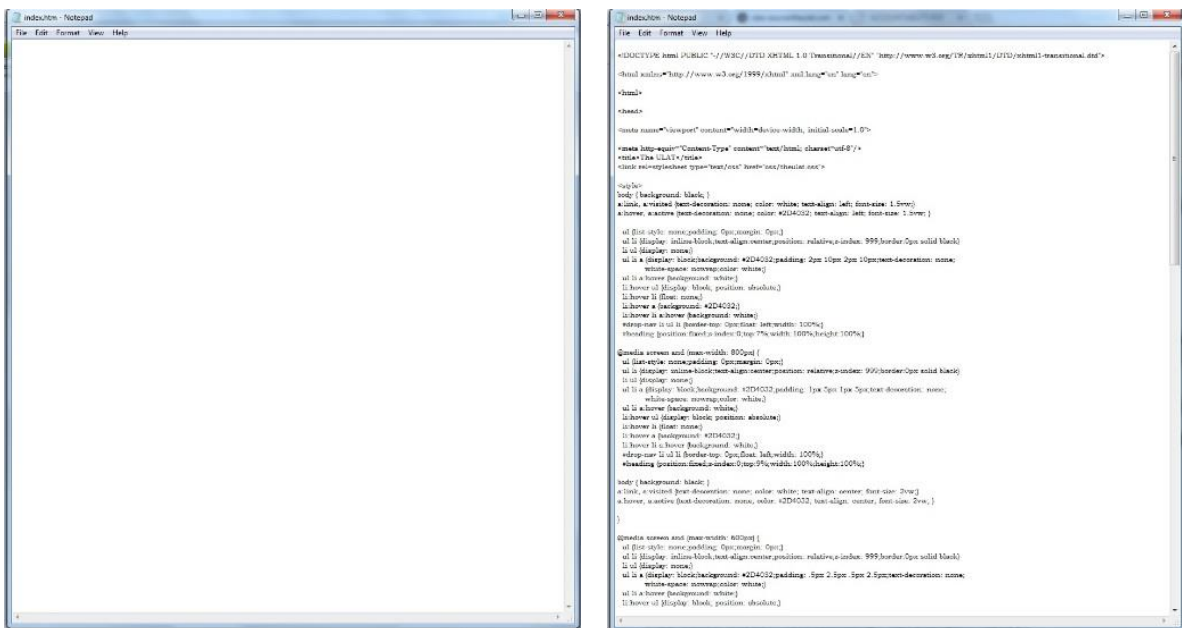


The Oral Participation Evaluation Spreadsheet

If given a pile of the appropriate parts, and a week within which to do the job, do you think you could build your own car? How about a computer? If your boss dropped on your desk a motherboard, a video card, a sound card, a modem, a fan, a power supply, various drives, etc., all of the necessary components to build a computer, and told you he wanted you to put them together for him before you go home tonight, could you do it? (The scary thing is that some of you probably could.)

Let's try something a little easier. Starting from a "notepad" looking like the one on the left...



...and without the aid of any website developing software, could you construct the ULAT home page, just the first part of whose source looks like what you see on the right, by writing in all of the proper HTML coding? (Neither could I, by the way.)

Most of us would probably answered "no" to all three questions. But could you drive a car, use a computer and navigate through the ULAT website? Of course you could.

Please bear those thoughts in mind as I begin to present to you "The Oral Participation Evaluation Spreadsheet" (OPES). Were you to see all of the formulae in the hidden cells that went into its creation, you might be overwhelmed and not dare to use it. However, just like driving a car, using a computer or cruising through the ULAT, by the time you finish reading this lesson and trying it out, you will find that it is very easy to

- In column B, you are to replace the entries "Student 1, Student 2, Student 3, etc." with the actual names of your students. Ideally, to simplify your record-keeping, you will have seated your students in alphabetical order or at least in the order in which they appear on your [Seating Chart and Record-Keeping Spreadsheet](#).

- At the top of columns "O" through "BD", add the dates of class periods for the upcoming quarter. Voilà! That's all there is to setting up the OPES!

If your school uses trimesters instead of quarters, cut the trimester in half, give the student the grade indicated by the OPES for the first half of the trimester and then start with a fresh spreadsheet for the second half of that trimester.

Daily use

Now that your OPES is set up for the entire quarter, all that remains to do is to update it on a daily basis, or as often as you find the time.

It is highly advisable to update it daily. Why? First of all, assuming you are using the [Seating Chart and Record-Keeping Spreadsheet](#), setting those sheets aside until a more convenient time to transfer the results to your computer makes you run the risk of losing one or more of them. Remember that a big reason for using the OPES in the first place, and for heavily weighting the oral participation grade, is to hold students accountable for regular oral participation. It is highly demotivating for students if sheets are lost and they see that their efforts have gone for naught. Secondly, once again for the sake of accountability, and therefore active participation, it is good for students to see a tight correlation between their participation in that day's class and the rising or falling of their class grade when they check it online. This reinforces for them the fact that getting involved in class discussion is indispensable and that it "pays off".

At the end of the day, your record-keeping spreadsheet for one particular class will probably look something like this (except that you will have names filled in the rectangles instead of "Student 1", "Student 2", etc.):

CLASS: <i>f</i> A = ABSENT, T = TARDY				Date: <i>9/5</i>			
Student 24	Student 25	Student 26	Student 27	Student 28	Student 29	Student 30	Student 31
Student 17	Student 18	Student 19	Student 19	Student 20	Student 21	Student 22	Student 23
<i> </i>	<i> </i>	<i> </i>	<i>A</i>	<i> </i>		<i> </i>	<i> </i>
Student 9	Student 10	Student 11	Student 12	Student 13	Student 14	Student 15	Student 16
<i> </i>	<i> </i>	<i> </i>	<i> </i>	<i> </i>	<i>T</i>	<i> </i>	<i> </i>
Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8

The vertical hash marks above correspond to voluntary comments made by the student. The "A" indicates that the student was absent and the "T" means that the student arrived late to class.

Here is all you have to do to update the OPES each day.

- Place the record-keeping spreadsheet next to your computer and, while consulting that day's records, enter the totals for each student in the column under that day's date. If the student volunteered four responses on a certain day, you will enter a "4" within the cell across from his or her name. VERY IMPORTANT! If a student is absent on a certain day, enter the letter "A" in his or her cell on that specific day. The OPES automatically takes into account the student's absence and therefore doesn't allow the lack of oral participation on that day to diminish the student's grade.
- That's it! There *is* no point number 2. It's that simple. Do step number 1 each day and, in the red column (column "M"), you will see the student's grade evolve throughout the quarter!

ORAL PARTICIPATION AND EVALUATION SPREADSHEET																	
CUMULATIVE DATA										DAILY ORAL PARTICIPATION TOTALS							
STUDENT'S NAME	Req.	Neg.	Use of	Commt.	Oral	Scores	9	5	5	5	5	5	5	5			
	Est.	Part.	Englsh	Abs.	Part.												
1 Mike	0.0			16	100	7	3	6									
7 SPW1 Sue	0.0			5	69	2	2	1									
8 25 Jerry	0.0			20	100	5	6	9									
9 2.5 Phil	0.0			24	100	8	4	12									
10 4.8 Joseph	0.0			15	100	3	1	11									
11 Joan	0.0			18	100	1	8	9									
12 Marie	0.0			3	51	0	0	5									
13 Kayla	0.0			17	100	10	5	2									
14 Steve	1.6			10	100	A	3	7									
15 Tom	3.2			4	95	4	A	A									
16 Randy	0.0			20	100	6	9	5									
17 Jackson	0.0			14	100	2	4	8									
18 Sheila	0.0			12	95	1	8	3									
19 Mary Anne	0.0			19	100	7	3	9									
20 Kate	0.0			10	87	5	3	2									
21 Bill	0.0			9	83	1	7	1									
22 Peter	1.6			7	89	A	2	5									
23 Carol	0.0			17	100	9	1	7									
24 David	0.0			11	91	3	4	4									
25 Anne	0.0			23	100	12	2	9									
26 Jeff	0.0			7	76	2	2	3									
27 Cindy	0.0			9	83	4	0	5									
28 Cynthia	1.3			18	100	9	A	9									
29 Paul	0.0			13	96	5	7	3									
30 Carl	0.0			11	91	6	2	3									
31 Student 26	0.0			0	50												
32 Student 27	0.0			0	50												
33 Student 28	0.0			0	50												
34 Student 29	0.0			0	50												
35 Student 30	0.0			0	50												
36 Student 31	0.0			0	50												
37 Student 32	0.0			0	50												
38 Student 33	0.0			0	50												
39 Student 34	0.0			0	50												
40 Student 35	0.0			0	50												
41 Student 36	0.0			0	50												
42 Student 37	0.0			0	50												
43 Student 38	0.0			0	50												
44 Student 39	0.0			0	50												
TEACHER'S PARTICIPATION										1	2	1					
Degree of difficulty: 70										1.8	1.3	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Notice that Tom has only made 4 comments thus far in the school year, but that he still has a 95% average. The OPES does not allow his absences to detract from his score.

class period as my standard class duration and 70 remarks as an average total for the entire class when the whole class period was devoted to discussion.

Clearly, in the case of Steve's class detailed in the preceding image, judging from the sheer quantity of participation, I imagine that the responses were brief in nature and that his class is closer to 90 minutes in length. That is why they have had the equivalent of 4.8 class discussions (when compared to a class just 45 minutes in length) after just three days of school. However, it doesn't matter! The duration of your class period and the nature of the kind of comments required of the students have no bearing on the students' results. By dint of its design, the OPES makes allowance for all such variance. (Don't try to explain this to parents.)

3. In column "G", we can see how many class period equivalents the student missed because of absence.
4. In column "I", we see how many total oral contributions the student has made throughout the entire marking period.
5. Finally, on line 46, you can see how many class period equivalents took place on that particular day.

Optional features

The following features of the OPES are all optional, though the use of the last two is highly encouraged:

1. In column "C", teachers can choose to enter how many times a student requests to be excused during class to use the restroom, go to the office, go to his or her locker, get a drink, etc. This will have no bearing on the grade, but may help a parent understand why the student's oral participation score may be suffering.
2. In column "D", teachers can enter the quantity of incidents of negative participation (interruptions, talking out of turn, etc.) attributable to a student. If you use this feature, however, be advised that incidents of negative participation slightly lower a student's average.

ORAL PARTICIPATION AND EVALUATION SPREADSHEET																					
CUMULATIVE DATA		Req. Use of	Cumul. Oral	Oral	DAILY ORAL PARTICIPATION TOTALS																
STUDENT'S NAME	Req. Use of	Part. English	Abs.	Part.	Score																
1 Mike	0.0	16	100	7	3	6															
SPN 1 Sue	0.0	5	69	2	2	1															
25 Jerry	0.0	20	100	5	6	9															
2.8 Phil	0.0	24	100	8	4	12															
4.8 Joseph	0.0	15	100	3	1	14															
Joan	0.0	18	100	1	8	9															
Marie	0.0	3	61	0	0	3															
Kayla	0.0	17	100	10	5	2															
Steve	1.5	10	100	A	3	7															
Tom	3.2	4	95	4	A	A															
Randy	0.0	20	100	6	9	5															
Jackson	0.0	14	100	2	4	8															
Sheila	0.0	12	95	1	8	3															
Mary Anne	0.0	19	100	7	3	9															
Kate	0.0	10	87	5	2	2															
Bill	0.0	9	83	1	7	1															
Peter	1.5	7	89	A	2	5															
Carol	0.0	17	100	9	1	7															
David	0.0	11	91	3	4	4															
Anne	0.0	23	100	12	2	9															
Jeff	0.0	7	76	2	2	3															
Cindy	0.0	9	83	4	0	5															
Cynthia	1.3	18	100	9	A	8															
Paul	0.0	13	98	3	7	3															
Carl	0.0	11	91	6	2	3															
Student 26	0.0	0	50																		
Student 27	0.0	0	50																		
Student 28	0.0	0	50																		
Student 29	0.0	0	50																		
Student 30	0.0	0	50																		
Student 31	0.0	0	50																		
Student 32	0.0	0	50																		
Student 33	0.0	0	50																		
Student 34	0.0	0	50																		
Student 35	0.0	0	50																		
Student 36	0.0	0	50																		
Student 37	0.0	0	50																		
Student 38	0.0	0	50																		
Student 39	0.0	0	50																		
TEACHER'S PARTICIPATION											1	2	1								
Degree of difficulty: 70											1.5	1.3	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

- Column "E" is like "D" in that these transgressions of classroom policy also negatively impact the student's average. This column is for times when a student uses English in class, if such has been prohibited.
- The black bar on line 45 is an important optional feature. It is where one indicates how many times teachers had to answer their own questions in the course of a class discussion. The total of the "teacher's participation" is entered on the black line within the column corresponding to that particular day's class. For example, in light of student passivity, you see that the teacher provided an answer to one of his own questions on September 5 and that he did so twice more on September 6 and once more on September 7. This deserves some explanation.

The spreadsheet shows columns for Cumulative Data (Req. Use of Cumul., Oral Part., Score) and Daily Oral Participation Totals (Days 1-15). The 'TEACHER'S PARTICIPATION' section at the bottom has a 'Degree of difficulty' set to 70.

There will be days when students, feeling lethargic, may not care to engage in discussion. In that case, rather than cajoling and upbraiding the students or, worse, waiting for them to feel like answering, teachers can merely answer the question, or make a comment themselves to keep things moving. When I would do this, I would turn to the recorder and say, in a jubilant voice and in the appropriate language, "A point for the teacher!" The recorder would then be shown where to inscribe my point on the record-keeping sheet and I would continue as though not troubled in the least by their lethargy.

However, at least one time, I would also show them the OPES and would enter the total of my points in the appropriate location. When teacher's points are added, they cause the average for all of the students in the class to drop slightly. When the students see this, thereafter they make every effort not to let the teacher answer his or her own questions!

- Finally, at the bottom of the section for each class, you see the label "Degree of Difficulty" and then a number in a cell to its right. Modifying that number enables the teacher to fine tune the scoring system. By putting your cursor on the cell containing that number, you see that having it set to "70" means that the rigor of the grading scale will be "average" in its expectations

The tooltip for the 'Degree of difficulty' dropdown menu lists the following scale:

- 50 = Difficult
- 60 = Moderately difficult
- 70 = Average
- 80 = Moderately easy
- 90 = Easy

for the students. Setting it at "90" means that more in the way of participation will be expected of the students. Setting it at "50" causes the OPES to be more lenient in establishing the students' grades. (Note that the cell only controls the grading scale's "degree of difficulty" for that one particular class.) Consequently, if a teacher considers his or her students' averages and feels that they are lower than what is merited, the teacher can adjust the "degree of difficulty" downward to adjust the students' averages upward. The converse, of course, is also true.

Try it. You'll like it.

Language Teachers' Topics for Reflection

1. What is the Oral Participation Evaluate Sequence (OPES)?
2. Why is objectivity so important when it comes to recording and evaluating students' oral participation?
3. How can you obtain a copy of the OPES?
4. Simpler to use than it looks, what are the three bits of information a teacher adds to set up the OPES at the beginning of the school year?
5. What are the two activities a teacher must do daily to update the OPES?
6. How can teachers ensure that they never have to answer their own questions due to student lethargy?
7. If the grades attributed to students by the OPES seem either too low or too high, how can the OPES be adjusted?

[NEXT CHAPTER](#)