

A Short and Unscientific Evaluation of *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*

INTRODUCTION

Massive studies which consider all sorts of variables and control for specific factors are important to our understanding of the educational process. Equally important to our understanding of education are indepth case studies of classroom activities. A poor step-child of these well planned and carefully considered research undertakings are the teacher developed "feedback" forms. While this type of information gathering may not make a major impact on the shaping of educational policy or contributions to pedagogic theory, it can provide classroom teachers with vital and worthwhile information with the potential for changing the behavior of the teacher or supporting what is already being done.

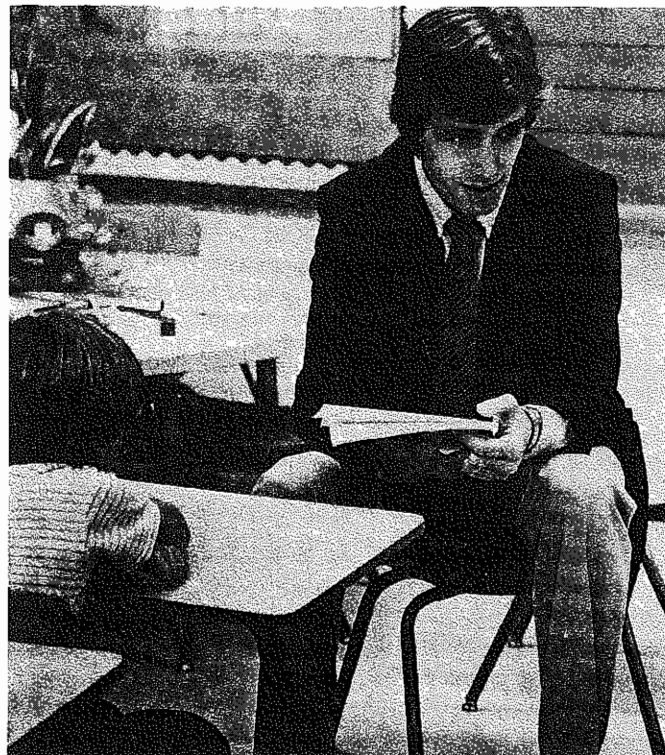
This article presents a student evaluation form for *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* and the results of the student feedback. Its purpose is to present for inspection one approach to student feedback. Others are invited to use, modify and improve this method for collecting data about the content and methods of philosophy for children toward the goal of developing a more or less standardized student rating and comment form but with the larger purpose of providing a simple method for collecting hopefully useful information about classroom activities for use within the classroom by the classroom teacher.

ABOUT THE COURSE

The course which was evaluated using the form under discussion was taught under the following conditions. The time frame for the course was one semester generally one day per week and approximately one hour per session. The course instructor was not the regular classroom teacher but rather a teacher from a local college. The students were fifth graders, approximately 8 males and 13 females in a neighborhood (Parish) Catholic school. The class was conducted in the school library with students sitting around four large library tables placed in a square. The students were white and largely middle class.

ADMINISTRATION OF TEST

The evaluation was conducted in a simple and straightforward manner. At the end of the last session each student was given the form. They were instructed not to place their names on the paper and to answer each question honestly. As part of the instruction they were informed that the purpose of the evaluation was to collect information about their reaction to the class. They were also told that they would be given the results of the evaluation. Students were



advised that they were not required to write comments but that comments would be helpful. No time limits were placed on the completion of the forms; papers were collected as students turned their papers face down on their tables.

FORM, RESULTS AND STUDENT COMMENTS (UNEDITED)

Student Evaluation — Philosophy For Children 21 Evaluations

	Average Score	Most Common Answer
1. I enjoyed reading the novel, <i>Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery</i> . Very Much 5 Somewhat 4 Not At All 3 2 1	3.1	3
2. I enjoyed discussing the ideas which were brought out in the readings. Very Much 5 Somewhat 4 Not At All 3 2 1	3.7	4
3. I learned new ways of looking at problems by reading and discussing <i>Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery</i> . Many 5 Some 4 None 3 2 1	3.4	4
4. I found this class: Difficult 5 Average 4 Very Easy 3 2 1	2.3	3
5. Compared to other classes I feel I learned: A Lot 5 Some 4 Little 3 2 1	3.04	4
6. I would be interested in reading another novel and continuing discussion like this next year. Yes No Maybe		11 Maybe 8 Yes 2 No

7. Comments:

- It was OK.
- I thought that it was interesting to discuss the problem and find out the answer but at times the reading was boring.
- I never thought about sentences so much in my life.
- You learn what the others thought and then you are able to compare them to you.
- This novel made your mind think. Like when someone would say something and they feel what they said was true. You would react and tell your part.
- The idea of the novel or the plot was very bad.
- It was a fun class and I would like to do it again next year. I liked discussing ideas and all about the different chapters.
- It was all right and I enjoyed this class a lot.
- I learned a lot about thinking and I thought it was good.
- I really liked reading the book. I wish we could read another book like the one we read and also I really learned a lot about sentences when you switch them around.
- I liked this class because the stories were enjoyable and I feel I learn more.
- I get tired of doing the same thing all the time. It would be better if you discuss something else.

SUMMARY

As the instructor for the class I found the information to be valuable. Two areas particularly concern me. First based on this information I will suggest to the school personnel that the students explore one of the other novels, either *Suki* or *Lisa* next year. Second, I will increase the variety of approaches I use in discussing the material. The change is based on my own observation as to the rut which I allowed myself to get into and forced on into my awareness by a single student comment. The comment has significance because it is consistent with my own reflection about the course and by seeing the comment written, the impact of the statement has a greater significance.

These comments bring me to restate the pedagogic value of this type of feedback, *i.e.*, it allows for teacher understanding, support and improvements. Perhaps the use of student feedback information is not profound but it can be personally significant.

Richard Morehouse

