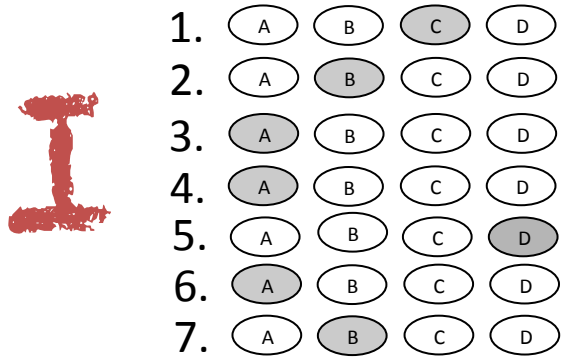
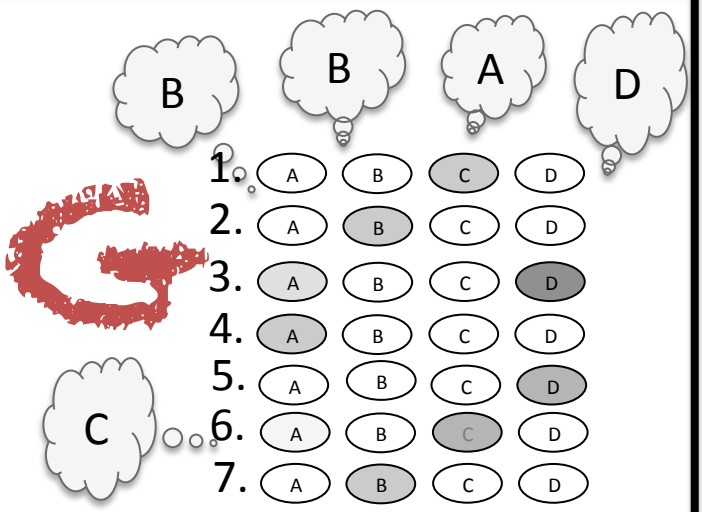
CETL Weekly Teaching Tips presents

Collaborative Testing: Maintaining Rigor While Increasing Critical Thinking

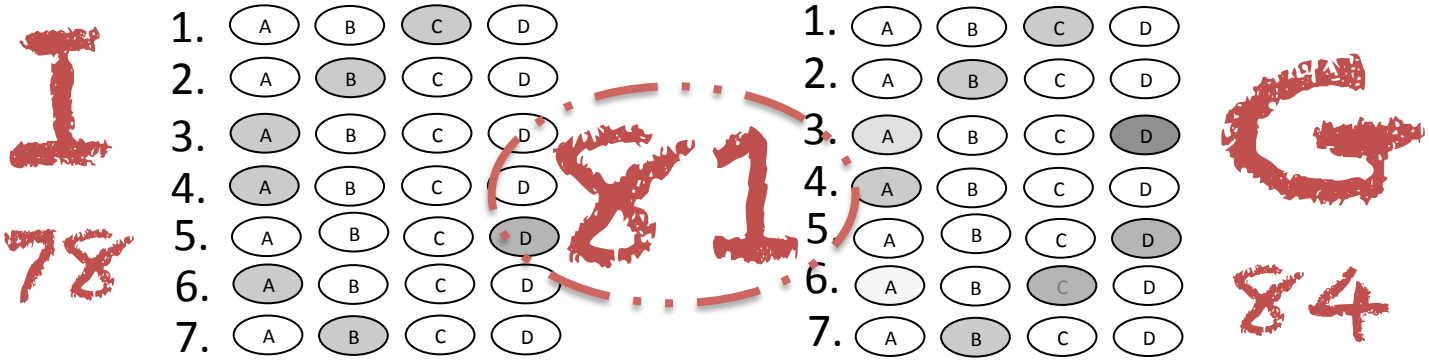
Collaborative testing ... on an exam? How could that actually work?

Students start by taking an exam in a traditional method such as Scantron, and put an I on the top of it when they are done.





When individual exams are complete and submitted, students get into groups to go over the exam and individually fill out another test form based on these answers.



If individual grades are over a 78, the instructor will average the group and individual grades. Students can't earn their way into a passing grade by the saving grace of the group, but they can earn extra points based on this voluntary group effort. If individual grades are higher than the group, the student keeps the individual grade.

For more a step-by-step guide to collaborative testing along with grading directions, visit

oakland.edu/teachingtips

CETL adapted this material from Barbara Penprase, Lynda Poly-Droulard, and Marla Scafe's contribution to the 2013 Oakland University Instructional Fair.

Maintaining Rigor While Increasing Critical Thinking Through Collaborative Testing

After students complete individual examinations they form into small groups and take the same examination as a small group where they can discuss the questions and rationale for the answers.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Develop examinations, only need one copy of each examination. Will use the same examination for the individual and group test.
2. Develop groups, 5-6 students per group. Students can either self-select group members or faculty can assign groups. If students self-select, faculty then has the right to add students to groups that are not full to make sure that groups are evenly distributed.
3. Students take individual examination on their own using their own scantrons (traditional method do taking examinations). After completing examination, students hand in their scantrons with an "I" (individual at the top, leave the examination on their own desk face down, and wait in hall until the individual examination period is complete.
4. Students return to classroom when faculty designates, takes their own examination and a new scantron to an identified location in the classroom for their small group. On the top of the scantron they put "G" (group).
5. Students begin to take examination as a group when faculty states it is time to begin and are given a designated time (usually an hour) to complete the examination. Each student can fill out the scantron with any answer they select; they do not have to choose what the group agrees upon.
6. After completing the group examinations, as a group they hand in their scantrons and then wait until all participants have completed the group examinations. The students keep their examinations at their desks again face down.
7. After the allotted time and all scantrons are handed in, the faculty then reviews the answers to the examination so all the students have immediate feedback on their performance. I stress that I still need to grade the examinations and will review using point-by-serial. If a question is deemed unclear and misleading, I throw the question out. Their grade may be higher than what was indicated during the review.

Grading

1. Grade the individual students' grade on the examination.
2. Grade the group grade for the student on the examination.
3. If the student receives 78% or better on the individual examination, they are eligible for the group examination grade.
4. Group examination grade is the average between the individual grade and the group grade.
5. It is important to note that students MUST pass the class on their own individual grades for the examinations (70% overall) before any group grades are considered. They cannot pass the class because of group grades, but they can receive a better grade in the class because of the group grade so rigor is maintained while encouraging the objectives mentioned above.
6. If an individual grade is higher than a group grade, the individual grade is the final grade. There are no negative consequences for taking group examinations and I rarely have students refuse to participate in the examination.

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