

## Time to Breathe

It's nine a.m. You've forgotten to breathe. You're back to class, sort of. Are these your students? Three bedheads and four rectangles of red and white checks who refuse to turn on their cameras? There's an almost tangible malaise. Students disappear, sometimes for good. Each chirpy Canvas Inbox inquiry results in either *the gravitational forces of the universe won't let me leave my bed or my body's stuck at the edge of this abyss but my mind has gone clean over*. After weeks of radio silence, you've gotten an *I got sick* and an *I'm homeless*.

You're not doing so hot yourself. How to translate the hand gestures that said it all into a tidy PDF slideshow? How to preemptively act rather than *re-act*? How to shrink that three hour video on the Watercolor Color Wheel down to 20 minutes? How will society manage when you're forced to cut the part about the fabulous origins of Ultramarine Blue?

It's one p.m. You've forgotten to breathe again. You must be doing something right: more than three quarters of the class follow your written words, PDF slideshows, and videos no sweat. But then there's Student Number W0511103. Every semester there's a Student Number W0511103. The one who takes a bit longer to get it, the one who requires a lot of attention. Never a problem in the past . . . but now?

Seventeen email exchanges, five offers to meet in Webex. You've even spoken to her on the phone three times. Each time, she says, cheerfully, *I understand! I understand!*

It's three p.m. You're not even thinking about trying to breathe. No, Student Number W0511103, you definitely don't understand. This reminds you of those times when you used to travel all over Mexico. By the end of the day, the TV and computer screen were simply unintelligible.

You were just.

Too. Tired. To. Follow.

Poor Student W0511103! This would never happen in an in-person class. You took the importance of physical presence in a drawing class for granted, but how do you send yourself over the Internet?

It's six p.m. The gym has announced the closing of its doors. Breathing is no longer a priority. You decide to do fifty jumping jacks but stop at thirteen. The inside of your head is like the prom scene in *Carrie*. Kinetic energy on steroids. An hysterical touch on the keyboard has completely eliminated Module 7.

Where did Module 7 go? Who can help you get it back?

It's three a.m. Despite the curfew, twenty-two year old Samantha next door is having a party. One loud, non-socially distanced drunk girl is singing *Lonely* off-key.

You shut your eyes tight. You inhale. Not the same as breathing.  
*I'm so lonely, I'm **Mrs.** Lonely, she howls.*

You think of Student Number W0511103. You think of everybody out there, isolated and alone. You get up and go to the computer. You send Student Number W011105 pictures of all the work done by her fellow students. The ones who would normally be there to say, or otherwise convey, *I did this and so can you*. You instruct her to copy what she sees. You go back to sleep.

It's nine a.m. You've received two drawings from Student Number W011105. They're exactly right. She now wishes to meet in Webex! Student Number W011105 has gone from a red-and-white checkerboard to a smiling woman in a riotously colored batik scarf wrapped around her head. *My husband says, she says, That teaching lady sure is patient with you!*

You laugh. If that's not breathing, it'll have to do.

**We are evaluating essays for:**

- Organization
- Strong style and personal voice
- Originality and clarity of content and ideas

**How to use the rubric:**

Please use this rubric as a measure of what we will be looking for when selecting winning essays. This rubric should provide guidelines, not an unreasonable or rigid standard. You have probably encountered a rubric before, but here is a quick guide to using this one:

- Along the left side of the rubric grid are the criteria for evaluating essays.
- Along the top of the grid, we have scores from 4 (outstanding) to 1 (poor).
- For each criterion, match the essay with the description that best fits it and assign a score in the rightmost column.
- Once you have scored the essay on all the criteria, add those five numbers. That is the score for the essay.

	4	3	2	1	Score
<b>Focus on Topic</b>	There is one clear, well-focused topic. Main idea is supported by detailed information.	Main idea is clear, but details are not clearly relevant or connected to the main idea.	Main idea is somewhat clear, but there is need for more relevant evidence.	Main idea is <i>not</i> clear. There is a seemingly random collection of information.	
<b>Organization</b>	Details are presented in a way that effectively keeps the reader's interest.	Details are presented in a way that sometimes makes the writing less interesting.	Details are presented in a manner that distracts the reader.	There is no clear structure to the paper.	
<b>Originality and strength of ideas</b>	Formulates a thought-provoking, well-developed, and fairly original perspective on essay theme.	Writer takes a clear perspective on essay theme, though it is not developed fully.	Writer's perspective on essay theme is evident, though it is vague.	Fails to provide a clear perspective on essay theme, or writer contradicts themselves.	
<b>Quality of evidence/examples</b>	Provides compelling and insightful evidence/examples that demonstrates the author's perspective.	Offers adequately compelling – though perhaps vague or incomplete – supporting evidence/examples.	Provides compelling but sometimes confusing evidence/examples to support writer's perspective.	Offers only general evidence/examples that are sometimes contradictory to the writer's perspective.	
<b>Voice</b>	Author's voice is strong and engaging. Draws reader in.	Writing attracts reader's interest. Author's voice shows engagement with the topic.	Technically well written; however, author's voice is weak.	Writing fails to engage the reader.	
				<b>TOTAL</b>	

Adapted from Rubric for Editorial – Commentary Essay from LAEP.org and the 6+1 Traits of Writing Rubric from Readwritethink.org

