Foothill College Math Department Book Club (FHMDBC)
Meeting 6 Preparation: June 2022

Quick reminders for our book club

1. This year, winter - spring 2022, we read:
   Grading for Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms
   by Joe Feldman (16 chapters for a total of 260 pages)

2. Previous documents for our 2022 FH Math Faculty Book Club:
   - FHMDFBC WS2022 Homepage
   - FHMDFBCWS2022 Doodle Poll to find meeting schedule (Google Doc)
   - 12/30/2021 Winter 2022 Planning Meeting with Nicole Gray (Google Doc)
   - 11/29/2021 Winter 2022 Planning Meeting with Ram and Carolyn (Google Doc)
   - FH Math Dept Book Club Interest form (Google Doc)
   - FH Math Dept Book Club Invitation (.pdf on Google Drive)
   - FHMDBC_WS2022_Meeting_1_Preparation (Google Doc)
   - FHMDBC_WS2022_Meeting_2_Preparation (Google Doc)
   - FHMDBC_WS2022_Meeting_3_Preparation (Google Doc)
   - FHMDBC_WS2022_Meeting_4_Preparation (Google Doc)
   - FHMDBC_WS2022_Meeting_5_Preparations (Google Doc)

Updates and news

1. I need to confirm a few things with Carolyn, and I'll send out information next week about how to get credit for participation.

Individual Preparation

1. Reading: Pilar 3 Motivation & Building Soft Skills (Chapter 11 - 14)
2. Writing prompts(draft):
   a. Question 2 from "Questions to Consider" page 182
   b. Question 1 from "Questions to Consider" page 239
   c. Each pair pick a question to explore

Pairs Preparation

1. Pick a 3rd writing prompt to consider
2. Meet to discuss what you have written

Good quotes - as you read if you find a quote that resonates with you feel free to include it here. You can also add quotes from our discussion.

- Chapter 11 “For successful students, the extrinsic motivation of grades yields attitudes and behaviors that we don’t want in our students…”
- Chapter 11 “Low grades often cause students to withdraw from learning.”
- Chapter 11

  > “Some of our strategies are about carrots and sticks (punishments and rewards), some are interpersonal (persuasion, shame, encouragement), and some are pedagogical and instructional (offering more choices, using hands-on activities, choosing relevant curriculum).”
- Chapter 13 “we have to make sure that we account for students for whom there actually isn’t as strong a relationship between specific soft skills and their performance.”
- Chapter 18, Page 209 “We defend our grading practices that are inflexible or unforgiving as being in our students’ best interests–that if we give students only one chance to take a test, subtract points for disruptive behavior or lack of preparation, or reduce a score on an assignment when students submit it late, it mirrors and prepares them for the real world.

Continuing discussion ideas.

- Math 1ABC and Math 48ABC - cohort model over a year? Standards based?
- Follow-up with students who leave classes. What can we learn about why they left?
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Pair 1: Jennifer and Sarah

Jennifer's Responses

Question 1: Question 2 from "Questions to Consider" p. 182: How much of a motivator is hope? How much do you notice a change in student behavior and motivation, particularly among lower-performing students, before the first assessment of the term compared to after they have received the scores of the first assessment? At the beginning of the term versus after the first progress report or report card (when they receive their first formal low grade)? How could offering redemption via retakes, weighing more recent performance, minimum grading, or 0 - 4 scales throughout the term affect motivation?

In the past, I have witnessed some students disappear early on, or leave early during a quiz or test and never come back. Sometimes, a student would leave after the first class and never come back or message me or anything. In learning to teach online, I met Lené and learned so much from her. She explained an approach in online teacher, to both give and get something from students within the first 10 minutes, the first 10 hours, and the first 10 days of the course. I have found it to be brilliant. I try to do that in all my classes now. And in those time frames, I work to nurture active participation, hope through early success, and trust and agency through honest feedback, with suggestions for improvements (resubmits). It's a little hard to manage retakes, but Canvas does have a "Reassign" button, but it only works with the "Assignment" Tool (not quizzes or discussions). I think that students don't expect retakes, and so they're really grateful when they're offered. I think that if a grade doesn't reflect what a student knows or wants to know how to do, there is a type of justice that is palpable when you work together to better capture or increase their skill level. I have found, with 0-4 grading and retakes that many students persist, knowing that they can earn a passing grade. A few times a quarter, I'll hear from a student who I thought I lost. When I tell them, "you can still earn any grade," they get excited. They don't always make the come back that they hope to, but I think it's not as violent to them when they feel I'm cheering them on from the sidelines.

Question 2: Question 1 from "Questions to Consider" page 239: Which equitable practice will you try first? How will you know whether it was successful? I have already implemented 0-4. Partially, I think it's successful. But I want to improve my rubrics, especially the descriptions of different levels of proficiency. I already allow resubmissions. But I don't have the infrastructure in place to manage retakes. I can barely keep up with grading the first tries! I dabbled, last summer, with the Mastery Gradebook in Canvas. I don't know if I want to put more time into figuring that out or just use a paper gradebook, like is described on page 198 and page 236. Either way, I want to think about articulating standards for each chapter and make sure that my

assessments measure those standards. Speaking of standards, here is a very useful list of standards that IGETC suggests for prerequisite classes:
"Prerequisite/co-requisite courses, if necessary, should teach the skills and knowledge without which the student is highly unlikely to succeed in college-level mathematics and be consistent with CCSSM standards for mathematical practice::

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Model with mathematics.
- Use appropriate tools strategically.
- Attend to precision.
- Look for and make use of structure.
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning."

I really value these standards, personally and professionally! So as I teach my classes, I'm asking myself how these skills show up in my classes, and how I can support further development of them for my students.

Question 3: Question 3 from Questions to Consider Pg. 182 How would the commitment to mandatory retakes align or conflict with your school's vision? What would have to change for your classroom or your school to commit to mandatory retakes? What would make it difficult? What could your school do to make it easier to make retakes mandatory?

Our school culture says "We're the best." In the heart of Silicon Valley, our school identity is very tied to "Excellence." We also have prioritized working towards equitable outcomes. So, first, a teacher and later a department would have to view these strategies for equitable grading as an "excellent" path towards equitable outcomes. Then, a teacher would have to get really clear on what the assessments were going to look like (I've been "innovating" in my class for so long, I think I would need to collaborate with others, to design some assessments that we all agreed measured levels of proficiency with the standards.). Then we'd have to create 2-8 additional versions of each assessment, like we had in Math My Way. Then we'd have to establish a practice of reflection for the students to engage in. I really liked the conversation protocol on page 232. If the student didn't meet standards because they didn't do the learning activities, I'm not 100% convinced that telling them to "go do the learning activities" is the solution. Maybe it is. Maybe my learning activities need to change. Maybe "support" activities would look different. I'd like to have my students work with a tutor. But increasingly my students have frustrating experiences with tutors. And I think that's because of how differently I'm approaching their learning and how that is not aligned with the tutors' experience. We could reclaim the MathMyWay office area and storeroom as a collaborative space for us to work in. We could call it "Covid Era Loss of Learning Mitigation Project," and ask them to spend that Covid money on developing ways to support students who experienced learning loss these last

couple of years. We could hire Rachel to be our project manager. ;-) I want to do this for Math 10, Math 80 and also Financial Literacy, as we develop it. I want to do it for Math 1A, 1B, 1C. And I also want us to do it for Math 48A, 48B, 48C. I want this to be our “Return to Campus plan,” and have the on-campus classes come with all of these equitable practices. Haha! Difficulty is in our minds. We’re way too “busy.” So paying that Covid money to give us time to do the work would be the “easy” way to do it. Without time, it’s difficult. It’s also difficult to agree randomly on ideas, when we haven’t been in conversation and connection, evolving ideas together. We do have personal flex days available and the school could support us in having a full day retreat periodically. But for this project, I think it’s more of a small group vision followed by intense project management of production work.

Sarah's Responses

Question 1: Question 2 from "Questions to Consider" p. 182: How much of a motivator is hope? How much do you notice a change in student behavior and motivation, particularly among lower-performing students, before the first assessment of the term compared to after they have received the scores of the first assessment? At the beginning of the term versus after the first progress report or report card (when they receive their first formal low grade)? How could offering redemption via retakes, weighing more recent performance, minimum grading, or 0 - 4 scales throughout the term affect motivation?

Class has definitely been more fun to teach up until the scores are returned on the first major assessment. I have had the feeling that I'm able to give a lot of students a fresh outlook (hope) about math at the start of the term, and then returning the first midterm causes things to look like "business as usual" (dismal) for some of them.
I have also seen that it's really important for the students to have the possibility of bringing up their grade at the end of the term, when deadline motivation is a big factor for some.
I do believe that weighing more recent performance makes sense. I guess I've had trouble with the extreme version, where I feel I'm incentivizing procrastinating and cheating if a final exam can make up for a lot of low performance during the term.
Chapter 11 resonated a lot with me, both by describing problems I still have (giving retakes to students who have the gumption to ask for them, which I recognize is not equitable) and also by describing concepts that I've been trying to incorporate (like making formative assessments basically non-factors in the grade).

I have tried out test corrections in the past, but not enough to settle on a great system. It felt like a game of cat and mouse with too many rules about the type of help, the type of correction, etc.

Question 2: Question 1 from "Questions to Consider" page 239: Which equitable practice will you try first? How will you know whether it was successful?

Good question!

I really like the standards scale and mastery ideas, but I have to keep thinking about how they can apply to the classes I teach. One way I would know whether this was successful is if the class lost its qualities of laundry list and pressure cooker (complexity mounting over the weeks, squeezing out the students until only the strong remain). Are the standards the 3 SLOs? The 14 course objectives?

Another one I'm thinking about is not including participation or classwork in the grade. This is currently my policy, but unfortunately it goes hand-in-hand with very low expectations for "participation" in its current incarnation. This is basically because I agree with the author and

pulled the plug on the previous incarnation of participation-for-credit, but haven't figured out my next move yet. So the question is: what kind of participation or classwork would be worthwhile to institute, without grading it? I think it is important for equity purposes to normalize (require?) interaction and participation, but at the same time it's a tax to the people who don't need the interaction and participation to hit the material mastery, and that looms really large to me. Some people call this concept "busy work."

Question 3: Question 3 from Questions to Consider Pg. 182 How would the commitment to mandatory retakes align or conflict with your school's vision? What would have to change for your classroom or your school to commit to mandatory retakes? What would make it difficult? What could your school do to make it easier to make retakes mandatory?

Pair 2: Phuong and Teresa

Phuong's Responses

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Question 3: TBD

Teresa's Responses

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Hope is not just a motivator, but a necessary condition to engage in school. If the student does not have any hope of completing the class successfully, they would be foolish to waste their time and energy doing assignments and trying to learn.

I definitely have taught far too many classes where student engagement decreases after every assessment. And I am not alone in this. I heard about it from other frustrated instructors. I have been given advice like "send out an email after the exam to encourage students to show up to class the next day" and "don't schedule your student evaluations shortly after an exam". It seems that students feeling discouraged, angry and generally beat up by the exams is a common phenomenon.

What really changed this for my classes was when I started offering corrections. Students are actually amazingly positive considering their experiences, and now when I had back their assessments they are not feeling as discouraged, but instead dive right into what they missed, why, and how to do it correctly. It has made for a much more positive, productive and enjoyable learning experience for the students and working experience for me.

I think it is a combination of hope for their grade, as they get increased credit for the corrections, and an actual policy that supports a growth mindset. The assessment is no longer a final decree of their knowledge and abilities, but a tool to help them focus their learning and improve. Talking and doing activities about growth mindset is pointless if the policies of the class are based on a fixed mindset.

Question 2: Question 1 from "Questions to Consider" page 239: Which equitable practice will you try first? How will you know whether it was successful?

Here is what I'm planning to do, assuming that I can get myself together enough to execute it, and assuming I continue to have reasonable class sizes and support from the college. If due to our current budget concerns I have to go back to teaching three classes of forty students each, I am at a loss for what I could possibly do to improve my classes based on the information from this book. But anyway, here is my list.

1. Write a rubric with five levels of competency that could be used for anything or almost anything I evaluate for the students in the class.
2. Use a 1 - 5 grading system instead of 0 - 100.
3. Have the students retake all or part of assessments after they do corrections.
4. Continue looking for alternatives to exams for assessments.

Question 3:

Pair 3: Nicole and Jeff

Nicole's Responses

Question 1: Question 2 from "Questions to Consider" p. 182: How much of a motivator is hope? How much do you notice a change in student behavior and motivation, particularly among lower-performing students, before the first assessment of the term compared to after they have received the scores of the first assessment? At the beginning of the term versus after the first progress report or report card (when they receive their first formal low grade)? How could offering redemption via retakes, weighing more recent performance, minimum grading, or 0 - 4 scales throughout the term affect motivation?

Question 2: Question 1 from "Questions to Consider" page 239: Which equitable practice will you try first? How will you know whether it was successful?

Question 3: What are the various types of student motivation you might use to help students progress in your class? How do you tap into student motivation in the classroom? How is this connected to your current grading structures?

Jeff's Responses

Question 1: Question 2 from "Questions to Consider" p. 182: How much of a motivator is hope? How much do you notice a change in student behavior and motivation, particularly among lower-performing students, before the first assessment of the term compared to after they have received the scores of the first assessment? At the beginning of the term versus after the first progress report or report card (when they receive their first formal low grade)? How could offering redemption via retakes, weighing more recent performance, minimum grading, or 0 - 4 scales throughout the term affect motivation?

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