



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Science and Soul of Learning Accountability

Blended into the slashes of color made by her two-year-old son as he dipped the wheels of his toy racing car into the tempera and ran them across the sheet of paper were two distinct but subtle figures of guitar players mom Kimberly had drawn with ink to flow visually into the wild color expression. The concept is Discovery and Control—only one of several creative visual exercise experiences. Firing an attack on the teacher's synapses was the burning question: How do I grade this?

Anachronistic evaluation systems in today's academic market are either the shallow lettering ritual or the complex numbering package. Readers might be interested in a system that works best for me. Admittedly, my particular disciplines lend themselves to diverse accountability processes. However, it is my belief that, with a little "adjustment," many of the activities in which I am engaged could be adapted to fit other areas.

There are three phases of student connection to traditional grading procedures in my accountability process: 1) initial survey (Accountability Inquiry), 2) interim considerations (Mid-term Evaluation), and 3) final cooperative accountability report (Thoughts to Ponder).

On the first day of class, the Accountability Inquiry is handed to each student with the charge that it be returned during the next class period. Students are urged to think carefully about the five aspects of the program that I suggest are essential to successful involvement in the course's experiences. Each is discussed at length.

Accountability Inquiry

Evaluation variables:

- Attendance _____%
 - Quantity / Effort _____%
 - Comprehension (displayed understanding) _____%
 - Risk / Craft (extension beyond expected) _____%
 - Discussion Participant _____%
- 100%

You may wish to work with the following examples prior to filling in these percentages.

I. Please assign a grade to each of the following students based upon the information given below:

Student	abs	work in	comprehension	risk/craft	grade
#1	10	20/30*	good	some	___
#2	none	29/30	little	none	___
#3	2	27/30	very good	much	___
#4	4	20/30	excellent	much	___
#5	none	15/30	some	none	___

(*The number 30 represents a possible maximum number of assigned projects)

II. Using the criteria in I, please invent three additional students of your own with the following results for grades:

#6	___	___	___	___	B plus
#7	___	___	___	___	C
#8	___	___	___	___	borderline D+ to F

There is the traditional progress evaluation in the form of a mid-term grade about halfway through the course.

Mid-term Evaluation

1. Now that you are at the midpoint of the course, it is assumed you have had a chance to assess both your involvement in the learning process as well as your expectations. Please speak to both as you write about your accountability and achievement at this midway point.

2. Having received particular numbers from me (identifying: absences; number of assignments given; assignments handed in; quality point totals received on work handed in; and my personal comments on your involvement in the course up to this point), please identify two grades which will accurately reflect your active participation in this course to this point. (You may use pluses and / or minuses with the letter grades, understanding that these cannot appear on any official document.)



Complete each sentence:

"I recommend a grade no higher than _____ for mid-term."

"I recommend a grade no lower than _____ for mid-term."

Finally, as the course comes to a close, I do not give a test to measure some artificial level of temporary understanding. After all, if I have been alert to the activities of each student during the course, a more appropriate personal note attached to his or her final evaluation sheet, plus advice handed out in Thoughts to Ponder, should be sufficient impetus for a thoughtful response from the student.

Thoughts to Ponder

The key words are: involvement, accountability, and integrity. Every learning experience depends upon these three fundamental elements. Each person is responsible for all three as he or she searches for the answers to the Great Questions—Who am I? Where am I going? How do I get there?

Your experience in this course is no exception. By using the specific information summary I have provided, my written personal observations, and a review of your mid-term evaluation, you should be able to put together a reasoned analysis of your *involvement/ understanding/production*.

Please remember that all learning is a slow, cumulative experience; each assignment is a stepping stone to the next, more complex challenge.

By intentionally or unintentionally bunching them up without regard for each visual idea to fit into its sequence, you may have done yourself a disservice vis-à-vis visual comprehension.

No grade is rendered to either admonish or reward. A grade is a symbolic reflection of a life-moment measuring events for which, normally, you are responsible, even though at times these events may seem to be beyond your control. You must accept the courage to be ultimate judge.

Step back and review this "moment" as dispassionately as you can. Your integrity is your most valuable power. Whatever knowledge you have acquired this semester only has importance if it has helped open your eyes to better assess who you really are.

Here are some suggested questions which might assist you in your written remarks. Ask yourself:

- If I had it to do over again, how might I have better handled the course?
- What are the aspects of the course in which I felt most successful?

- What aspects of the course continue to confuse me? In which could I have improved?
- In retrospect, in what aspects of the course did I feel most comfortable? What suggestions do I have for the teacher to help me feel more comfortable in those uncomfortable moments?
- Was there too much work, just enough, or not enough?
- Are there aspects of the program I would change? How?

Conclude your written statement by completing the following three statements:

"I recommend a grade no higher than _____ for my final evaluation."

"I recommend a grade no lower than _____ for my final evaluation."

"If my grade appears to you to be lower than _____, I would ask to schedule a personal conference with you to discuss it."

Detractors presume they have a very firm handle on the criteria for classroom performance. This is only part reality. The rest is illusion.

As *guide* rather than god, the teacher is able to infuse limited control of any outcome. Ultimately, the student is responsible for his or her involvement. The initial survey and class consensus serves as an unwritten contract between the student and subject matter.

Finally, I would share with you a haiku from Beaucoup Haiku:

Life's 4-R challenge:
choose between Rhythm,
Ritual, Routine or Rut.

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