

CAT 4: Directed Paraphrasing (Assesses Skill in Application & Performance)

Estimated levels of time/energy required to prepare is LOW; to respond (students) & to analyze is MEDIUM.

Description: Students paraphrase part of a lesson for a specific audience in two or three sentences.

Purpose: This CAT allows instructors to assess how well students have understood and internalized the learning by seeing if the student can translate highly specialized information into layperson's terms.

Procedure:

- 1) Select an important theory, concept, or argument that students have studied in some depth. This should be a topic with some implications outside the classroom.
- 2) Determine who would be a realistic yet challenging audience for the paraphrase of this topic, what the purpose of such a paraphrase should be, and how long (number of words or amount of speaking time) the paraphrase should be.
- 3) Respond to the Directed Paraphrase yourself. Can **you** complete it within the limits given?
- 4) Prepare the question to be display-ready by writing it on the board, a transparency, or digitally projected. They could also be written on a half-sheet of paper and distributed to the students. It is important the prompts are presented in writing. Do not only read the question(s).
- 5) Hand out index cards or half-sheets of paper. It is best if students do not write their names, unless there is a very good reason to know who wrote which comments.

Examples:

Course: Computer Science; Database Systems

In plain language and in less than five minutes, paraphrase what you have read about computer viruses – such as the Michelangelo virus – for a vice president of a large insurance firm who is ultimately responsible for database security. Your aim is to convince her to spend time and money “revaccinating” thousands of workstations.

Course: Criminal Justice; Managing Community Relations

Imagine that you are the city's deputy police commissioner in charge of community relations and public affairs. For a two-minute presentation at a meeting of the police officers' union, paraphrase the arguments **in favor** of creating a civilian review board. Then, for an equally short statement at the next public meeting of the city council, paraphrase the arguments **against** creating a civilian review board.

Adaptations/Extensions:

- 1) Direct the students to paraphrase the same topic for two very different audiences, and then to explain in detail the differences between the two paraphrases.
- 2) Ask students to keep a journal of paraphrases as a summary of important topics in the course.
- 3) Get an appropriate outside “expert” to comment on and assess some or all of the paraphrases and give authentic feedback.
- 4) Have the students role-play the parts of the expert reader(s) in #3.

Suggestions: Responding to students' feedback may take longer than planned. Set clear time limits. To temper expectations and disappointment, let students know you will not comment on everything. If **you** cannot easily do the task, do not ask your students to do it. Directing the paraphrase at a specific audience makes the task more demanding and more useful than simple paraphrasing.

References and Resources:

Angelo, T.A, and Cross, K.P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.