

Designing Assessment Backward To Move It Forward

2017 Assessment Institute in Indianapolis
A Featured Speaker Session – Track 14A(AM)

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A DISCLAIMER

The Four 'Nots'

If I say *anything* that seems remotely critical, remember that my comments are absolutely:

NOT about the institution that employs you;

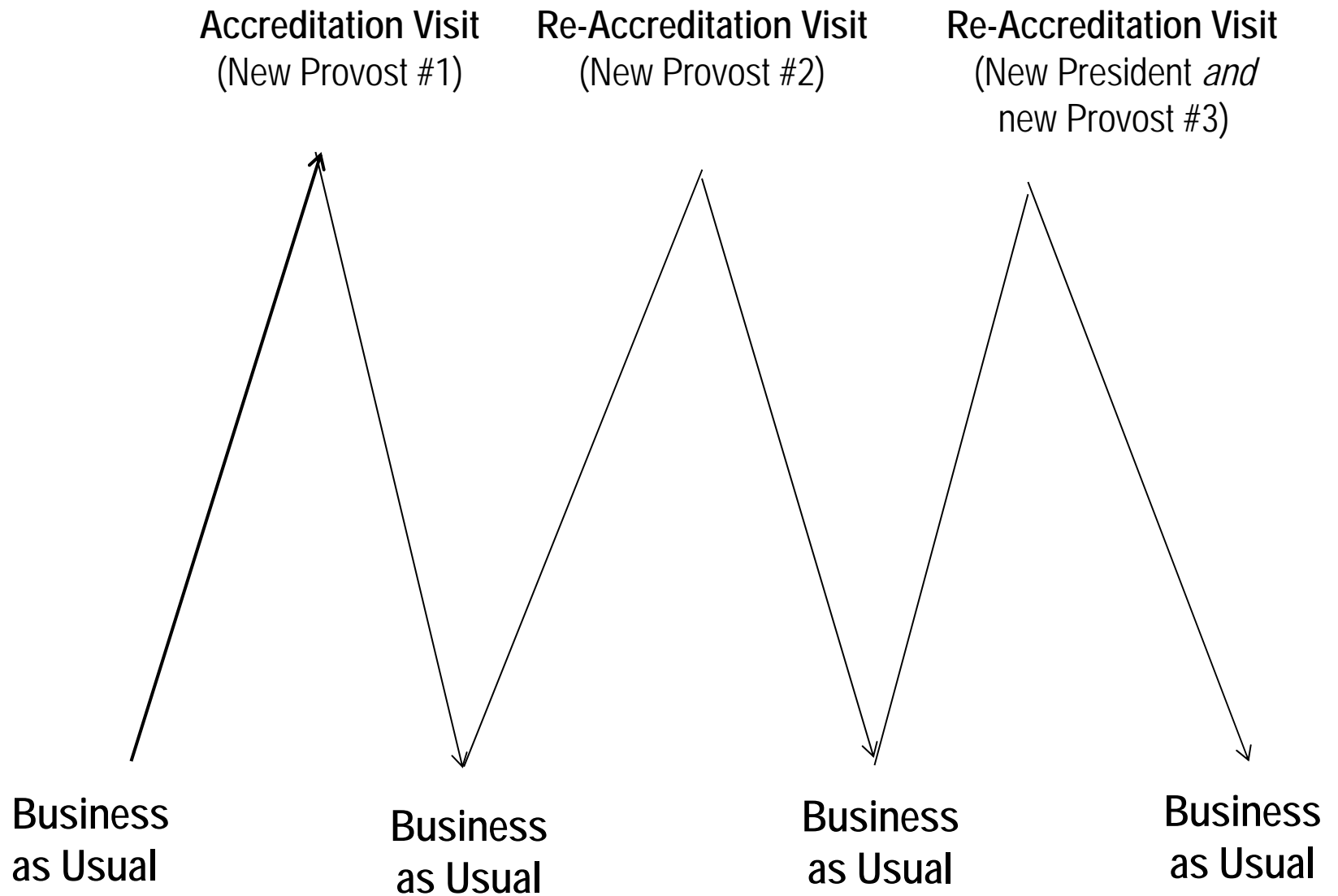
NOT about any institutions *you attended*;

NOT about any institutions *your children or other family members attend/attended*; and

NOT about *you!*

**Here's what the future
looked like to *Assesyphus***

The future . . . as seen by Assessyphus



**The good news is that, in 2017,
higher ed. assessment has:**

- **Powerful assessment tools
(NSSE, VALUE rubrics)**
- **Ubiquitous enabling technologies
(LMS, dashboards, etc.)**
- **Widely adapted frameworks (DQP)**
- **Supportive networks (AALHE)**
- **Centers of expertise (NILOA)**
- **Scholarly & practical resources**

The *less good news* . . .

There are still relatively few institutions that have proven able to use assessment to:

- (1) clearly define their learning outcomes (LOs);**
- (2) Set transparent standards for assessing those LOs;**
- (3) Demonstrably improve those LOs and/or;**
- (4) Sustain those efforts over time.**

Today, more than 33% of all US adults (25+) have at least a 4-year degree.

About 42% have at least a 2-year degree.

Have those gains in degree attainment led to a more civil, equitable, sustainable and just American society?

What kinds of learning outcomes did those graduates achieve?

Transformative learning . . .

**Results in greater self-awareness,
explicit understanding, justification
and openness to challenge
regarding our own implicit biases
and everyday habits of mind – and
deeper empathy for those of
others.**

Transformative learning . . .

Requires high-levels of skill in metacognition and reflection, and the ongoing motivation to engage in them.

Metacognition involves . . .

- **Self-Awareness**

Knowing that and when you are thinking

- **Self-Monitoring**

Noticing the quality/intensity of your thinking

- **Self-Regulation & Self-Assessment**

Directing/Correcting your thinking

Reflection requires metacognition,
but goes beyond it to affect/change
values, beliefs, actions and/or habits

If we aspire to cause transformative learning, we have to be willing to change habits of heart, hand and mind . . .

and to accept the inevitability of resistance and even conflict.

"A well-designed program is a clever learning trap, from which students cannot escape without demonstrating they have mastered the intended learning outcomes at the required high standards."

T.A.

Some questions to consider . . .

If you wanted to construct a solid, functional building, would you start by:

1. Buying lots of concrete, steel & glass?
2. Buying lots of heavy equipment & tools?
3. Hiring lots of workers?
4. Building the easy bits first?
5. Designing and building each room independently of the others?
6. Developing a highly detailed overall design of the finished building you need?

And some related questions . . .

If you wanted to construct a solid, functional assessment program, would you start by:

1. Collecting lots of data?
2. Buying lots of technology & tests?
3. Hiring lots of data analysts?
4. Assessing the easy stuff?
5. Assessing each course/program in isolation?
6. Developing a highly detailed design of the overall assessment program you need?

*"You can't fix by analysis
what you bungled
by design."*

Light, R., Singer, J. & Willett, J. (1990). By Design.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press.

Perhaps shifting our focus from means to ends – and employing backward design and design thinking principles – might help us promote transformative, and not just additive change?

Seven Transformative Guidelines

1. Design backward and work forward
2. Build shared trust
3. Build shared language and concepts
4. Build shared goals and motivations
5. Re-engineer systems first, then change people
6. Take a scholarly approach at every step
7. Don't assume, ask (assess & evaluate)

Options for Transformation

1. Design backward and work forward

Designing Assessment Backward

Suppose we began by asking:

1. Who might actually use feedback from this assessment?
2. Why would they use it?
3. How might they use it?
4. How do we know?

Options for Transformation

2. Build shared trust

- A shared 'transformative learning experience' for all faculty, academic staff and administrators *[e.g., The 3-Day Workshop]*
- A transformational "boot camp" for all incoming students – teamwork, study skills, reflection, etc.
- Values affirmation exercises

Values Affirmation Exercise

What educational/professional/personal values motivate you to invest time and energy in assessment efforts?

Which value(s) did you mention?

- A. Improving your institution**
- B. Advancing your career**
- C. Improving students' learning**
- D. Collaborating with others**
- E. Promoting equity**
- F. Saving the nation**
- G. When's the break?**

Interested in learning more about

Building shared trust?

- Schnabel, N. et al. (2013). Demystifying values affirmation . . .
- Steele, C.M. (2010). *Whistling Vivaldi...*

Options for Transformation

3. Build shared language and concepts

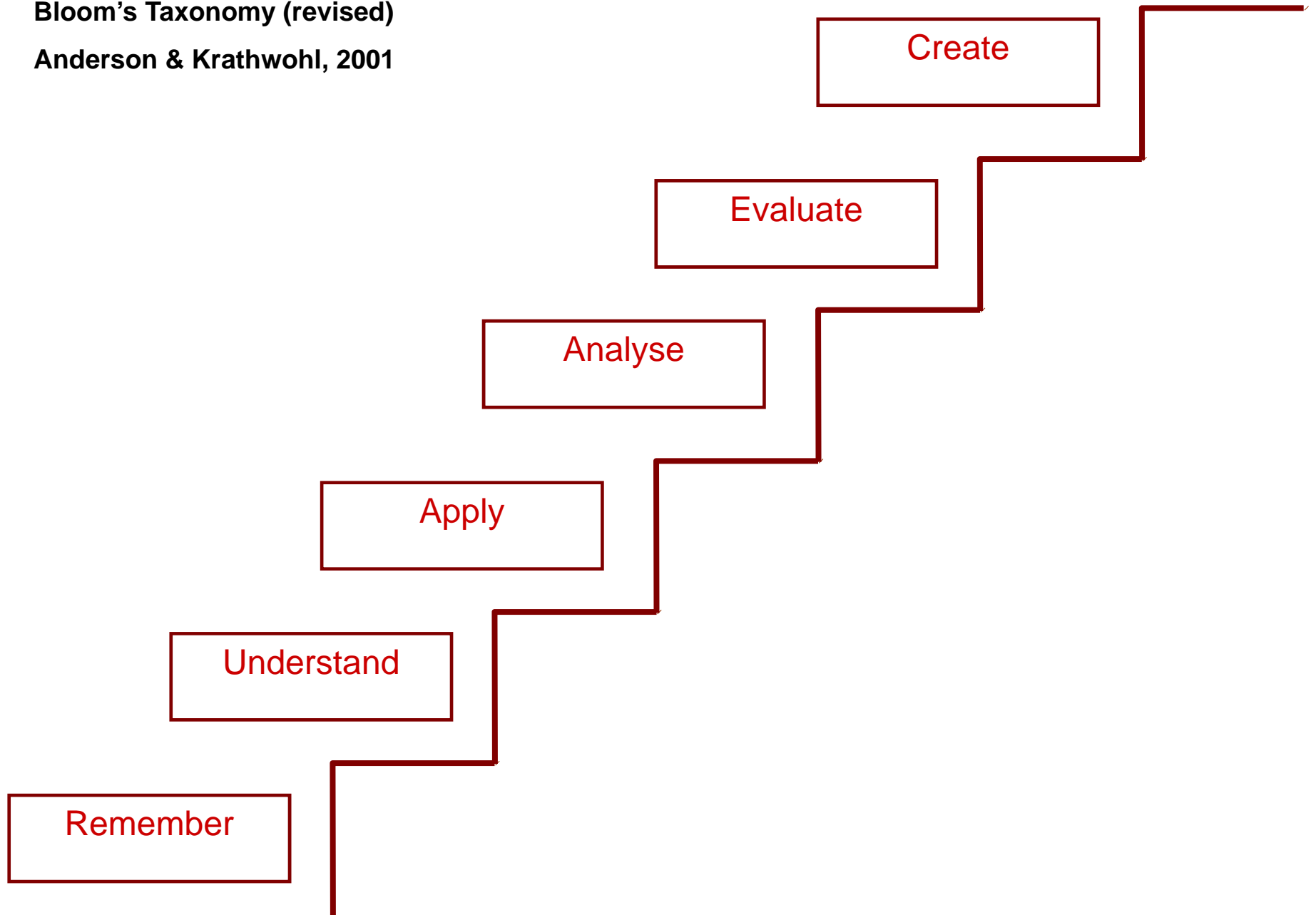
- Assessing prior knowledge of key terms, such as *learning outcomes, standards*, etc.
- Teach students common, powerful learning and study strategies, such as “Blooming”

Categorizing Questions by Bloom's Taxonomy Levels (Blooming)

By systematically varying the elements of the task, we can better assess and promote transfer and deep learning.

Bloom's Taxonomy (revised)

Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001



Interested in learning more about

Building shared language and concepts?

- Cook, Kennedy & McGuire (2013) on “Blooming”
- Dunlosky, J., et al. (2013) on effective learning techniques
- Myer & Land (2003) on “threshold concepts”

“It’s not what *we* do,
but what *students* do
that’s the important
thing.”

Biggs, J. & Tang, C. (2007). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*, 3rd Edition. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill, p. 19.

Options for Transformation

4. Build shared goals and motivations

- **Triangulate assessment on goals and expectations re: liberal learning outcomes involving employers, academics, partners, alumni, and students**
- **Goal-setting exercises with 1st and 4th year students**

Interested in learning more about

Building shared goals & motivations?

- Kaplan, et al. (2013). *Using reflection & metacognition ...*
- Morisano, et al. (2010). *...personal goals . . .*

Options for Transformation

5. Re-engineer systems first, then change people

- Review grading standards and rubrics to ensure that they recognize and reward transformational learning
- Review RTP policies and process to ensure that the assessment, evaluation, design and development, and related change management and leadership required is fairly recognized, evaluated, and rewarded
- Create robust professional development opportunities to support faculty engaged in transformational change [e.g., Professional Certificates]

It's time for the “MF” word . . .

Meaningful FEEDBACK

**“From the student’s
point of view, your
feedback is the
instruction.”**

Anonymous

Options for Transformation

6. Take a scholarly approach

- **Involve librarians early and throughout**
- **Offer contestable funding for well-designed, research-informed transformation-focused projects**
- **Create mentored opportunities for students to engage in educational transformation projects alongside faculty**
[e.g., Harvard's *Seminars on Assessment*]

Options for Transformation

7. Don't assume, ask

- *Treat the curriculum as an ongoing quasi-experiment*

Options for Transformation

7. Don't assume, ask

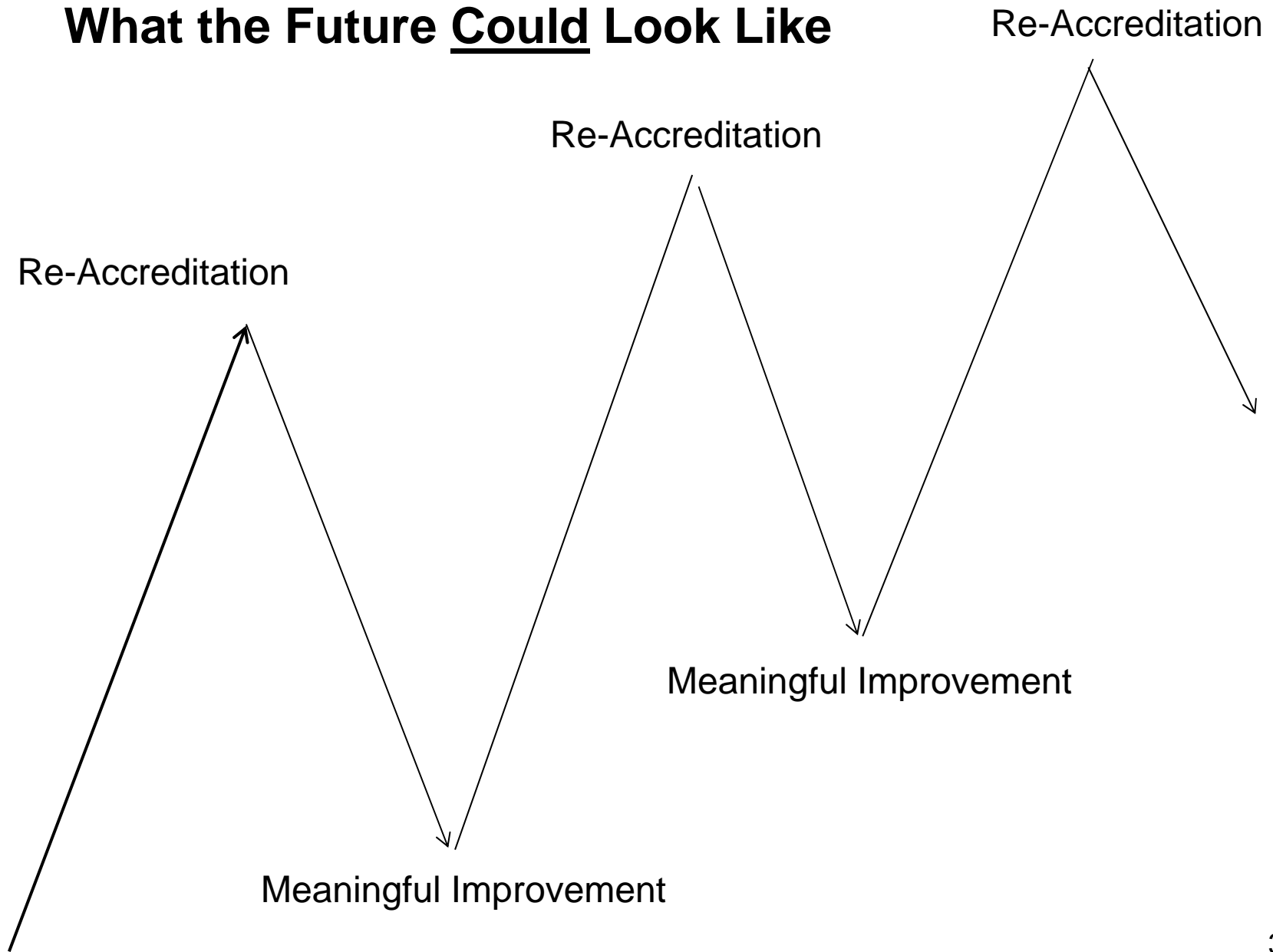
Let's revisit the Applications Card.

Applications Card

Ideas/Techniques

Possible Applications

What the Future Could Look Like



**Please complete
the session evaluation form.**

Thanks for your attention and participation

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A FEW USEFUL REFERENCES ON ASSESSMENT, BACKWARD DESIGN & LEARNING

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