procedure that bothers me is the grade point itself. I feel so cheap when they identify me as a 3.143. That's just not my idea of a complimentary adjective.

So what am I getting at? The present grading system is worthless. It puts unnecessary stress on the student. It seems that learning is no longer the primary reason for taking a class; earning a high grade is. It just doesn't make sense to worry and develop an A- or B-complex in some course like nutrition when that grade doesn't reflect your knowledge.

Grades haven't always been worthless. Remember the good old days in kindergarten? Miss Wood (kindergarten teachers are always single and always have one-syllable last names) would write, "Brian is doing very well, colors beautifully, and mixes well with the other children!!!" Short, sweet, and positive comments with three exclamation points and two smile faces. There was no D-plus for coloring outside the lines, no F's for failing to sleep during naps and no big outcry over spilled milk. That's the way grades are supposed to be reported.

To solve some of these problems, I've developed a new grade report for college students. It consists of two parts: a report to the student and a separate report to the parents. No letter grades or numbers are used in either report. The report to the student calls it like it is, without messing around. It is sent straight to the student and is either a Pass or a No Pass. What makes it unique is that it allows the instructor to check off one of 15 comments that most appropriately explains the grade. For example, my grade report for last semester would have the following comments:

-You were lucky. No one guesses that many answers right.

-Congratulations! Your sweet talking and groveling worked.

-The only reason you passed this course was so that you could graduate and leave us alone. Now go graduate and leave us alone.

The report to the parents is sent out much later. Like the other report, it has just Pass or No Pass options. But here the student gets to fill out the comments column. Most students have to come up with reasons (not excuses; there is a difference) for their parents anyway, so putting comments on the grade reports saves everyone time and hassles. Some of these comments are:

-All of the brains were in my section - they destroyed the curve.

-I didn't need the class to graduate anyway.

-Most of the grade was from a group project - and the people in my group were the dumbest...

-Grades really don't matter.

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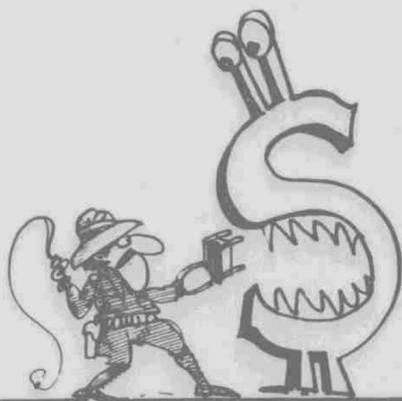
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