

Alex Hsu

6.813 Heuristic Evaluation-CheckMark

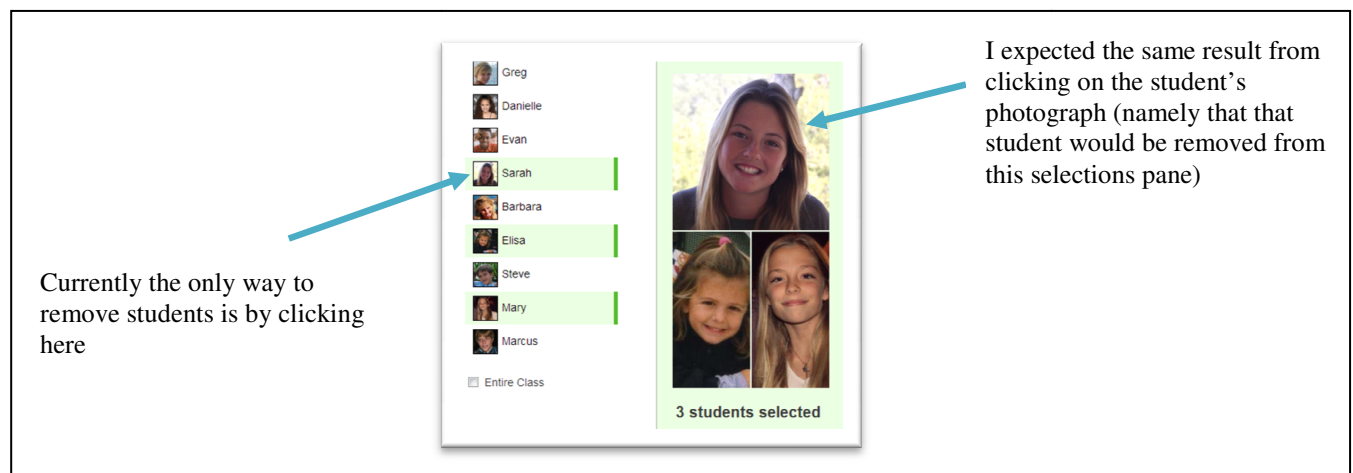
*I discussed this assignment with Zach Hynes (overall assignment guidelines, not specific feedback). Also, if the group has any questions feel free to e-mail me! aehsu@mit.edu*

First I just wanted to say that I think your idea is really great and would be extremely useful for parents/teachers in keeping up with students.

## Selecting and Deselecting Students

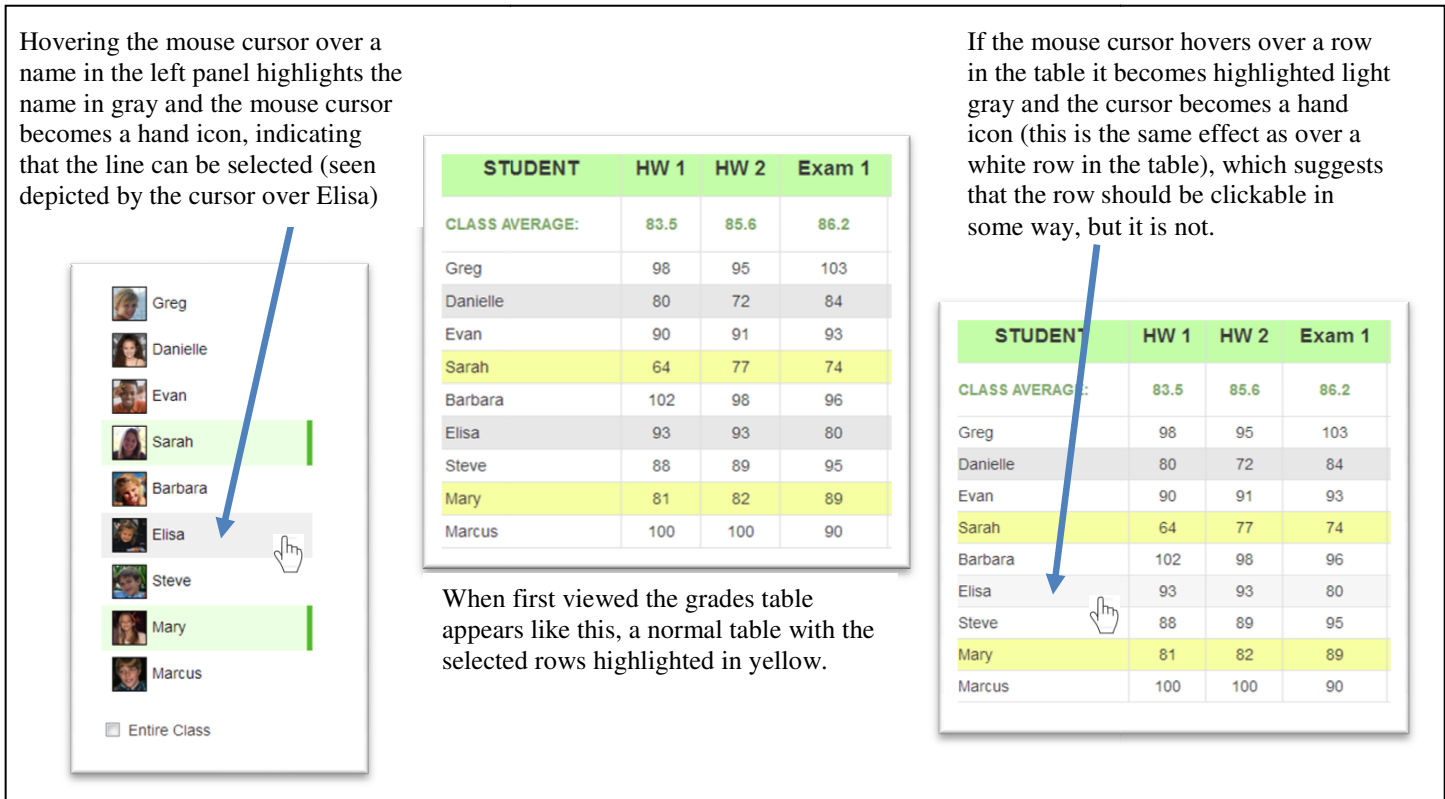
I really like the way that the pictures of the students appear when they are selected in the left panel, but once they are selected I was not expecting the only way to deselect a student to also be in the left handed panel.

- 1) *Affordances/Learnability*: When you click on a picture of a selected student, I expected it to remove that student from the list (and for a brief period of time I couldn't figure out how to remove students from the picture panel/selected list). See Figure 1 for illustration of this problem. Severity: minor



**Figure 1.** Deselecting students from pictures.

- 2) *Learnability/Consistency*: Another way I expected to be able to add or remove students was in the “Grades” tab, which is populated with the list of students where the selected students are highlighted. In this table, when you hover over an unselected row it becomes highlighted (in gray), which is the same effect that is observed when hovering over a student in the selection list on the far left. However, in the grades panel clicking on the student does not do anything (I expected it to highlight the student and add them). Either making this highlight disappear or making it have functionality expected and consistent with the selections list on the left is important. See Figure 2 for illustration of this problem. Severity: major
- 3) *Good*: I like that if you have some students selected, choose the “Entire Class” option and then uncheck the box it maintains the previous selection. At first I was confused about this, but I think it was a good design choice.

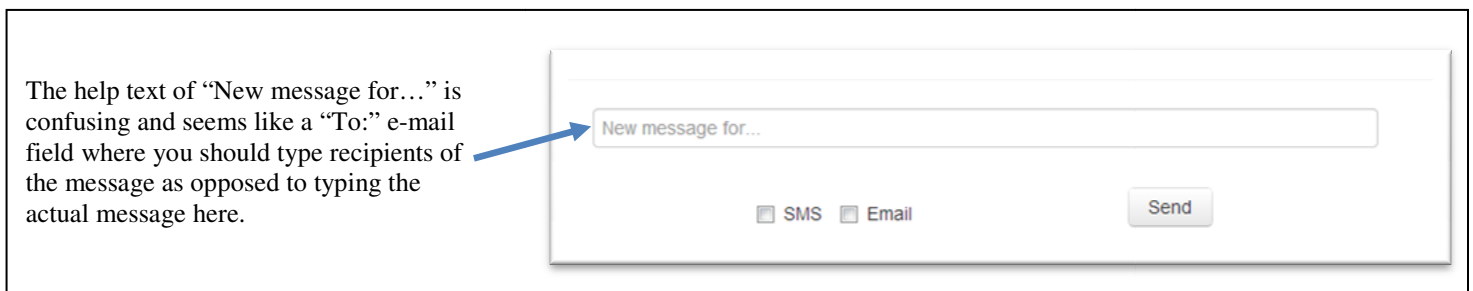


**Figure 2.** Color change on hover, affordance for being able to select.

## Messages

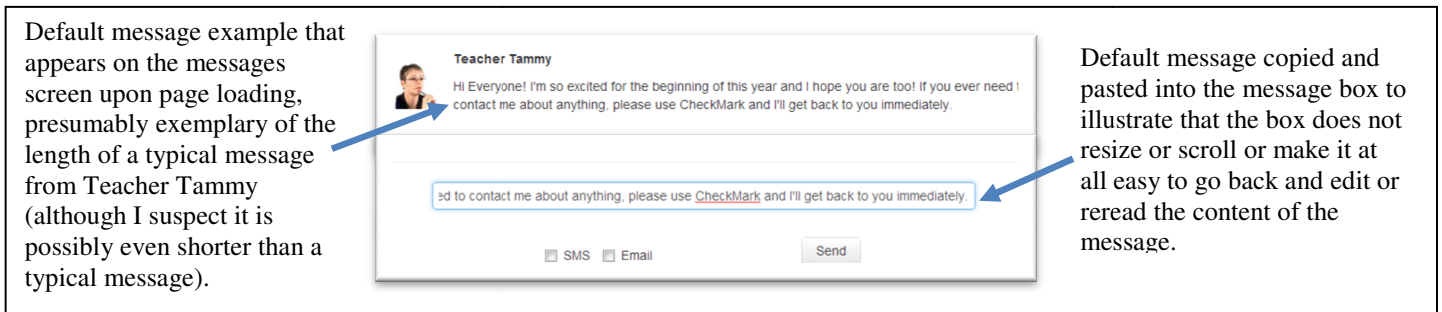
The ability to send messages to individual students or to the entire class is a really useful functionality, and being able to see these messages displayed is really cool!

- 4) *Help and Documentation/External Consistency*: The help text in the message box says “New Message For...” which suggests to me that it would be like the “To:” field of an e-mail and I thought I was supposed to type in the recipients of the message. Even simply changing this to “New Message...” would indicate that this field is where you type the actual message. See Figure 3 for details. Severity: minor



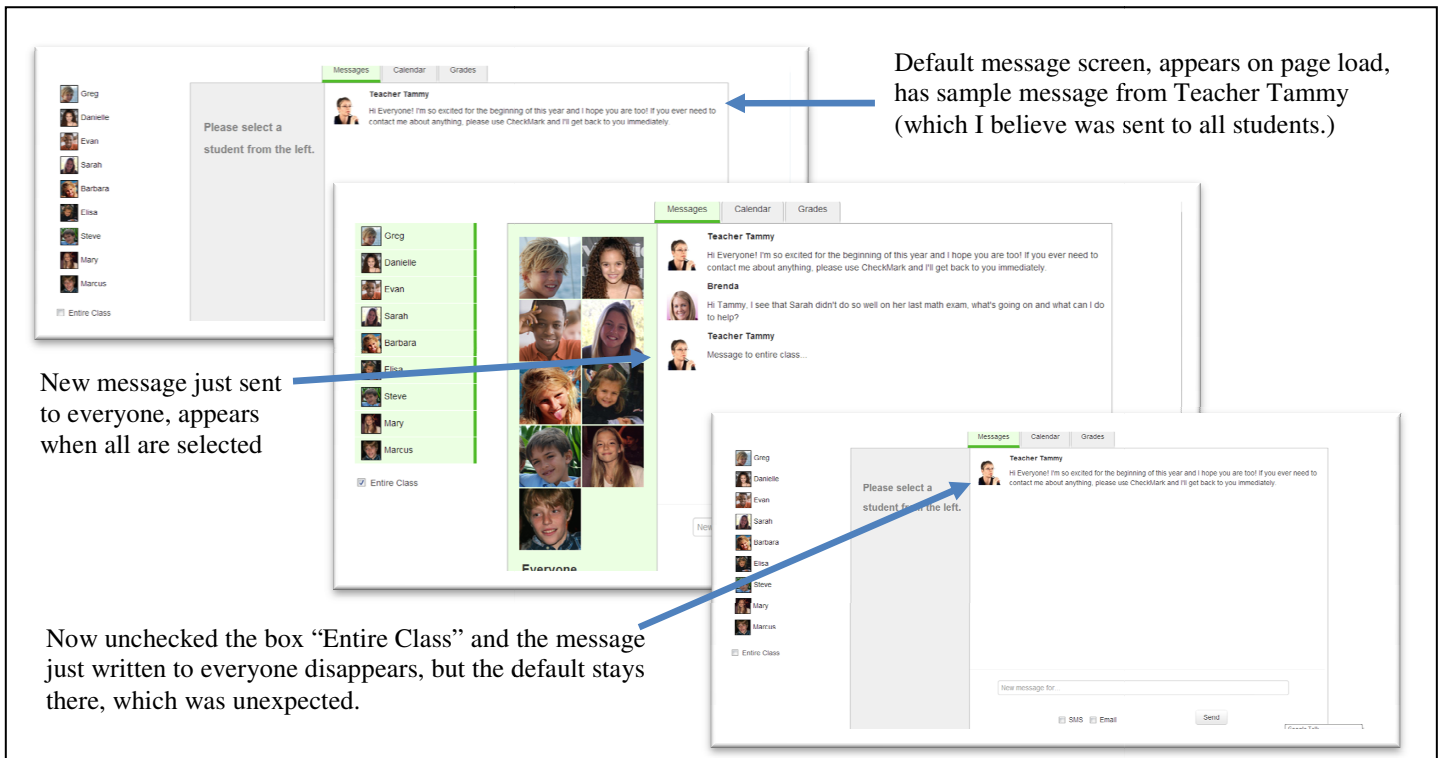
**Figure 3.** Message default text “New message for...” is confusing.

- 5) *External Consistency/Efficiency*: When typing a message that is longer than the allotted message box, I expected the box to resize or a scroll function to appear or something as opposed to one long block of text. Having just one long string of text makes it very difficult to edit messages and hard to reread what you have written. It is also inconsistent with sending an e-mail, which provides more space to write messages. See Figure 4 for more information. Severity: major



**Figure 4.** Message box does not resize or scroll with long messages (screen shot compressed for spatial reasons).

- 6) *External Consistency/Efficiency*: It is really great that the message panel dynamically updates and you can see all of the messages, but I can see this list quickly becoming difficult to read through or find message history. It was hard to test because I couldn't send messages from parents so I'm not sure what you were anticipating a conversation to look like, but in most e-mail or chat clients you could see the history of a specific conversation, either through threading or searching. Currently in this interface it seems like the messages will just appear in order, so if two students were selected all of the messages from their parents as well as everything from the teacher would be displayed. Even if only one student is selected, seeing a conversation that occurred would be really difficult because if Teacher Tammy sent a message to the whole class in the middle it would show up in the middle of the conversation. Since I couldn't simulate a conversation I couldn't take a screenshot, but I think that some sort of message threading or way to read a whole exchange would be really helpful. Severity: major
- 7) *Consistency*: I am unclear what messages would be locked and which ones will only show up when students are selected. At first I thought that messages to the entire class would always appear in the messages pane because the default example message is there when no one is selected. However, after "sending" a message to the entire class when I deselected the whole class, only the original message remained. If this is supposed to be an example, indicating that somewhere would be useful, but presumably if a teacher is using this tool consistently they will not want message space to always be taken up by an example message. See Figure 5 for the sequence of screens. Severity: minor



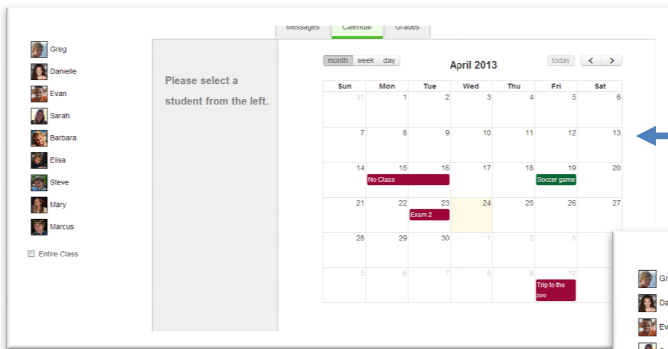
**Figure 5.** "Locked" messages to everyone, default remains others do not.

## Calendar

The calendar tab is overall really straightforward and easy to understand and use! Very similar to other calendar interfaces which makes it intuitive.

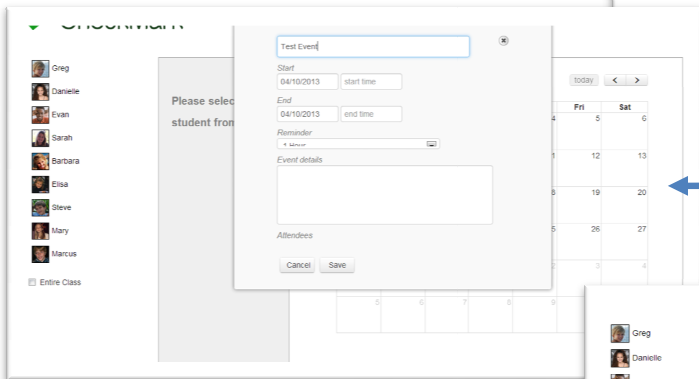
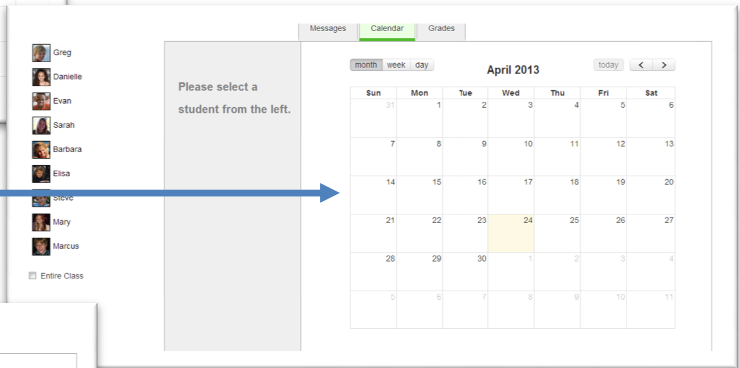
- 8) *Safety/Anticipation:* On the calendar screen, I expected events that contain the entire class to show up even when no one was selected, because it is (presumably) something that the teacher would also have to do. It is odd to see an empty calendar, but a more pressing problem is that if you create an event when no students are selected it disappears after you do select students, which can lead to lost events and data for the teacher. My expectation would be that if an event is created when no students are selected it would either apply to the whole class or have a special color indicating Teacher Tammy only. Currently, it appears the color of individual student events, but if any students are selected this event is lost. The calendar will not let you create an event with no event name, but it should also warn the user that they cannot create events with no participants (if this is a feature that would not be supported). Also to note, if no students are selected from the previous screen the calendar shows up as if the default student was selected, but if it transitions to no students on the calendar screen, all of the events disappear. See Figure 6 for a walk through of this event creation. Severity: major
- 9) *Good:* I really like the color differentiation between events that contain the whole class, small groups of students, and individual students. It makes it really easy to see what is coming up and visually filter events. I also like seeing the student thumbnails when the event is hovered over.





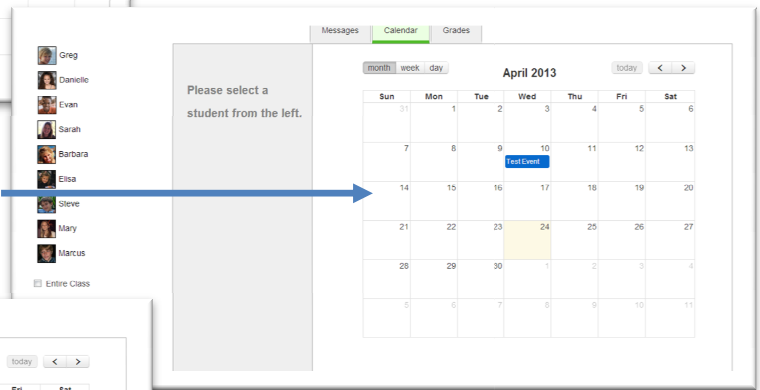
Originally, transition to calendar screen from messages screen when no students are selected, results in the calendar from the default selection of “Greg” showing up.

Then if Greg (or any student was selected) and then no students are selected again the calendar becomes blank, not showing any events.

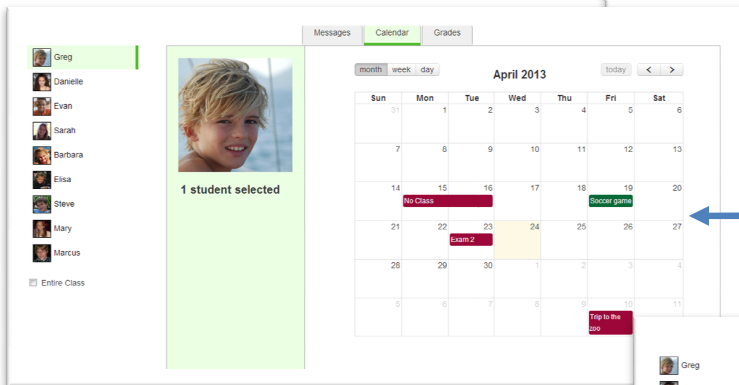


Then if an event (called “Test Event” in this case) is created while no students are selected it acts as if it is a normal event creation as on any other screen.

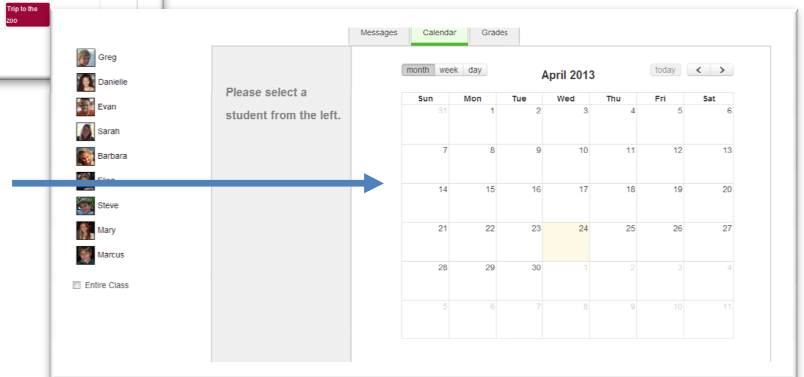
The “Test Event” appears on the calendar on the created date. It is blue, which is the color used on other screens to indicate events only attended by one student.



Then if Greg (or any student) is selected, the “Test Event” disappears, which wouldn't be atypical of an event that is not attended by the selected student.



However, if then no students are selected again the “Test Event” is actually gone and has been lost somewhere in the transition, which is probably not what Teacher Tammy would have wanted to happen to her event.



**Figure 6.** Creating an event when no students are selected causes that event to be lost when students are selected.

10) *Aesthetic*: The calendar is slightly difficult to see because the lines are fairly faint and the boxes are white on a white background. Maybe it would be possible to make the background a light gray or some other color to make the calendar stand out more so that it is really clear and easy to see. Figure 7 shows a screenshot of the calendar as it appears on the white background. Severity: cosmetic.

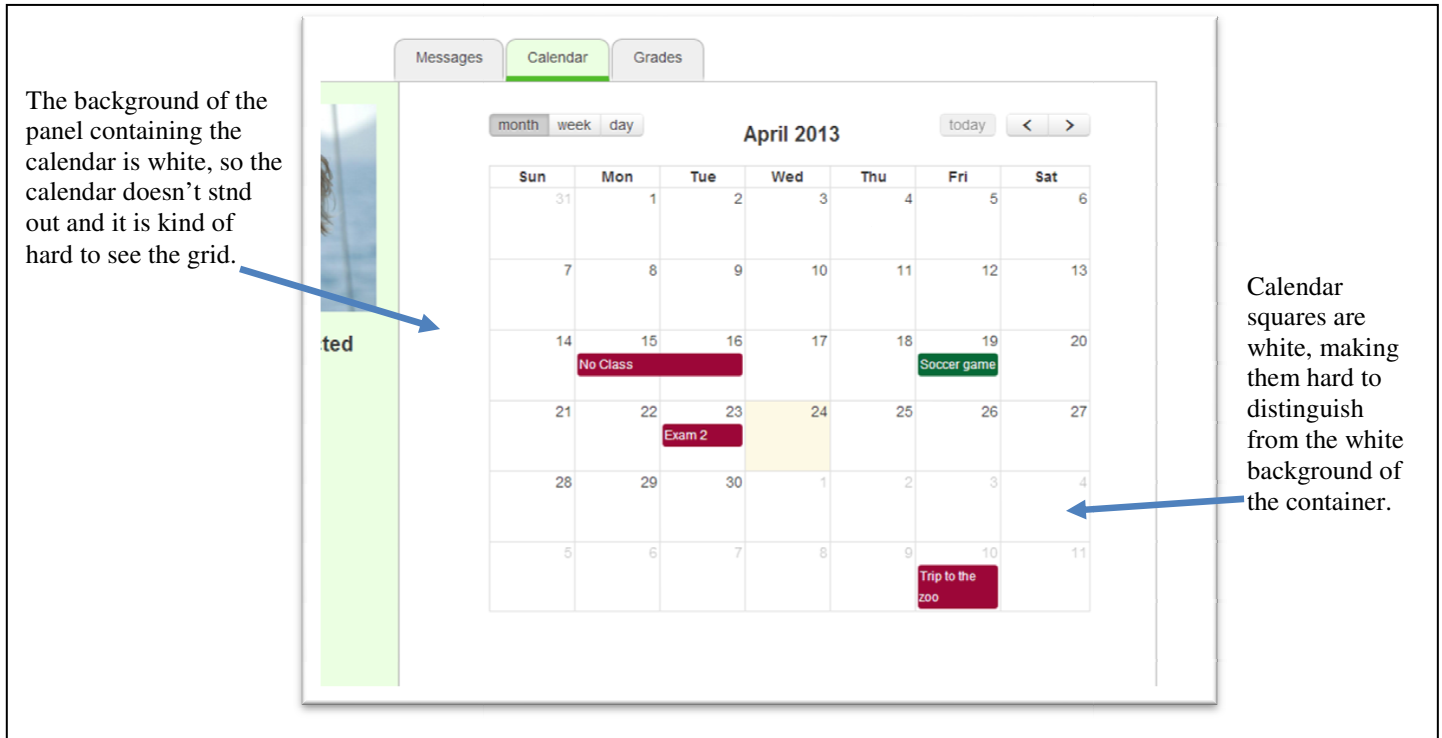


Figure 7. White calendar on white background.

## Grades

I think that the idea of being able to share grades with parents easily is a really important function and something crucial to your website idea, so it was a really nice way to have the gradebook presented and

11) *Consistency/Aesthetic*: As mentioned above it is confusing that when a row in the grade table is hovered over it becomes emphasized. However, even when no rows are being hovered over, the alternating row color also presents some confusion. When no rows of the table are highlighted the rows alternate between gray and white. I didn't notice this until I had highlighted all but one of the gray rows, and I could not figure out why the remaining gray row was grayed out and at first I thought it was indicating that the student was somehow inactive or not selectable. I know that the initial alternating colors makes the table a lot more readable, but then maybe also alternate the highlighting color so that it is darker/lighter as well to remain consistent? This effect can be seen in Figure 8. Severity: minor

| STUDENT        | HW 1 | HW 2 | Exam 1 | Total Points | Average | Grade |
|----------------|------|------|--------|--------------|---------|-------|
| CLASS AVERAGE: | 83.5 | 85.6 | 86.2   | 255.3        | 85.1    | B     |
| Greg           | 98   | 95   | 103    | 296          | 98.7    | A+    |
| Danielle       | 80   | 72   | 84     | 236          | 78.7    | C+    |
| Evan           | 90   | 91   | 93     | 274          | 91.3    | A-    |
| Sarah          | 64   | 77   | 74     | 215          | 71.7    | C-    |
| Barbara        | 102  | 98   | 96     | 296          | 98.7    | A+    |
| Elisa          | 93   | 93   | 80     | 266          | 88.7    | B+    |
| Steve          | 88   | 89   | 95     | 272          | 90.7    | A-    |
| Mary           | 81   | 82   | 89     | 252          | 84      | B     |
| Marcus         | 100  | 100  | 90     | 290          | 96.7    | A+    |

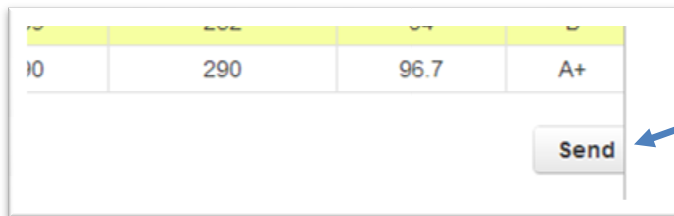
Initially, if no students are selected, the table alternates between gray and white rows (making it easy to read).

Then as students are selected, their rows in the grade table are highlighted yellow, but if they are not highlighted the background color remains the default. Therefore, if all of the gray rows are selected except for one (in this case Elisa's row), her row stands out just as much as the highlighted rows.

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Figure 8. Alternating table row colors.

12) *Aesthetic*: The send button on this page is aligned oddly so that the right side is cut off by the side of the panel. It is also inconsistent with the "Send" button from the messages screen in two ways. First being the alignment (the messages send button is not aligned with the right) and the second is the font weight, the one on the grade page is bold and the one on the messages page is not bold. See Figure 9. Severity: cosmetic.



This is the send button on the Grades Page. It is cut off by the right edge of the panel and the text weight is bold on the button.

This is the send button on the Messages Page. It is not aligned with the right side of the panel, and the text weight is not bold.

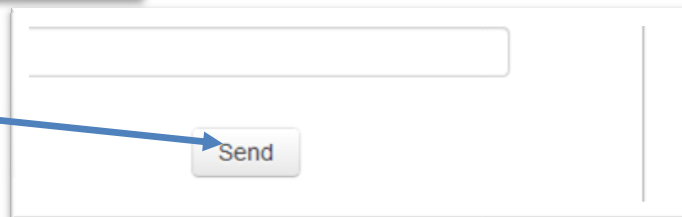


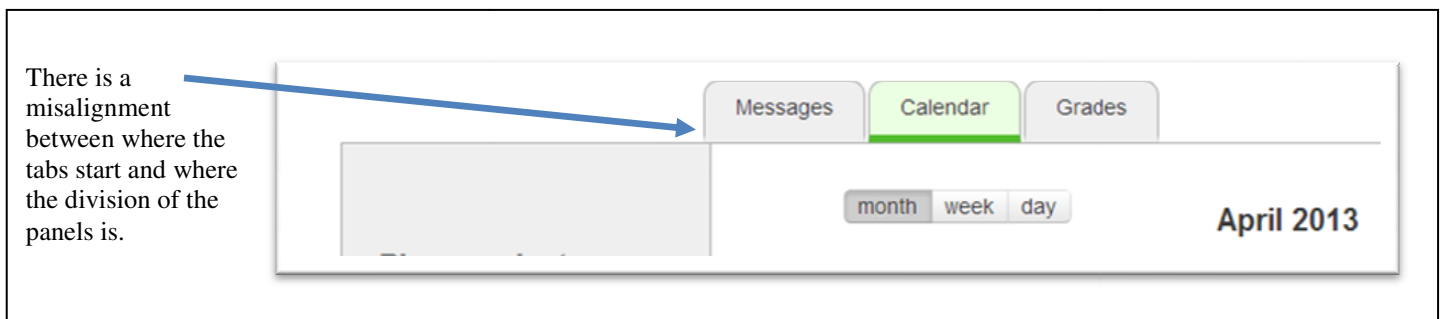
Figure 9. Send buttons (grades and messages pages).

- 13) *Safety*: This page is very ambiguous as to what information is being sent and who it is being sent to. I know that the functionality of the button is not currently implemented, but it is unclear who will be receiving the grade information of the selected students. This is a situation in which it would be very bad to send the grade report to the wrong parent or have grade information released by accident. I also wanted to be able to add a message or at least see the format of the message I was going to send (i.e. be taken to another screen to see the layout of how the grades would be sent or personalize them with more information for the parents). I don't really know how to illustrate this with a screenshot, but basically after you click the send button (depicted above in Figure 9), the selections clear and presumably some sort of message would be sent. Severity: major
- 14) *Anticipation/Efficiency*: When sharing grades with parents I was expecting there to be a way to send just one grade or select which grades are being shared instead of sharing all of the student's information every time. I tried to select a column in the table to do something like send the Exam 1 grades to the parents after the students complete that test or something along those lines, but it is not possible. Actually, I discovered quickly it is not actually possible to select anything in the table, which is slightly inefficient because to change selections you need to go all the way back to the left selection panel. This is more of a suggestion and expected functionality than an issue with the interface, so no screenshot applies. Severity: minor

## Overall

I really like the overall design and idea I think that it is simple to understand, and there isn't too much going on or extraneous information or buttons anywhere.

- 15) *Good*: Color scheme/overall feel of the site. I think it is a really simple layout and overall very nice. Since there are photographs having a minimalist color scheme is good so that it doesn't look too busy/crazy.
- 16) *Aesthetic*: The design does use boxes to differentiate between the different panels, as oppose to white space, which can make the site feel slightly cleaner. The boxes also lead to things like misalignment of the tabs and the windows (seen in Figure 10). Severity: cosmetic



**Figure 10.** Navigation tab alignment.