

Classroom Assessment Technique (CAT)

CAT Chosen: What's the Principle?

Why this CAT was chosen: I am part of a program called Parelli Natural Horse-Man-Ship (PNH). One of the first things students need to learn about the theory behind PNH is “The 8 Principles.” These are the eight guiding principles of natural horsemanship (according to Parelli), and understanding them, as well as using them appropriately, are critical to students success in the program. This CAT seemed a natural fit to assessing students knowledge of the Principles, and their ability to apply them (or at least recognize them) in a new situation.

This CAT had to be slightly modified in two ways in order to be used in this setting. First, it would be impractical to try to take physical notes as an instructor or student in an outdoor setting involving people, their horses, and a large amount of space. Second, even though I am at a high enough Level in the program to become certified, I am not a certified PNH instructor, so I could not actually facilitate this session. To address the latter, I asked my instructor, who is certified, if she would use this in one of her upcoming sessions. She agreed to facilitate this CAT for me. I observed the session, took notes, and we debriefed it with each other.

Learning activity set-up: This learning activity could be used at any level of the program depending on the amount of subtly being observed by the students. However, for this purpose, the activity was used in an Advancing Level 1 On-Line Focus Group. A Focus Group session is sort of like a workshop. Each group consists of three to six people who meet with an instructor every other week and focus on a particular area of their horsemanship, On-Line Level 1 in this case. In between sessions the participants practice and come to the next session with questions for the instructor. The instructor also introduces new things for the students to practice. The Focus Group usually meets six times.

The goal of this activity was to see if students were able to recognize which Principles they were using when things were going well, which Principle was being violated if they were having problems, and how a Principle might apply in their current or proposed situation. It was decided to focus only on Principles 2,3,4, and 5 for this session. Please see Table 1 for a listing of the aforementioned Principles.

I made a chart listing the Principles on one side and the student's names across the top (Table 1). During the session, as different situations arose, the instructor would ask the students which Principle they thought helped them be successful, which one they needed to work on if they were having a problem, or how a given Principle might help them in their situation. If they correctly identified the Principle I would place a “Y” in the appropriate place on the chart. If they misidentified a Principle or didn't recognize how it might apply, I placed an “N” on the chart.

After the session, the instructor and I were able to quickly see which Principles students were able to recognize or apply and which ones they weren't.

Supplies needed: The chart, pencil, students with horses and appropriate tools (12' line, halter, Carrot Stick)

Results: The results were interesting. Given the opportunity to state which Principle applied in a given situation students tended to go to Principle 2 or 4. They did reasonably well with identifying when both Principle 2 and 4 applied, but they had a hard time recognizing when they did not apply. This was particularly true when they were violating Principles 3 and 5. When presented with a hypothetical situation about someone else, most of them were able to correctly identify which Principle applied or was being violated. The conclusion from this is that the students do not yet have the emotional fitness or self awareness to see violations of Principle's 3 and 5 in themselves. At Level 1, all that is expected is a basic understanding of what the principles are and how to use them. As they progress through the Levels more emotional fitness and self awareness will be required, however, they all did very well given where they are.

What worked, what didn't: I think the session went well overall. This CAT was effective for both my instructor and I to quickly see where each student was. The setup of having me observe and administer the assessment also worked well. For this Level of students, we probably asked them to think about too many things. It was hard for them to think about what they were doing while they were actually doing it.

What would you change next time: There are two things I would change next time. First, I would do this CAT in the beginning of the session by asking them to identify the Principles using hypothetical situations instead of doing it during the session while they have their horses. Second, I would reduce the number of Principles being considered. Doing the CAT at the beginning with hypotheticals would make it much quicker. Also, if only two or three Principles were asked about, it would be a good basis for the new information being delivered in the session.

Table 1:

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Principle 2: Don't make or teach assumptions			
Principle 3: Communication is two or more individuals sharing and understanding an idea			
Principle 4: Horses and Humans have mutual responsibilities*			
Principle 5: The attitude of Justice is effective**			

*There are 8 responsibilities – 4 for the human, 4 for the horse

**This relates to doing things in phases and neither over reacting nor under reacting – it also pertains to having control over emotions such as fear, frustration, and anger

For a complete listing and explanation of the 8 Principles please visit the following web page:

<http://www.parellinaturalhorsetraining.com/8-principles-of-horse-training/>