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THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING

How do teachers learn?

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The Scholarship of Teaching

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Editor: Jan Worth-Nelson, Interim Director
Thompson Center for Learning & Teaching

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From the Editor:

Dear Colleagues,

It is no accident that I selected the theme "How Teachers Learn" for this volume of *The Scholarship of Teaching*. My arrival at the TCLT a year ago set off cascade of learning for me. The exhilaration and vulnerabilities of being newly situated in a nexus of teaching excellence is still very fresh. I'm continually reminded that we are often at our absolute best -- all our faculties, so to speak, in high gear -- when we're learning.

One of the inestimable joys of my first year has been the opportunity to immerse myself in the literature of the scholarship of teaching. As a writer, I'm closely attuned to how people talk and write about what they do and what they care about – the crafting of ideas and even, elusively, the tone created within the work. The writers of the scholarship of teaching, it seems to me -- Robert Boice in *Advice for New Faculty Members* to Dee Fink's classic *Creating Significant Learning Experiences,* to name just two – are often passionate, positive and galvanizing.

One of my favorites is the new book from the legendary Parker Palmer along with Amherst College physics professor Arthur Zajonc. I've quoted from it often this year. The title alone is a substantial bonbon: *The Heart of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal*. Its tantalizing subtitle is "Transforming the Academy through Collegial Conversations."

What we have here, in Volume Four of the SOT, is a fascinating set of transformative collegial conversations.

In fact, it is Parker Palmer to whom our lead author turns. Teddy Robertson's beautifully reflective essay re-examines Palmer's first book, *The Courage to Teach*. If her richly contemplative essay seems tinged with a valedictory quality, perhaps it's because she is about to retire. She does not squander the significance of the moment. Her observations from a lifetime of teaching are spirited and compassionate as she concludes with verve, "there are still things I can learn."

In the wake of that rousing assertion, you'll hear from two heroines and facilitators of teaching excellence at UM–Flint, Marian Wright, benefactor, and Lois Rosen, the founding director of the TCLT. You'll hear from a self-described "novice lecturer," Brian Johnson, and you'll hear from a half dozen veteran faculty at the peak of their powers – Judith Ableser, Hannah Furrow, Terry Horgan, Peggy Kahn, Marcus Paroske and Sarah Rosaen.

I'm honored to offer these essays. They energetically communicate that we are not just a community of teachers, but a community of learners -- vibrant, curious, and, dare I say it, loving.

Have a great year!

Jan Worth-Nelson
Interim Director
Thompson Center for Learnign & Teaching
Lecturer of English

On Reading Parker Palmer Late in Life

by Theodosia Robrtson, Associate Professor
Department of History

Word of Introduction

When The Scholarship of Teaching asked Dr. Robertson, longtime history professor, Eastern Europeanist and translator of the works of Bruno Schulz , what we should say about her, her response was so concisely appropriate, and so true to her character, that we are taking the liberty of quoting it verbatim. She wrote that she "is always trying to grow and change---hence, her foray into the electronic world with her hand held by young, strong and smart students. She is confident that older and younger can be partners in this new online world which is so natural for them and so amazing for her. Yet, the human problems of life persist of course, and she may have more experience with that than they do at their ages. They and she can learn from one another . . ."

It's ten minutes to the hour. Walking down the hall I can see into the classroom where students are settling in, the laptop users along the wall outlets, puffy down jackets chinked between chairs; it is winter. Rising above the color and buzz a lanky male perches cross-legged atop one of the tables in the back of the room. Ball cap bill turned to the back, he calls out good naturedly, "Hey, Professor, why the big smile---is it because you are going to put the screws to us with this quiz?" He means the first of four quizzes during the course; it's the end of the second week of classes. Time to get down to business. He looks incredulous when I reply that I'm smiling because I am so happy to be there.

The cross-legged student is a charmer---smart and susceptible to being engrossed by the material of this course. And like many twenty-something males who turn up in classes today, pretty much fearless in the face of my academic, or at least grade-dispensing, authority. I have arrived early to position the electronic props essential for the next hour and fifteen minutes of concentration. The choreography of the contemporary classroom. Several students approach me with personal issues--future absences, work and family problems. Meantime I blank out the screen now humming down from the ceiling; at a later point I will want these students' full attention on my words. Lecture materials cascade out of my bag onto the table, layered like strata on an archeological site. The hubbub subsides; the cross-legged student has slipped down silently from the table into his chair. We begin.

What makes this twenty-first century classroom life congenial, a source of satisfaction different from before---when I wore a suit and the room was hushed until I filled it with my voice? Where are the challenges of teaching in this changed atmosphere?

These questions were gathering in my mind in the early weeks of a recent winter semester when an interview with Parker Palmer popped up in on NPR. I recognized his name but had never read his book with the title that grabs: *The Courage to Teach*. So, decades after I'd begun to practice the craft, I sought out a manual. Decades into collecting materials and ideas, tips and techniques, it seemed high time to read this influential classic.

The Courage to Teach dates from 1998 and since then many of its concepts have percolated through pedagogy: the community of teachers and learners, acceptance of different learning styles, the futility of external power over students, the need for authentic dialogue in the classroom. These notions are familiar now. College and university centers for learning and teaching have promoted them across American campuses. Books and teaching materials of all kinds have disseminated classroom techniques (although Palmer is chary of the term) that foster successful learning.

Reading *The Courage to Teach* unearthed memories from the past. The title echoes Paul Tillich's 1952 volume *The Courage to Be*, a philosophical-theological reflection on the mid-twentieth-century anxiety of meaninglessness, fear of freedom and autonomy, and the consequent appeal of totalitarianism. Coinciding with American interest in existentialism in the latter 1950s, *The Courage to Be* was read in colleges and seminaries in the 1960s, cited in the pulpit and in *Time* magazine. Perhaps Tillich's postwar analysis of the human condition (or its title) must have spoken to Palmer. At least, this was my supposition. To teach without a sense of self, to stand with an aura of authority before learners perhaps adrift in an era of anxiety courts dangers ethical and political. Whatever our subject matter, we are not simply purveyors of "objective" information. In any case, nearly six decades after Tillich the availability of information has so proliferated that it compels teachers to devote time to teaching judgment and criteria beyond facts and data. Our role with students---as with ourselves---is to be part of a quest for understanding and, in Tillich's terms, a quest for meaning.

Reading *The Courage to Teach* also sent me back to a second book from the pre-Palmerian past: Carl Rogers' *On Becoming a*

Person, published in 1961. Rogers opened up the world of the human personality beyond my inherited cultural and parental understandings and introduced me to Kierkegaard's injunction to become "that self which one truly is." The dignity and respect that Rogers' fully attentive and non-judgmental stance accords another human being fixed the phrase "client-centered therapy" in my vocabulary. Palmer's several references to Martin Buber and "I and Thou" must have been a clue. *On Becoming a Person* offered hope and optimism; it imparted a different kind of confidence to meet the world than the baccalaureate diploma I attained.[1]

The opening chapters of *The Courage to Teach* deal with identity and integrity, fear and paradox---Palmer is big on paradox, not surprising for a Quaker and mystic. All these chapters survey what he terms the "inner landscape" of teaching and learning. Now, about midway through, however, the ground shifts: Parker Palmer moves from the teacher-learner relation to the centrality of the subject matter as the terrain where both meet.[2] The classroom is neither student-centered nor teacher-centered; it is subject-centered.[3] Something of a surprise here. Still expecting some *ur*-formulation of recent educational mottoes, I re-read the passage. Of course; we knew this all along. How could it be otherwise? It is the subject matter that lured us into our fields in the first place.

... my focus has shifted from masses of detail to problems and questions that continue to puzzle me after several decades of teaching... To paraphrase Palmer, our subjects are large and complex, while our knowledge and our skills remain imperfect and partial.

Reviewing my lecture notes the night before a teaching day, I am amazed at their density of information. Single-spaced with penciled notes crawling up the margins, their thoroughness is startling. Almost as startling to me is how my focus has shifted from masses of detail to problems and questions that continue to puzzle me after several decades of teaching. Some initially intrigued me in graduate courses; others have emerged over time. I have pursued them on my own, but I notice that more and more I raise them in the classroom. For their part, students pose questions to which I can only respond that I do not have an answer, but that the question is good and worth some research. To paraphrase Palmer, our subjects are large and complex, while our knowledge and our skills remain imperfect and partial. The shift away from masses of detailed material has opened space for exchanges in an area once chock a block with data. In the hour and fifteen minutes formerly too short to cram in the requisite coverage of material I feel a certain spaciousness.

Gathering in my mind this particular semester was a fresh awareness that each time I begin a Polish or Russian history course my own excitement as a learner returns. Once again, I am in thrall to my field, Slavic studies, just as I had been as a graduate student fascinated by history, literature, language. At that time Russian Formalism and the monumental figures of Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) dominated the field. We graduate students sailed along boldly, intrepid under the twin flags of binary oppositions and the dialogic imagination. I did not become a linguist or a literary theorist, but the insights of Jakobson and Bakhtin marked my understanding of Slavic languages and literatures, history and culture. The most basic notions of Jakobson and Bakhtin have nourished the lectures that I've composed, the readings I've chosen, and the discussions I've tried to stimulate. They nestle deep in every course.

Despite its prolixity, Palmer's subtitle, "Exploring the Inner Landscape of the Teaching Self", touched on something I recognized: congruity between the teacher's inner and outer life, harmony between one's knowledgeable self and the self who teaches. The teacher's inner and outer lives meld without tension along the terrain of the course subject matter. In my own experience some congruity and harmony have grown increasingly palpable in recent years. I think I can even date it from roughly the time that texting replaced cell phone ringing, and students' classroom comportment took another swerve downward.

When *The Courage to Teach* first appeared in print, the informality of teaching had already been advancing for three decades, since the late 1960s. Today colleagues decry the disappearance of classroom decorum. Syllabi catalog the proscriptions: alimentary (food and noisy wrappers), sartorial (hats), electronic (phones and laptops). The list grows yearly. Perhaps we should be surprised that the teacher-learner encounter still involves any layers of convention at all. Vestiges do remain. When the chips are down---a student challenges my expertise, all electronic equipment fails, a death occurs on campus---I feel the layers fall away. Sudden exposure reveals the self; I teach who I really am. Palmer calls it teaching from within.

Outside of class students seem perpetually *en route*: they email from their smart phones. They work several jobs or must be absent from class to do training for a job, having searched for months and finally landed one. They care for siblings. They seem less and less healthy. Students' inner and outer lives are in struggle, not harmony. The fragmentation of work and learning challenges the vaunted multi-tasking capabilities of their generation, sabotages their efforts to focus, to concentrate. Learning requires concentration and not only now in the classroom. They will need the same ability to concentrate in the future, to persevere in jobs, and to pursue what we exhort as life-long learning. What facilitates concentration---beyond

manners and decorum? I think it is fascination with a subject so absorbing that one forgets oneself. How can I entice these students to enter deeply into the subject matter of our course, deeply enough to promote the concentration essential now? If students can concentrate deeply here in the classroom, perhaps they can replicate the process elsewhere and repeatedly in life.

This same semester when reading Parker Palmer, I watched a PBS program in which a young African woman imprisoned during civil war in her country and threatened with torture or execution, recounted how she kept her sanity by learning a foreign language. Her desperate concentration helped her maintain some small degree of equanimity in inhuman conditions. She turned incarceration and maltreatment into a time for learning; learning became a refuge. Psychologically as well as physically, she survived. Her story reminded me of the many memoirs of concentration camp victims and Gulag prisoners who recited Torah or poetry from memory. The power of concentration, of total immersion in a world of knowledge beyond ourselves, can support the human spirit in the most acute, relentless, and terrifying situations we know.

And what of the elusive congruity between the teacher's inner and outer life? That I experience congruence in my existence in the classroom today, an inner and outer life that have come together, is a convergence of disparate life experiences. The many pieces that have gradually moved toward connection have jagged edges and have been for decades far apart. Accidental experiences which first took me to Poland and encounters with amazing people there and along the way (few were scholars) shaped both my learning and my development as a person. Only the distance of years reveals how valuable were experiences, collisions with people and events over which I had so little control. Now what seems pivotal in the process was the attraction, the captivation with a subject that occurred and that impelled me to study, to concentrate. Understanding---knowledge---emerged slowly and partially. Time has intensified this dimension of what Palmer phrased as "the centrality of the subject."

What seems to make this twenty-first century teaching life congenial and satisfying to me is somehow connected to the informality of the classroom which allows me to experience the congruence between my inner and outer life, my scholarly and teaching self, a shared humanity with my students.

What seems to make this twenty-first century teaching life congenial and satisfying to me is somehow connected to the informality of the classroom which allows me to experience the congruence between my inner and outer life, my scholarly and teaching self, a shared humanity with my students. The challenge of teaching in this changed atmosphere involves finding new ways to let the subject matter captivate students, and so in turn promote the concentration that allows learning to develop. If I can exhibit that congruity at all, then perhaps such an experience can give students hope. Hope that their fragmentation, their anxiety, may gradually abate. Confidence that captivation may occur when a student finds his or her subject.

I'm glad that I found Parker Palmer late in my teaching life. Had someone handed me *The Courage to Teach* years ago, I probably would have been impatient with it. I would have skimmed it, frustrated at the tedium of therapeutic language. But just now it hits the spot. There are still things I can learn. I can read it for teaching, but better, I can read it for myself.

Endnotes

[1]In an October 2000 review of *The Courage to Teach,* Neil Lutsky noted Parker Palmer's debt to Carl Rogers, writing that "there's more than a faint echo of Carl Rogers in Parker Palmer (although Rogers is not mentioned in the book). What matters most in Palmer's scheme is the apparent authenticity of the teacher's commitment to his or her vocation and role. Inauthentic teaching reflects a turn from the deep personal valuing of the self toward, largely, the conditions of worth specified by the norms of contemporary 'objectivist' culture."

Lutsky, N. (2002). "Should it matter who the teacher is? A review of Parker Palmer's The Courage to Teach." In W. Buskist, V. Hevern, & G. W. Hill, IV, (Eds.). *Essays from e-xcellence in teaching, 2000-2001* (chap. 7). Retrieved [June 30, 2009] from the Society for the Teaching of Psychology Web site: http://teachpsych.org/resources/e-books/eit2000/eit00-07.html.

[2]Palmer shifts gears a second time with the last section of the book on the social microcosm.

[3]Ch. Four, pp. 116-117.

Editor's note:

The TCLT is pleased to feature both of Palmer's books, *The Courage to Teach* (2009) and *The Heart of Higher Education* (2010) in our resource library. The books are available to all UM-Flint faculty on a first-come, first-served basis. If you are interested in borrowing a resource, please call 237-6508 or drop by the TCLT, located at 241 French Hall.

"Who's John Wayne?"

by Terrence Horgan, Associate Professor
Department of Psychology

Word of Introduction

While Psychology Professor Horgan vividly remembers his own childhood, he confesses in this essay how he has painfully learned that not all reference points from that distant past work well in communicating challenging concepts to today's students. Thus when we attempt to enliven our teaching with examples and anecdotes, he suggests, we need to pay attention to the uncomprehending stares—he is, after all, a scholar and researcher of nonverbal behavior. "If we expect our students to crack open a textbook and read about people and events of yesteryear," he concludes, "then we should be willing to listen to what students have to say about the current year."

How do educators learn? As a psychologist, I'd say that a process that involves reflection, insight, acceptance, and mastery can be just as helpful to educators as it is to clients in therapy. And, for educators and clients alike, there's a need to understand how the past influences the present, and how the present can be used to deal with the past. In this article, I'll discuss my long therapy, er, rather learning session related to these points. I'll describe how my past hindered my teaching effectiveness, and how the above-noted process helped me to think about ways to use the present to get students in touch with the past. I fully recognize that the theme of the story that you're about to read is as old as the hills. I only hope that the details of my story will give pause to those educators in the social sciences who might not be aware of, or know how to get rid of, the historical baggage that they bring into the classroom.

Reflection

I remember having to suffer through it as a child. People much older than I, usually my parents, would sit me down and attempt to teach me something relevant about life by referencing people and events of their youth. These life lessons often started out with the phrase, "When I was your age." And it wasn't uncommon to hear something along the way about how their friends felt the same way they did about the matter at hand. I had a few professors do much the same years later when I was a young adult in college. This time, however, the lessons contained nuggets of information that someone much older than I thought I should know. What remained the same was the packaging; the kind that suggested that a regift or at least something that few people really wanted or needed was inside. No, the professor didn't say, "When I was your age," but he or she did try to make lecture material *relevant* to my life by citing historical figures and events as if they should be as fresh and appealing to me as they were to him or her and, presumably, his or her colleagues.

Now I don't know about you, but my ears would often glaze over when these particular life lessons and lectures began. To be sure, I did engage in deep and critical thinking, but usually not about the subject matter at hand. I'd think, "He's so out of touch." I'd wonder, "Things are so different now, doesn't she know this?" I'd say to myself, "I hope that I don't do this when I get older." And, of course, I'd engage in that most important metacognitive activity of all: "Remember to keep him/her thinking that you care about and understand the relevance of what he/she is talking about by nodding your head in agreement and smiling in appreciation often."

I didn't dare think about sharing such thoughts with my parents or professors. Times were different back then, you know. Yet maybe they needed to hear me say that I couldn't relate to what they were saying or that the relevance of their lessons and examples had escaped me. Perhaps they would've realized that they needed to update the people, figures and events that they cited. But who would they have turned to to do that? Their social network was probably somewhat restricted to people their own age, who knew about and talked about these very same people, figures and events.

Thank God that's all behind me. Finally, it's my turn. I'm the one who's older. I'm the one who can give life lessons at home and lectures at campus. And it's about time. As a reminder to myself I presume, I tell my 14-year-old daughter what I had to go through when I was her age. No matter, though; I'm confident that I'm different from my parents and professors. I'm on top on things.

For example, when I lecture at campus, I try to teach important concepts in the field of psychology by relating them to the people and events that my students will find interesting or relevant to their lives. I hope to engage students' critical thinking skills by doing so. I remember one such instance in particular. I was attempting to bring the Jungian construct of the "Animus," which is the idealized conceptualization of the male in the minds of females, to life in my theories of personality class (Jung, 1971). When doing so, there's a need to help students understand how a woman's knowledge of the

idealized psychological tendencies of men, which is part of her animus, might've been shaped by culturally transmitted symbols or images of masculinity in the media. To move this process along, I decided that I should cite an iconic figure of the western cinema, somebody who everybody had seen in a movie or read about in a book or magazine.

This is when my troubles began.

I settled on John Wayne for my example. After I said his name, there were, I'm sure, a few smiles and nods from my students. Yet nobody really responded to the name or showed the I-understand-the-connection look on his/her face. How could my students even think about the plausibility of an "animus" existing or, if they did think it existed, how it might lead to relationship problems between men and women in their world, if they didn't understand the relevance of the example I used?

I soon realized that the misconnection between me and them was even more severe when a woman in her early twenties raised her hand and asked me sheepishly, "Who's John Wayne?" "You got to be kidding," I thought to myself. Then I wondered, "Isn't John Wayne part of our American heritage?" I knew I had to come up with another example. I asked, "How about Clint Eastwood?" Only a few eyes shot open with understanding. I couldn't help but think that there were many students sitting in my classroom wondering, "Who's Clint Eastwood?" or "Is he suggesting that that old dude who directs movies represents the ideal male?" I stood in front of class desperately searching my memory banks for someone who might represent this Jungian notion of the idealized male figure in the minds of females. I drew a blank.

There also was the time when I tried explaining realistic conflict theory (viz., intergroup tensions can arise when groups compete for a limited resource; Levine & Campbell. 1972) to my social psychology class by referencing the *Harry Potter* book series by J. K. Rowling. I really felt with it when I talked so confidently about how the rivalry between students from the "Slytherin" and "Gryffindor" houses at "Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry" was strengthened when they had to compete with each other for the prized "House Cup." I was stunned when that reference was met with a few snickers. Either through their telepathic powers or my sudden clairvoyance, I knew they were thinking that "*Harry Potter* is so yesterday." I wanted to try again. I thought about the books that my 14-year-old daughter was reading. Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series came to mind. I hesitated, though, because I wasn't familiar with the books in that series, having heard only tidbits of information about them from my daughter. I remembered learning about territorial disputes between werewolves and vampires, something that might be of relevance to realistic conflict theory, which is what I was trying to teach them. I made a glib reference to the characters and disputes in that series. It worked. I heard a couple of "oh, yeahs" from my students.

Insight

The "Who's John Wayne?" question taught me that what I thought would be a commonsensical example of the "animus" makes no sense to students if he's no longer commonly talked about. And with respect to the Harry Potter misfire, I realized that what seems like contemporary culture to me, fresh and appealing, isn't necessarily so from the perspective of my students.

These experiences, as well as others like them, have taught me that I'm probably not much different from my parents or professors of old. As I've aged, I've gotten more and more out of touch with contemporary culture. I'm also not fully appreciative of this fact, especially when I'm giving life lessons at home or lecturing at campus. And I'm not as mindful as I should be of the fact that the world of my students is different from my own. I'm sure I wouldn't want to know how many times my students have said to themselves, "he's so out of touch," or "things are so different now, doesn't he know this?"or "I hope I don't do that when I get older," when I'm citing people and events that I think will make my lecture material seem interesting and relevant to their lives.

Acceptance

Gaining insight into oneself is one thing; accepting it fully, another. It takes time.

After the "Who's John Wayne?" lecture, I sent an email to my colleagues letting them know what had happened. As a social psychologist, I realize that this is a natural tendency among people. We examine the validity of our own views by comparing them with those held by people who are similar to us (Social Comparison Theory; Festinger, 1954). My parents probably did this when they let me know that their friends or co-workers felt the same way they did about the life lessons they were giving me at home.

As for me, I knew that my colleagues would've heard of John Wayne and would agree with my decision to reference him when I had to describe aspects of the "Animus" to my students. And Harry Potter wouldn't have seemed like ancient history to them. Several of my colleagues responded, sharing equally dumbfounding stories about how their students hadn't gotten references that they had used in class. The tone of these emails suggested that their students should've known or appreciated their references. I felt reassured that what I had done in the classroom was right after all.

My professorial smugness soon fizzled out, though. I knew that reaching out to my colleagues for reassurance was the wrong thing to do. Why? The individuals we turn to, whether as parents or professors, are likely to be similar to us, especially with respect to age. Thus, the people and events that seem relevant to them are not likely to be much different from our

own.

Moreover, I understood that I'm susceptible to the false-consensus effect (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). Because I associate with others (viz., colleagues) who are similar to me, such as in age, I'm more likely to hear my opinions expressed by them as well. This will result in my opinions being more mentally accessible to me than those that are different from mine (MacLeod & Campbell, 1992). Consequently, I might believe that more people, including my students, share my opinions on a variety of issues than is actually the case.

Let me illustrate this effect with another class example. Every year I give a lecture on the topics of human attraction and attractiveness in my social psychology class. This involves covering the evolutionary perspective on physical beauty; specifically, the facial and bodily features that might signal reproductive health and thus physical attractiveness in humans. After reviewing these so-called objective features of human beauty, I have to provide an example of a famous person who possesses those features for the class to consider. Halle Berry always comes to my mind first. I have a picture of her on one of my PowerPoint slides for this lecture series.

The question is whether Halle Berry is the appropriate person to reference. She was the epitome of beauty when I was a younger man. Moreover, so many people my age have told me that she is, in their opinion, a beautiful woman. Thus, as would be predicted by the false-consensus effect, I'm likely to overestimate the extent to which my students see her as a relevant example of physical beauty, too.

Social comparison theory explains why my viewpoint continues to be anchored in my past, and thus resistant to change. First, I know that if I were to ask a professor around my age whether Halle Berry is a good, relevant example of physical beauty, something that I'd be inclined to do anyway, his or her answer would be "yes." I also know that I haven't been as interested in the views of undergraduate students or, for that matter, much older colleagues, because I see both as different from me. Truthfully, I don't know who they'd see as a relevant example of physical beauty, although I'm fairly confident that Halle Berry wouldn't be the first person who comes to mind. Not surprisingly, that picture of Halle Berry has been on my PowerPoint slide for years now.

Notwithstanding that picture of Halle Berry, I know and accept the fact that, at times, I'm out of touch. More important, I've learned how my past represents a potential block to reaching today's students with some lecture material, both of the classical and contemporary type.

If you teach in the social sciences, you might be wondering if any of this applies to you. Maybe it doesn't. But consider the following. Do you *really* know how current the people and events are that you reference when you try to connect lecture material to the world of your students? Is it possible that the "who's" and "what's" that you cite aren't nearly as interesting or relevant to your students as they are to you and your colleagues?

Imagine that you want to lecture on how decision-making can go awry in groups, such as with the phenomenon of groupthink (Janis, 1982). What relevant world event would you bring to the attention of your students? Would you think of the Challenger disaster right away? (I would, for I vividly recall the day that that tragedy occurred. Moreover, the people I know --- other social psychologists my age --- would likely point to that disaster as a good example of groupthink. The textbook I use in my social psychology class also cites that tragedy in its section dealing with groupthink). If you do, keep in mind that many of your undergraduate students weren't even alive when the Challenger disaster took place. That event, so fresh and real to you, will seem more historical than relevant to the lives of many of your students. In order for them to see the relevance of poor group decision-making to their world, you would need to discuss, at some point, a more recent world event, one that they would've talked about with their friends and family.

As is the case with clients in therapy, it's comforting to know that others are going through what you are. This was the case for me when I learned that I wasn't alone in the land of the out-of-touch. I recently had to evaluate a gifted, 40-year-old colleague's lecture on human attraction in introduction to psychology. She was telling her students how standards of beauty can change over time, from people valuing a thin to a more full-figured body type among women. She then said the names of two famous people to bring this point home: "Twiggy" and "Marilyn." As I sat there, I couldn't help but think that some, if not many, of the 18- or 19-year-olds listening to her had no idea who she was referring to. I knew that she needed to reference modern-day examples of "Twiggy" and "Marilyn" body types in order to make her original examples more meaningful to the class (e.g., "Marilyn" had a body type similar to so-and-so). She didn't, though. She might've assumed that the names "Twiggy" and "Marilyn" would automatically activate the appropriate images of Lesley Hornby and Marilyn Monroe in the minds of her students. Or maybe she just didn't know who the modern counterparts are of these two historical figures.

Mastery

At times educators need to minimize as opposed to highlight the time rift that often exists between them and their students. How might educators in the social sciences stay in touch with contemporary culture in order to keep their examples interesting and relevant to the world of their students? Having children is one strategy. For example, when I lectured about realistic conflict theory, I should've known to talk about *Twilight* as opposed to *Harry Potter*, as the former is the book series that currently holds my 14-year-old daughter's attention the most now. There is, of course, a question about the efficiency

of this 14- to 18-year strategy.

There are other strategies that, if used properly and in conjunction with one another, can help educators stay in touch with contemporary culture. All involve listening to students. The utilization of these strategies should put educators in a better position to call upon examples that will help their students understand the relevance of lecture material to their own lives.

Listening to students

First, it's important to survey your class after you have referenced people and events that you think are interesting and relevant. Blank stares (and maybe even smiles and nods of appreciation) might signify that your examples haven't registered with many in your class. If this is the case, then recognize that this is a teachable moment for you. It's time for you to reflect on your past and wonder if it is interfering with your teaching effectiveness in the present day. This opens up the possibility of control over your past in the classroom.

Another way to stay in touch is to hold face-to-face meetings with your students. If you have concerns about the examples that you plan on using in an upcoming lecture, then ask your students how they feel about them in advance. For example, during my office hours, I could've asked a few students if they had heard of John Wayne. If they were only vaguely familiar with him, then I could've asked them who they felt represented an idealized image of masculinity in the media. What I heard from them might've opened my eyes to contemporary culture from their perspective.

Lastly, we can join social networking sites. Here's where we can read others' tweets, blogs, and posts as a way of learning about the things that are currently of interest to them. More important, you'll be exposed to the views of others from a wide range of age groups, including college-aged students (e.g., former undergraduate students who are now in graduate school). Yes, it's true that you'll encounter a lot of inane chatter on such sites; on my Facebook account, for example, "friends" have wall posts about what they are currently doing at home (e.g. watching TV). However, you'll also read about their current likes and interests (e.g., books, TV shows, movies, music) and, from some of them, get a smattering of commentary about famous people (e.g., politicians, media figures, TV/ movie stars, music stars, sports figures, etc.) as well as events (political, social, entertainment, technological, etc.) that have just happened.

The Internet

Many of you are probably thinking that, unlike our parents or professors in the past, we have the Internet. The world is at our fingertips, even contemporary culture. That much is for certain. For instance, if a student were to say to me that a particular actor represents an idealized version of masculinity to her, I could do an extensive Google search and educate myself about him. For many topics in personality and social psychology, this is how I can get exposed to information about contemporary culture that isn't contained in academic journals and textbooks or discussed extensively on National Public Radio.

However, the Internet shouldn't be used in isolation, but rather in conjunction with listening to your students in the formats mentioned earlier. As I'm sure many educators have discovered already, this magnificent tool can be somewhat unwieldy at times because of the breadth of its database. I'll hit on the problems associated with the Internet by discussing how I dealt with the task of having to locate a famous person who is both widely known to students and represents a physically attractive person from the evolutionary perspective.

What I did was a Google search of attractive actors, actresses and models, with the family filter on of course. This slapdash search revealed seemingly countless images of young celebrities who were unfamiliar to me. When I went to their websites, their bios or profiles contained links or references to others who were equally famous and unfamiliar to me. These celebrities had their own websites, complete with references and links to other mysterious, but apparently well-known, people. If I hadn't grown so weary, this search would've gone on indefinitely. The information overload was overwhelming and maddening, especially given that I had to select a person or two from this sea of options.

Sure, I did come across an image of a young actress or actor who I recognized from a movie, but I usually didn't remember his or her name. And when I checked out his or her website, the name of the person was only vaguely familiar to me and not something I was likely to commit to memory easily. Moreover, I wasn't confident that my students would see this person as a relevant example of a physically attractive male/female.

This lack of confidence stemmed from prior mistakes. I remember one time several years ago when I showed an image of a then 30-something Denzel Washington to my undergraduates. I selected him from a Google search because I thought he was an actor that college students would know and appreciate. Moreover, Denzel Washington possesses facial characteristics (viz., symmetricalness) linked to human attractiveness, according to evolutionary psychologists (Mealey, Bridgstock, & Townsend, 1999; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1993). But, alas, a young woman in class told me that Denzel Washington "isn't attractive because he's an old man."

Concluding remarks

What I'm recommending may rub a few educators the wrong way. Believe me, it's not easy for me to even suggest that we should stay in touch with contemporary culture in order to be better educators. I spend my spare time reading history books, not *People* magazine. Importantly, I'm *not* suggesting that we dispense with references to historical events and figures.

Communicating that information is of the utmost importance to the education of our students. Nonetheless, it must be counterbalanced with discussions revolving around truly contemporary events and people.

To help students understand and think critically about important concepts, such as groupthink, it's crucial that we apply them to genuinely contemporary issues and people --- the ones that are relevant to the lives of our students. If we do this, we can help students understand the importance of related historical events or figures that we, as both educators and (usually) older people, feel they ought to know as well. By valuing and not confusing the old and the new, namely our own past and students' present-day lives, we can help our students do the same, that is, value contemporary *and* historical figures and events. Should my students know about the decision-making leading up to the Challenger disaster? Yes, indeed! Should I know the name of one young famous man who college-aged students would easily recognize as the epitome of the Jungian notion of the animus? Absolutely!

If we expect our students to crack open a textbook and read about people and events of yesteryear --- the ones that may be more meaningful and relevant to us --- then we should be willing to listen to what our students have to say about the current year. This can be done in the classroom, during face-to-face chats, and in cyberspace via social networking sites. This might not be easy for us to do as we get older, especially given how quickly the world seems to be changing in the age of the Internet. Yet it might be critical to our success in the traditional and virtual classrooms of the twenty-first century.

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What I Learned When I Became a German-language Student

by Peggy Kahn, David M. French Distinguished Professor
Department of Political Science

Word of Introduction

What happens when a long-time professor becomes a student again? In short, as Political Science Professor Peggy Kahn describes below, the experience can be jarring, unsettling, humbling, and illuminating. And in the process, she learned – or relearned – essentials of compassionate teaching. Among them, she notes, "our expectations and judgments are often corrupted by the fact that we are teaching things that seem obvious and easy to us, since we have been working on them for decades, and our expectations for quick and complete transformations are surely misplaced."

Three years ago, in order to recapture and go beyond the limited German I knew thirty years ago, I began studying German language, experiencing a transformation from professor to student, an educative reversal rich with discomfort, pleasure, and insights. Of course all faculty continue to learn new things in their lifelong fields of study, but learning something new from the beginning and in conventional classroom settings was different and disorienting.

I made myself a student because I wanted to be able to read German in order to better understand the politics of central Europe, to be able to teach European politics more authentically, and to reconnect with my family's history and my partially European identity. In a more general sense, I felt I had failed myself and violated some of my own core commitments by not really developing another language to a level where I could meaningfully use it to expand my understanding and experience. When as a graduate student and younger researcher I had specialized in British politics, I had abandoned my developing French and German language skills. Resolved to reinsert a second language into my life, in summer 2008 I attended university classes on the Ann Arbor campus, in summers 2009 and 2010 attended intensive 4-week language immersion courses at the Goethe Institute in Freiburg, Germany, and in between and since have continued to study independently.

The university classroom

In my first classes in summer 2008, learning seemed in part a work of conservation and reconstruction, in part a set of new departures. The introductory German I had learned in college, I realized soon after starting my course, had not all disappeared and a lot of half-remembered, unsystematic language knowledge, perhaps even a bit of a feeling for how it all worked, remained. The structured work of a course helped to order, expand, and develop the pieces, and I quickly made progress. General knowledge helped too, as did the German words I had learned over a couple of decades of reading and teaching history and politics. A reader and writer, I benefited from my knowledge of how English works. For some students in my small classes, German was a third language; they already spoke Korean, Chinese, or French, as well as English, and so in some ways also knew how languages worked. There were musicians, some of whom had already studied German diction, who wanted to learn this important language of the musical world. Disciplined and industrious, bright and creative, my fellow students learned fast.

Previous individual and generational experiences may be a resource for the individual student who is trying to learn, but it is also a pedagogical question for the instructor trying to teach. There were telling times when lack of life experience, or perhaps good fortune, made it difficult for my fellow, young students to understand certain texts or issues. I thought perhaps some Flint students would have done better with a one-paragraph short story of Franz Kafka, "Gibt's auf!" This universalized, minimalist story is about a man who awakens one morning, sets off to the train station in what appears to be his daily routine, realizes from his watch and the clock tower that it is later than he thinks, then feels he has suddenly forgotten how to get to his destination. The sight of a policeman raises his hopes, but when the narrator approaches, the policeman smiles (sort of as if having a private joke) and tells him to give up. A lot of students thought this was about a tourist who needed directions, but I thought many UM-Flint students might have come to a different conclusion, seeing this as a comment on personal disorientation in an impersonal, perhaps bureaucratic society, perhaps having met someone like this policeman in their own lives.

In these compressed summer courses, we were required to learn grammar, learn more than a hundred words a week, learn to read and write German, and develop listening and speaking skills. There were textbook and workbook exercises,

oral partnered class exercises, films, children's books (probably the best of the reading), articles and web sites, weekly essays and language learning journals, role plays and quizzes, weekly exams, orals, and a written final. A lot of material was on the web and the web teaching frame, and of course my wireless computer's connectivity was often awry, the Language Resource Center on campus had limited, and no weekend, hours, and web links were sometimes broken. This 7-week summer course followed the exact same model and every assignment and activity of the full-term 14-week 4-credit course. It tested my organizational skills, especially since I had other responsibilities and commitments concurrent with the course (like most students, and certainly those at UM-Flint). I found it difficult to keep track of all the assignments. I had to study many hours a day, every day. Some of the quizzes seemed to me to trivialize information and be somewhat arbitrary. When working on my Language Learning Journal (for about three hours a week we had to expose ourselves to and write about authentic German language in films, texts, conversation, web-exchanges), I was able to read at my level and to my interests. The weekly essay assignments also almost always gave students a choice and allowed for personally meaningful work. Being a student, I discovered, is not really a pleasant feeling, as one is regimented into and held accountable within someone else's structure. I also felt infantilized by not knowing the language; being presented with basic and boring, superficial material; and being taught in an overly structured way. Yet some of the creative assignments, which allowed flexibility and autonomy, helped balance the tough, repetitive and depersonalized work of learning rules and vocabulary.

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Part of my unease was being a student in a certain kind of teaching-learning system. The culture of language teaching and learning on the Ann Arbor campus is high-energy, supported by sophisticated technology, study-abroad possibilities, and a range of marvelous language teachers. However, in the German department, first- and to some degree second-year language courses are designed and planned in detail, day by day, by a course coordinator. The coordinator has surely worked harder and more creatively than any one person can be expected to and brought his idiosyncratic sense of humor to the course. Yet the people with direct responsibility for "teaching" are teaching assistants and lecturers, who teach to the script. On the one hand this ensures standardized course content, while limiting the amount of course development and preparation time required of instructors; but it may also prevent instructors from investing themselves in the courses. I myself am hopelessly invested in another teaching-learning model, where full-time, experienced faculty teach introductory courses that reflect not only the standards of the field but also their own interests and strengths. There is also the matter of the type of language course this was—described as communicative and inductive to distinguish itself from the grammar- and reading-heavy courses that predominated when I was in college. The latter seem to have given me a very good foundation, and speak more to my motivation to read more advanced material.

But nothing could detract from my sense that, through a new language, my world was expanding. Over the summer I propelled myself through quite a few graded readers, including short stories, youth novels, and basic history, and ventured onto a few web sites. It was hard to stop. I was consumed. Sometimes I felt as if my brain were on fire. I neglected almost everything else. I hardly read anything in English, risking expulsion from the book group in which I participate. Sometimes trying to learn German reminded me of a chronic illness I once had: the improvement had been so slow as to be almost imperceptible. But my reading became less labored, and I ventured into progressively more advanced texts. Writing began to come more naturally at somewhat higher levels of complexity. The good parts of the experience were very good, and my underlying motivation got me through the parts that were boring, annoying, or not obviously productive of learning. As I often think to myself in self-defense at the end of my teaching semesters, no one course design or teaching method can possibly satisfy everyone's needs, and we all need to take responsibility for teaching ourselves.

Intensive language immersion in Germany

In summers 2009 and 2010 I joined students from over 60 countries in participating in 4-week intensive language courses at the Goethe Institute in Freiburg, in southwestern Germany. In summer 2009 my non-traditional status seemed to turn from an advantage to a disadvantage, as I and two other older students (one a Spanish teacher of English language and one a Ghanaian working at the Goethe Institute in Accra) found ourselves floundering amidst younger students who had had structured, sequenced, continuous and rigorous German language instruction in their own countries, often from native German speakers. However, when our instructor once heard my friend the Spanish teacher and I arguing in German about which of us was the worst student in the class, she firmly offered us a simple reframing (in German): "You are not 'the worst students,' you are learning." I felt relatively isolated by age and experience and had difficulty creating social relationships with the younger students. I sometimes had difficulty understanding spoken classroom instructions and took my cues from other students.

The pedagogy was good: the underlying principles were that interesting content had to drive the acquisition of language skills (grammar, vocabulary, speaking, writing, listening were embedded in interesting and significant content) and that active practice was key to language development. I was much better at passive language—reading and listening comprehension, than at speaking and spontaneous, or even planned and dictionary-assisted, writing. But I made progress and when I returned to the U.S. I found myself more or less able to read the leading news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, a newfound ability that was an important marker and a cause for rejoicing.

In summer 2010, working at a more advanced level, I was placed in a class of seven remarkable students. They were at a higher language level than I was. Compared with the 2009 students, they had more life experience, more academic degrees and were on average older. We had an energetic, widely educated, flexible and experienced teacher. From France, Russia, Poland, Chile and Algeria, we students had considerable incentive to communicate in and outside of class in our one common language, German. Our teacher fully understood the importance of our individual motivations related to specific content and professional aspirations, and in general she allowed us to pull ourselves along through material and tasks that interested us. We didn't so much learn the language through direct instruction (though there was a lot of advanced grammar), as practice the language. In addition to doing role plays around interesting social and political questions, having current events discussions, and executing thematic mini-projects, we each did a local city project at the end, researching a site in the city and guiding our fellow students to the site and through its history.

I realize from my own experience how important it is that we recognize certain learning successes even when other types of progress or mastery are missing.

I finally felt that I was beginning to come into adulthood in the language, certainly leaving behind the introductory course that had been focused upon very basic everyday usage (basic verbs, basic physical characteristics, family members, rooms in the house, basic transportation) and rather juvenile exercises. Now, for example, we were having discussions about perpetrators and victims in World War II, with a German instructor who lived in society which took collective responsibility for extermination of Jews (she explained that Holocaust was considered a euphemism in Germany) but within which there were multiple perspectives about the war and its relation to German identity; a young Polish student who had been on the fringes of discussion about Poland's victimization and perpetration of anti-Semitism; a Chilean lawyer who raised broad questions about modern history and anti-Semitism across continents; and two French students who had thought deeply about French occupation/collaboration and French resistance. I could more or less read the press and even some more academic work and understand some standard, formal spoken German. My abilities remained uneven—I could read almost anything and say almost nothing, and I struggled to keep in perspective these strengths and deficits. Having entered the language through reading, I was struggling with informal, everyday speech, and apparently creating much merriment through my use of the wrong register sometimes when I spoke.

Some broader insights for teaching

Vygotsky, the 20th century Russian psychologist, argued that we think through language, that language is not only a simple communicative medium but also a thinking and planning structure. At higher levels of education, we teach a more sophisticated conceptual language, in which (or through which) we invite students to think. Learning how to think in a new conceptual language has similarities with thinking and working in a non-native language. My language learning experiences of stumbling and of struggling cannot be entirely different from those of students working on acquiring new categories and ideas in the social sciences.

Students are able to understand concepts and arguments passively, I now see more clearly, before they can use new language actively to produce ideas. What students are able to comprehend but probably under-represent through class discussion and what they are able to demonstrate on multiple choice tests but cannot thoroughly explain in an essay are not unimportant or trivial. I recognize the importance of immersion, or repeated and continued exposure, to the conceptual language and its use. Exposure to a lot of reading and speaking in the conceptual languages we teach are positive and necessary, and we should continue to suggest to students that they read, or listen to National Public Radio, outside of class requirements. My struggles to hit the right tone or language register in German have also helped me see how our students struggle in writing and speaking to make the transition from everyday language to the more conceptual and formal language of higher education and to hit the right tone even in more concrete language.

I could mobilize lots of prior experience and an unusual degree of motivation to help myself learn German. Most students, even if they don't initially recognize it, have connections with areas of inquiry and bodies of knowledge, and these moments of satisfaction and connection can help learners slog through the hard parts. Sometimes the question is how well we as instructors bring these points of contact to the surface, without abandoning content and rigor. I've been fortunate to experience models of intricately interwoven and balanced pedagogy, which have embedded skill development in

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Lessons and Candid Revelations from a Novice Lecturer

By Brian Johnson, Lecturer, School of Education and Human Services
Assistant Program Manager, Office of Educational Opportunity Initiatives

Word of Introduction

Like many lecturers, Brian Johnson came to teaching from another world after becoming a lawyer. Despite his earlier accomplishments, as he describes below, he found the teaching life initially nervewracking. But Johnson had resources to draw upon: his constructivist approach, for one thing, and the influence of his mother, also an educator. Perhaps the most important message of Johnson's account of how he undertook his training as a new lecturer is that he was repeatedly helped by the wisdom and experience of his colleagues. When he was upset, they were there for him with advice and reassurance. When his class plan fell flat, they empathized. Their influence and his experience must have worked: he has just accepted a position as full-time faculty at Grand Valley State.

The constructivist approach to learning shapes my teaching pedagogy and beliefs. I learn more from this theory every day. Although we hear and read about theories and practices, we make sense of what we learn in our own due time. Exams are necessary; however, I believe that a great deal of learning cannot be assessed solely through a multiple choice question. When my students score well on an exam, of course I am pleased. Yet, I am more concerned with whether he or she will be able to apply what they have learned during my class to practical, real-life situations. Mastery of a student's understanding occurs at various times, and in various forms. An inexplicable feeling of fulfillment arises when a student from last semester emails me stating that although we discussed Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in class, she is now conducting an observation of a six-year-old, and is able to relate the concepts that we learned in class to this young child. I also believe that the best teachers are constantly learning and reevaluating their teaching practices. Two semesters ago, while explaining Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to my class, a student described the importance of scaffolding in a much more simplistic form than I ever could. I have since borrowed her description, and continue to use this explanation with my classes to this day. Even as the instructor, experiences and comments from my students constantly reshape my teaching practices, allowing me to become a better teacher, and continuing my role on this earth as a student.

Although I am a novice lecturer, for as long as I can remember, the foundations of teaching have also paralleled my philosophies on life. As a young child, I can remember my mother, an educator, shopping for nametags and bulletin board borders during the summer. Initially, I did not understand this occurrence, and questioned why we had to go into the "teacher's store" during the summer, since school was out. I now understand, and credit my mother, with teaching me a belief that now shapes my teaching philosophies, and which I try to convey to my students: a good teacher never takes a break, and is constantly thinking of ways that he or she can reach their students.

As I approach the end of my second year as a lecturer, I still vividly remember my utter nervousness before I began teaching my first class. Honestly, I still get just as nervous before each class, but am learning to turn this anxiousness into positive energy. Before each class, I shut my door, reflect, and set two goals for the upcoming class: 1) that I will impart knowledge unto my students, and 2) that I will not offend any student by my reactions to his or her comments or beliefs. Though these are but two short goals, they encompass a great deal of ground, and are easier said than done. I have the privilege of sharing office space with two of my mentors, Dr. Linda Pickett and Dr. Hannah Furrow. On one particular occasion, I can recall returning from class quite upset that the lesson that I had taught my class, and was so excited about conveying, received the "deer in the headlights" look from the majority of the class. I immediately explained the situation to Drs. Pickett and Furrow, asking what I might have done wrong, and asking for instant feedback. Both reassured me that not everyone processes information the same way. Not only has this advice taught me patience, it has also taught me that theories I stress within early childhood regarding egocentrism development among a child also extend to this novice lecturer – we all learn differently, and who am I to judge whether a student is grasping a concept solely by their facial expression, or lack thereof? I also gave myself a mental scolding, and reminded myself of the not too long ago days of law school, as I sat in a classroom looking like a "deer in headlights," hoping that my professor would not call on me. I quickly remembered that although I was scared out of my mind to recite the next case, I was learning. Things have a way of making a full circle. Thank you, Socrates.

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Reflections on Learning From Each Other

by Marian E. Wright, Retired Teacher
Benefactor, TCLT Teaching Circle Program

Word of Introduction

An in-service project for middle school language arts teachers led to an unforgettable encounter with a seventh grader named Ronald, whose brave willingness to share his writing about the death of his mother galvanized a classroom. And it galvanized Marian Wright, at the time a language arts curriculum consultant for the Flint Community Schools, to consider not just the power of student writing but the possibilities for Teaching Circles and the Computer Writing Classroom at UM–Flint. And she made it so, thus becoming the benefactor of two immensely fruitful and ongoing initiatives at UM–Flint. This is the story she first shared in person at last spring's mini-summit on teaching and learning.

I must admit that I was a little overwhelmed, yet honored, when Jan Worth-Nelson asked me to write a piece for this issue of *The Scholarship of Teaching*, thinking I didn't have anything to say that was truly noteworthy. After the usual fretting, agonizing and procrastinating, I began thinking about the Teaching Circles and how I became involved. That "thinking" even awakened me in the middle of the night! In my stupor, I quickly grabbed the pen and notepad on the nightstand to capture the ideas, knowing they'd be gone by morning. The thinking turned into reflecting. I began to recall forgotten experiences from over twenty-five years ago and to recognize their role in my active involvement with UM-Flint. That was exciting! Sometimes it is good to take the time to reflect back to the past in order to see how each life experience, in its unique and often subtle way, is preparation for the next endeavor.

These are my reflections.

During the final seven years of my thirty-year teaching career I was employed by the Flint Community Schools as the middle school curriculum consultant for language arts. We were concerned that our students lacked the ability to communicate their ideas and thoughts effectively in writing. We knew the curriculum needed to be changed, but before that could occur there had to be a change in the teachers' perception of what writing is. For most of the teachers, writing was the ability to write a complete sentence with correct grammar, capitalization and punctuation. With a few exceptions, writing was taught from a grammar book and students were graded on correctness. That approach was not working.

Where do you begin? Knowing that the first step in the process of change is recognizing and identifying the need for change, I embarked on a writing awareness campaign. Writing was my focus in verbal and written communications with teachers and administrators. Articles describing the newest theory and techniques in the teaching of writing were made available to teachers, as well as information on writing conferences and graduate courses in writing. The negative results of the state-wide writing assessment were used to stimulate discussion in curriculum meetings (teaching circles?). I spent time with teachers who were giving their students some good writing experiences, validating what they were doing while encouraging and supporting them to try out new ideas. Finally, I began to hear teachers and administrators not only talk about writing, but indicate the need to do something about it. Something was beginning to happen!

In 1984, I met Dr. Lois Rosen who had just joined the English faculty at the University of Michigan-Flint. Together we collaborated in designing a two-year in-service project [1] for middle school language arts teachers interested in learning a different approach to the teaching of writing with the emphasis on content, rather than mechanics. In addition to meeting with that small group of teachers to introduce them to methods and materials, Lois and I visited their classrooms to actively participate with both teachers and students when the students were involved in writing Sometimes, we provided demonstration lessons. Other times we worked with individual students or small groups as they progressed through the writing process. And we celebrated with them during the sharing of their completed pieces of writing.

It was during one of those celebratory sharing sessions that I met Ronald. As you know, middle school students come in a variety of sizes and shapes. Ronald was a "twerp", small in stature and rather scrawny. He was very quiet, somewhat withdrawn. He surprised his teacher and his classmates that hot late-spring afternoon when he raised his hand indicating that he wanted to share his piece of writing. Ronald chose to come to the front and center of the classroom, rather than speaking from his desk as many of the students did. With his paper held in front of him, he began to read, describing the day he came home from school and found his mother on the couch, "burning up with fever."

This was the last hour of the day and it was difficult for those restless seventh grade students to sit and listen, but there

was not a sound in that classroom. Ronald held his classmates spellbound as he continued the story of that memorable day. *His mother assured him that she'd be all right. But, during the night he heard her cries for help. Scared, he ran to the neighbor's house in his "sock feet" to get help. He watched the paramedics place his mother on a stretcher and put her in the ambulance. With tears rolling down his face, he watched as the ambulance pulled away, taking his mother to the hospital.* Ronald paused for a few seconds. Inwardly, all of us were hoping for a happy ending. He concluded, *"My mother died the next day."*

After class, I asked Ronald if I may see his piece, thinking of ways this beautiful and touching story could be shared with others. He handed the paper to me, appearing pleased that I was interested. I could not believe that the piece of writing I looked at was the same piece I'd just heard. It was not only difficult to translate the scribbled words, but there was not one mark of punctuation in two full pages of writing! Yet, Ronald had read that piece with polish and feeling.

Later, I found out that Ronald's mother had died a year earlier. My heart pained that he had been carrying that grief for so long. I was glad, however, that writing provided the way for him to tell the story and that he'd found a safe environment in which to share it. Perhaps he had begun to work through the very necessary process of grief. I felt so privileged to have been in that classroom that day.

Epilogue: During a writing conference the next day, Ronald's teacher asked him to read his story aloud to her and put the periods in, "so someone else can read your story as well as you did yesterday." He did that eagerly and effortlessly. [2]

Our project was a teaching circle. We were a community of teachers, learning together by experiencing the writing process through our own writing, discussing what worked and didn't work with our students, exchanging teaching methods and materials, as well as learning what the research was saying. We were a support group for each other as we continued to experiment and discover. Increasingly, we were becoming more confident in our ability to help students express themselves through the power of the written word. We were experiencing what Edward Albee acknowledged when he wrote: "Writing has got to be an act of discovery . . . I write to find out what I'm thinking about."

Curriculum change is a long, slow process. We began the process with a small group of teachers who positively did change the way they approached the teaching of writing. They began putting the emphasis on the content and expansion of their students' ideas, leaving the issue of mechanics for the practical application in the final revision. One of our project teachers revamped the final examination for her students by asking them to use the writing process to produce a finished piece of writing. "After all," she said, "why not test them on the application of what we have been doing all year, rather than asking them to identify the parts of speech?" [3]

The success of this project was encouraging. Lois and I continued to collaborate in our efforts to promote a change in the teaching of writing. We wrote a winning proposal for a federal grant that allowed us to launch the Flint Writing Project summer institute. With the help of the late Joanne Sullenger, Vice Chancellor for Development at UM-Flint , we were able to offer that opportunity a second year and invited teachers from all school districts in the county to participate.

Later, Lois and I combined our energies by organizing Young Author Workshops for Flint middle school students. These workshops were facilitated by Lois' English 412 students at UM-Flint and held in the middle schools as an after-school activity. This was a win-win! Lois' students gained valuable hands-on experience and the middle school students were given a wonderful writing opportunity which culminated in the publication of their writing pieces.

Following my retirement in 1987, Lois and I continued to work toward our goal of writing as a skill to be developed and used in all disciplines. We held the vision of an interactive, interdisciplinary writing classroom using computers. Joanne Sullenger shared our vision and was instrumental in helping it to be achieved. The Computer Writing Classroom was dedicated in January of 1996.

There was a need to expand the very effective program and facility for giving students tutorial assistance in writing. We worked with Joanne to find a new and larger home for the Writing Center, which just happened to be adjacent to the Computer Writing Classroom. Within that greatly expanded and refurbished facility, students are offered tutorial assistance in all areas of language arts and in all disciplines.

Joanne, Lois and I seemed to be on a roll. Next, we focused our vision and efforts toward "excellence in teaching." In 1998, the Thompson Center for Learning and Teaching was opened with Lois Rosen as director. The timing, the leadership and the funding were all in place for the inauguration of the first Teaching Circles at UM-Flint. And how exciting it has been to hear how those circles have continued to expand over the years in number of participants from all disciplines and depth of study. It truly has been a rewarding experience to witness the commitments faculty members have made to the Teaching Circles and hear how their participation has helped them offer their students an even better learning experience.

Endnotes

[1]Rosen, Lois Matz and Marian Wright. "Curriculum Change is a Slow Process." In Language Arts Journal of Michigan, 3, No. 1 (Spring 1987), pp. 22-36.

[2]Ibid., p. 23.

[3]Ibid., p. 29.

Teacher as student: The Impact of My Own First Writing Course on My Teaching of Writing Today

by Hannah Furrow, Assistant Professor
School of Education and Human Services

Word of Introduction

For Professor Furrow, the recollection of her powerfully formative experiences as a first-semester writing student continues to affect how she shapes her pedagogy as a writing teacher. She relates how her first semester as a college student, in retrospect, was also her "first learning to be a teacher." When her writing professor sat down with her, with his pencil and many questions, she began to discover, as she recalls it, "I owned my words." The experience changed her life. "I learned deeply what it was to be a writing student," she says, "and later, as I learned how to teach, each element settled into a place of knowing that already existed."

After an idyllic and turbulent (isn't it funny how teenage summers can be like that?) post-high school summer, I decided my long-held college plans were probably better than my more recent plans to become a travel agent, and I applied to, was admitted to, and enrolled in my local state university all within two weeks at the end of August in the mid-1980's. On my first day on campus, I ran into a friend who encouraged me to follow her to the writing center where, she said, we could take a test that might allow us to "place out of" English 101. This sounded good to me. After the two-hour test, we learned that my friend had been misinformed. The school didn't actually allow students to skip English 101, but we had been placed in the advanced section of the course. I felt duped—a harder class certainly wasn't my intention. I never could have predicted than that Advanced English 101 would provide the impetus and focus of my life's professional work.

I knew right away that Tony Brinkley wasn't going to be a regular kind of professor, in the same way it was immediately clear that Mary Poppins was no regular nanny. First, he was the only one of my professors who had students call him by his first name. Second our first class period, the entire period, was spent with students freewriting while he drew an Escher-esque doodle that covered the entire two panels of chalkboard. Third, that was to be one of only four class sessions held that semester. Instead of class, we were to meet with him individually for half-hour tutorial sessions each week.

And so began not only my first semester as a college student, but also my first learning to be a teacher. Each week through the long, cold fall semester, I trudged with a final draft of the previous week's paper and a first draft of a new paper, through leaves, then snow, to Tony's office on the second floor of the building that housed the English Department. Each week, I learned something about writing, and much more about teaching.

Even now as I write about the impact of this experience on my teaching, the thoughts and words come to me in the point of view of my eighteen-year-old self; they are deeply visceral memories. This experience taught me that my words were important, that I owned my words, that even my writing had purpose, and that my learning time was valuable.

My words were important. The first time I met with Tony, I was carrying a piece I had written the night before. I was nervous not only for this tutorial experience and for the quality of my writing (what if he decided I didn't really belong in the advanced class?), but also because of the content of my paper. I had written about the killing that summer of a young gay man by three teenagers in my hometown. I'm not sure whether I asked if that topic was acceptable, but I certainly remember having that question in mind.

Tony deftly began working with my writing—and it always felt that way, though he worked with the paper in front of us, the focus always seemed bigger than that single paper. The weekly papers were the tools, but the goal was writing, and thinking about writing. He was well aware of the incident I had written about, and he helped me to use my words to portray the very horror of it, as a report of a local happening, as a commentary about our community (I knew, to some degree, each of the people involved) and as a statement of fear for the broader implications. For the first time, I saw the ability of my words to carry all that I wanted them to carry. This was not just an assignment; it was sharing in writing what was important to me.

I owned my words. Tony's approach was unique. He used a

pencil, not the traditional red ink of English teachers. He didn't cross out, nor even correct. He asked questions. Painstaking, intentional questions filled my margins, reminding me of each week's conversation: "Is this the best way to say this?" "Have you considered other ways of looking at this issue?" "Would adding a comma here help the reader to slow down?" "What would happen if you started a new paragraph here?" He pointed out places where I had veered from conventions, places where my ideas were not clearly communicated, but he always made it clear that I owned my words. What I chose to do with them might impact my ability to communicate effectively with a reader, and it might impact my grade in the course, but my words, and how I used them, were mine.

My learning time was valuable. Every single week, 8:30-9:00 a.m. Thursday morning was mine in my instructor's office. He missed exactly one week, when his daughter was born. Other than that, my time slot was mine alone. Tony was always on time, he never allowed interruptions, and he never left early. From his commitment, I quickly realized that it was my responsibility to be there, to be prepared, and to focus. For an easily distracted, first-generation, first-year student, this was an important realization

I learned about empowering students, helping them to find their own voices, not merely to follow my plans (or that of the institution, or society)...I had found the difference I could make in the world, by helping students find ways to empower themselves.

My writing had purpose. Throughout high school, I had never seen my writing as distinct from my overall work efforts. An "A" on a paper meant that I had put in enough time, that I had worked hard enough. A "good job" or an "excellent" meant that I had deciphered what the teacher wanted and had met those expectations. Tony never gave vague evaluatory comments; his remarks were concise, whether they were statements of opinion or writing quality. He said things like, "I really found this part interesting." "These short sentences make me feel like I'm running." "Did you notice how powerful this sentence is?" As a writer, I found myself striving not for an A (although I was relieved when I received it), but rather for a greater quality of writing.

So many lessons, learned in a single semester, at a time when I really had no idea the impact they would have. I took several more courses with Tony over the coming years of my undergraduate degree and first graduate degree. He remained an excellent teacher and, in my mind, a mentor. When we read Blake, we did visual, auditory, and kinesthetic readings. When we read Holocaust literature, we were asked to write in dream sequences. During an unusually frustrating moment in an English Lit. class he taught one summer in a steamy, windowless theatre to a small, generally uninterested group of students, he walked out. As he left, he told us to figure out what was going wrong with the class and what plan we had to fix it. After ten minutes, he returned, listened to our concerns, and changed both the location and tenor of the course in a way that learning truly happened, on a number of levels. He was, and remains, brilliant and unusual.

Then I began my education courses to prepare me to be a high school English teacher, and later my composition pedagogy courses to prepare me to be a professor of writing. As I learned education theory and best practices, and the theories of composition pedagogy, the knowledge of how to be a writing teacher always provoked and interacted with my memories of being a writing student.

I learned about empowering students, helping them to find their own voices, not merely to follow my plans (or that of the institution, or society) from the liberation pedagogy of Freire. I remembered being a voiceless teenager, not knowing if not only how I had written, but also what I had written, was acceptable. I knew that this was my place. I had found the difference I could make in the world, by helping students find ways to empower themselves.

I learned about the importance of scaffolding learning and of interpersonal relationships from Vygotsky. I harkened back to those best moments of my own learning, in which I was being taught one-on-one, by someone who knew my zone of proximal development in writing. Tony knew when to push me, when I could perform better, when I needed more focus in specific areas of my writing. Seeing his commitment to my weekly meetings and to helping me with my writing motivated me in ways that I never could have been motivated in a less personal setting.

Further learning about the importance of shared understandings came when I learned the work of Don Graves and Don Murray. Each of them has offered so much to the field of writing education. Just thinking of Graves' joyful enthusiasm regarding his students' writing can recharge me on a day that is going less than well. Murray's work has sustained me in my own writing and given me writing practices that I share with students when they struggle with issues such as writer's block or indecision about revising. But I also learned a great deal from hearing about the relationship between the two and how they motivated each other as writers and as teachers. As I recalled the importance of relationship in my early learning with Tony, I realized my impact on students not only in my individual work with them but in helping them to build peer relationships in which they could count on one another in their work on writing.

When I first read Peter Elbow's *Everyone Can Write* (2000), I had returned home pedagogically. All those years earlier, the one textbook Tony had used was Elbow's *Writing with Power*

(1981). I'm not even sure I read it at the time, but Elbow's approach was woven through every element of the work I did with Tony. Ah, the memories of the hours (or maybe it only seemed like hours?) spent freewriting in those few class sessions we did have. Elbow's cut-and-paste method, his focus on writing in groups, his reader-based feedback, his advice to set a piece of writing aside for a period of time before revision—all these made their way into the semester, and lingered in my brain to be brought forth in my own teaching years later.

I discovered Mark Hurlbert's work in *Social Issues in the English Classroom* (1992) on my own while working on a presentation for the National Council of Teachers of English. My reading of that book taught me that every issue a student needs to write about has merit in the writing classroom. All these years later, I came to know for certain that what I had written about in that very first piece of college writing was, indeed, appropriate. When I later studied with Dr. Hurlbert (he served on my dissertation committee, as well), he introduced me to Derek Owens' work on sustainability in composition which serves as a primary focus today, as I look at issues of sustainability, composition, and care.

Care in education is an idea that I first learned about when reading Nel Noddings' work. Actually, I admit, I initially resisted reading her first book, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984). I thought care was intrinsic to everyone's teaching, and as such, was a rather pathetic topic, not meriting merit further exploration. As so often happens, though, I was soon falling off my high horse, recognizing that what Noddings had to say was absolutely critical to education and to my role as a teacher of writing. Indeed, it was the element of care, as Noddings describes it, as both a critical element of education and a goal of education, that had played such an important role in my work with Tony and was a primary basis for my own teaching today.

Many days I am unsure about my teaching. When I see the student who struggles regardless of the time I spend with him or her, when I see the student whose outside-of-school concerns have pulled his or her attention away from the academic, I want to do better, to engage more fully with these students. I regularly have students tell me that the individual time I spent with them gave them a sense of the importance of their learning and other students who comment positively on my approach to their writing. Between the unsure moments and the positive feedback, I know that my teaching improves with each new class of students. While I continually strive to improve, my roots are strong, reaching back to that first-semester Advanced English 101 course, where I learned about writing, but so much more about teaching writing. I learned deeply what it was to be a writing student, and, later, as I learned how to teach, each element settled into a place of knowing that already existed.

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Save the date! February 10, 2012

6th Annual Assessment of Student Learning Summit

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend the 6th Annual Assessment of Student Learning Summit, scheduled for Friday, February 10, 2012.

The event will explore the ways in which we, as a campus, can begin to assess experiential learning, and will feature a keynote presentation by Randy Bass. Dr. Bass currently serves as the Executive Director, Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship and Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning Initiatives at Georgetown University.

In his work, Dr. Bass has explored the aspects of learning that go beyond the cognitive to consider what he calls "invisible learning," i.e., the steps in the learning process that are often invisible but critical to development. By examining invisible learning, he contends that educators may better understand the intermediate steps needed to ensure that students can develop the skills and habits necessary to become masterful learners.

This work engages the scholarship of teaching and learning as a way to address accountability in education and assess student learning. According to Bass, it is difficult to enact a broader definition of embodied learning and then constrain it through traditional summative assessment (Bass & Eynon, 2009, p. 20). Thus, we anxiously look forward to Dr. Bass' visit in February and the opportunity to learn from him as we examine the experiential learning that occurs at UM-Flint.

The Summit is sponsored by the Office of the Provost in partnership with the Academic Assessment Committee and the Thompson Center for Learning & Teaching. Contact Jan Worth-Nelson, TCLT Interim Director at (810) 424-5493 with any ideas, suggestions or questions.

Bass, R. & Eynon, B (2009, January). The difference inquiry makes: A collaborative case study of technology and learning, from the Visible Knowledge Project. *Academic Commons*. pp. 1-29.

Common Ground and Uncommon Assessment

by Sarah Rosaen and Marcus Paroske, Assistant Professors
Department of Communication & Visual Art

Word of Introduction

Teachers often learn, according to Rosaen and Paroske, in a context of fruitful disagreements and an atmosphere of energizing pluralism. As scholars of Communication, they note that there are "precious few spaces in the professional lives of faculty where reckoning with criticisms of one's own commitments is forced." And the route they feature here, in particular, is the thorniness and challenge of student assessment. In contrast to its reputation as a pallid and deadening obligation, Rosaen and Paroske report that their department's conversations on the topic have been "rich," providing opportunities less about content knowledge than about "problem solving and intellectual reflection." There is hope, they suggest, within the "flexible rigidity" of assessment practice, for renewed and interdisciplinary vitality.

It's OK to ask. We get it all the time. "What, um, *is* Communication Studies . . . exactly?" Unlike some disciplines that have clustered around a core object of study or a more or less clearly defined set of theoretical commitments, the discipline of Communication emerged in the fluid context of an industrializing, and highly mediated, 20th century. The remarkable development of communication technologies, the rise of massive organizations that crossed borders and required complex networks of communication within them, the belated expansion of democratic agency and the attendant rise in political communication from a much wider group of people, all of these developments have been greeted by a profusion of scholars and students who are interested in communication *per se*. With those permitted by their government and culture to communicate across the globe growing exponentially, and doing so through media that raise unprecedented issues of technology and content, we believe the need for students to learn about communication in this day and age has never been greater.

In this issue of the *Scholarship of Teaching*, our colleagues from across the University ponder the question: "How do teachers learn?" Our thoughts are drawn to a cognate question: "When do teachers learn?" We learn the subject matter that we teach, initially at least, in graduate school. Many of us, however, did not learn that material explicitly with an eye toward how to teach it, let alone how to place it within a broader curriculum. The research intensiveness of many terminal degree granting institutions leaves translating that material to the undergraduate classroom an afterthought. We get the techniques of teaching in the trenches of teaching assistantships and stand alone service courses. But the mechanics of being a faculty member, the parts of teaching that go beyond the classroom itself, those skills wait until we enter the profession fully.

In Communication, and we suspect in other diverse disciplines, there is a secondary consequence of this model for teacher training. The expansive nature of Communication leads to strong disagreements over method and subject matter between various camps within the discipline. Some departments orient themselves around one approach to scholarship, be that social science or critical studies, theoretical or applied. While a few programs embrace multiple perspectives, most specialize in one approach or another, citadels along the larger battlefield that determines disciplinary identity. Faculty-in-training who study in these singular programs emerge minted in the image of their mentors.

These walls are less likely to be masoned at an institution such as UM-Flint, where disciplinary divides rooted in research are diminished given the importance placed here on teaching. When we leave our monolithic graduate program and take a job, we find ourselves suddenly sitting across from someone at a faculty meeting from the "other side." Our own Communication Program has grown in recent years through the addition of junior faculty to represent all of the major camps in the discipline. We two are a case in point. One, a post-positivist social scientist who sees academe through the lens of rigor and measurement, the other a humanistic textual critic who is skeptical of the move to quantify the rich and nuanced process of human communication. And yet, here we found ourselves working together to write a curriculum for communication majors, to construct core classes that represented each of us and our other colleagues in between, let alone how to make those differences meaningful for our students. What we cannot learn in school, what must only flow from our initial experiences as full time instructors at an institution, is how our teaching is harmonized with that of our colleagues to create a full curriculum. The responsibility to set a curriculum is more than learning the subject matter. And putting it all together is on-the-job training.

Recent exigencies in the academy have added an even deeper layer of necessary cooperation. Assessment, the insistence that programs measure the success of students in achieving desired

outcomes, demands of us not only to agree on the major, but on what the learning outcomes within that course of study will be. We must further come to consensus on measuring student achievement along those outcomes. Again, the pluralism of Communication presents unique challenges, as the faculty may not agree on even the most basic epistemological questions involved in assessment. We spent our academic careers, before coming together, critiquing the other side from the easy cocoon of isolation. Now, these criticisms must blend into some sort of coherent assessment regime.

This makes assessment, surprisingly, an exciting *opportunity* (yes, we said it) to be reflexive about our own place within the discipline. There are precious few spaces in the professional lives of faculty where reckoning with criticisms of one's own commitments is forced. We have our own journals, our own networks of colleagues, our own classes that we teach from our own perspectives. Assessing students over time throughout the entirety of the major, though, provides a forum for spotting points of congruence between these silos. We have found these discussions so far to be quite rich, so much so that we hope to share them with our colleagues in the discipline and those wrestling with similar issues of interdisciplinary assessment and curricular development.

For example, readers of this publication are no doubt, in some way, dealing with similar issues on interdisciplinarity in the assessment of general education. In some ways, our program is a case study useful for general education assessment. We too find it hard to isolate concrete outcomes that are similar to a physical science environment (e.g., solving a mathematical proof). As the general education outcomes groups have found, the best practice for assessing outcomes across the campus is to select indicators that are universally applicable. In turn, assessment becomes less about content knowledge and more about general problem solving and intellectual reflection. This raises a number of issues about the nature of assessment, and the struggle to harmonize views on what "problem solving" or "reflection" means across disciplines.

To answer this question ourselves, we turned to the National Communication Association's (the primary professional organization for Communication scholars and experts) conceptual framework for programs in communication. They suggest three domains of learning: behavioral, cognitive, and affective. Although there are important behavioral objectives like oral and written communication in our courses, along with scholarly inquiry, we determined the bulk of our objectives had more to do with cognitive and affective domains. Our list included goals like theory literacy, critical thinking, lifelong learning, cultural and diversity sensitivity, self-efficacy, and appropriate employability. Of course, the major obstacle has been to arrive at stable definitions of what these things are. When one considers how different disciplinary views can be of such broad domains, it is clear that our faculty need to incorporate that diversity in how we will fundamentally assess these objectives.

Literature on interdisciplinary assessment and general research collaboration suggest that communication is essential in order to appropriately assess the quality of scholarship and the magnitude of learning (e.g. Hechter, 2003; Oberg, 2009). On a simple level, we can use multi-method approaches to design and analyze outcomes. However, the construction and analysis of outcomes can still be muddy if we have not adequately discussed how each individual in the program really understands those objectives. One may argue that this is an issue of reliability; however, it is really an issue of validity. Validity issues must be discussed rather than analyzed statistically. We have had to develop our own strategies to account for these methodological issues.

Our Program adopted an approach rooted in communication (go figure!). This semester the entire set of full-time faculty are discussing and piloting new assessment measures. This discussion is especially necessary because we will be using class embedded metrics, meaning that the instructor for the course that addresses particular objectives will assess the associated outcomes. The instructor for those courses may be any one of the full-time faculty. We all must have a common understanding of the metric, not only to consider how the results reflect student learning, but also so that our individual use of that metric can be as equivalent as possible. Coming to such an understanding saves time since only one faculty member will fill out the metric while they are also grading; this after all, is a similar assessment activity.

So far, a rich conversation about student learning has developed each time we all use these metrics. One lesson we learned early on is that understanding the structure of the assignment was key to interpreting the metrics. Therefore, a reliability assessment is necessary but not sufficient. Further conversation, again across some wide disciplinary divides, is needed. We have found that this method leads to a common understanding of assessment tools, produces additional assessment conversations that are useful for understanding course content and objectives, and provides the necessary process for developing measurement tools that are appropriate for the program and do not dictate teaching methods or assignment structure. The feedback loop continues, and more communication with each other improves our objectives, outcomes, and our tools for measurement.

The overall philosophy of assessment could be described as *flexible rigidity*. We think there may be a lesson in that for assessment across the university. Assessment requires structure, but it cannot be so rigid that intellectual freedom is sacrificed; our Program and academe overall is, beautifully, too pluralistic to impose a one size fits all approach. It is unrealistic to think

that a communication program (or a general education program for that matter) can neatly control the measurement of learning (a bold admission from a post-positivist social scientist). The importance of intellectual freedom means there is no way that measurement can be reliable or valid in a traditional sense. Conducting assessment in this context requires us to bring our strengths together by talking with one another from an ethic of mutual respect. At the same time, intellectual freedom does not equal student learning. We must still find a common approach to measurement that can account for differences in teaching style, content knowledge, as well as epistemological and methodological plurality. By analyzing student learning we have a basis for common understanding of our learning outcomes. Similar to this, the campus has joined together on more than one occasion to discuss general education goals, outcomes, and assessment tools for those outcomes. The discussion to date has been appropriate and productive. However, now that assessment measures are starting to take form, one must consider what the data will really mean when analyzed. How do we know that the campus as a whole will interpret the assessment metrics similarly?

Given the difficulty of addressing these types of concerns, it is easy for programs and universities to ignore these issues. All too often, tensions emerge that are barriers to efficient decision making and quality teaching. Avoiding these tensions requires truly understanding one another; a goal we believe can be met by studying ourselves. Who are we? What do we know? What are our expectations of our students? How does each of us make decisions about quality? Once we lay out the answers to these questions, the faculty can start to recognize where differences exist and where we agree. However, designing appropriate questions, figuring out a way to honestly answer, really picking our brains and teasing out what fundamental differences we have developed over the years is going to be a challenge.

This, then, is how we learn to teach. While our graduate education may not have prepared us for the aspects of our profession that extend beyond the classroom, those missing lessons were provided immediately by working with each other. Assessment is certainly a head instructor. By extending a research initiative into this very question, we hope to supercharge that virtuous, reflexive feedback loop to the betterment of our students. Developing a valid set of measures that really represent the goals of our program that faculty members understand, respect, can appropriately teach, and assess in their classroom is the gold standard, both for our program and, we take it, for general education.

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TCLT Fall 2011 Cloth Bag Schedule

Good Fires:

Enkindling Ideas from the Teaching Life

What Am I Doing Here? Ten Things to Say About Higher Education

Tuesday, September 27, 12:30 - 1:45 pm, Tuscola Rooms, WSW

Tenure and Teaching: Hand in Glove or Iron Fist?

Wednesday, October 12, 11:30 am - 12:45 pm, Ontario Room, UCEN

Altered Lives: Coming into Academia "Late" and Its Rewards

Tuesday, October 25, 12:30 - 1:45 pm, Tuscola Rooms, WSW

When Active Learning Works and When it Doesn't: A Frisky Critique

Wednesday, November 9, 11:30 am - 12:45 pm, Ontario Room, WSW

Teaching for All to Learn: Exemplary Practices from Preschool to Graduate School

by Judith Ableser, Associate Professor
Department of Education

Word of Introduction

Education Professor Judith Ableser, ongoing and faithful board member of the Thompson Center for Learning and Teaching, describes here how conversations with her fellow board members led to a shared and clarified understanding about what we mean by "exemplary teaching." Extrapolating outward from those discussions and enriched with attention to relevant research, she offers principles honed by years of experience from special education through graduate school. The heart of the matter, she asserts, is to "ensure that all students are provided with the opportunities to maximize successful learning. "Excellence in teaching," she writes, begins with…strong knowledge of content and pedagogy, and is combined with a commitment toward learning and student success."

What can we learn from others to improve our own teaching practice? Are there principles of effective or exemplary teaching that are consistent across all levels of instruction from preschool through graduate school (P-20+)? If so, what are they? This paper will analyze exemplary teaching practices in a range of teaching contexts to explore if there are overarching themes and principles that are consistent across all levels.

One of the benefits of serving on the Advisory Board and Search Committee for the Thompson Center for Learning and Teaching is that I have had the opportunity to truly enact the main purpose and intent of the *scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)*. The scholarship of teaching was first introduced by Boyer (1990) and used primarily for promotion and tenure purposes, suggesting that traditional views of scholarship need to be revisited to include scholarship of integration, application and teaching. Kreber (2002) expanded upon this initial purpose and states that the scholarship of teaching and learning includes the ability to teach well and to know about teaching, constructing pedagogical content knowledge and, in addtion, the importance of disseminating this knowledge with others by making it public. The main outcome, therefore, of the scholarship of teaching and learning reaches beyond an alternative criterion for tenure and promotion; it is an effective tool by which to reflect upon one's own teaching for ongoing growth and improvement, and to engage in scholarship that will further enhance the understanding of teaching and learning within our professional community.

In seeking a new director for the Thompson center, the board members spent considerable time discussing and debating exactly what we meant by "effective or exemplary teaching." We agreed that effective teaching must be directly linked to effective learning; as learning is the purpose for which we teach. As we described characteristics of effective teaching, I realized I was drawing upon my own knowledge and experiences as a professor in Education and my background in Early Childhood Education, K-12 settings and Special Education. It occurred to me that the examples I gave of an exemplary professor could also be applied to excellence in teaching in other settings. For example, we all agreed that teaching excellence in higher education involves focusing on learning and learning outcomes to ensure that students successfully master content and skills. In my courses, I focus more on what my students learn than on what I teach. Rather than providing them with lectures and factual information, I engage them in assignments and activities that require them to seek out critical information that is research-based, analyze the content, and apply it to practical situations. As our conversations continued, we agreed that this approach involves facilitating students' learning through active engagement and critical and higher level thinking. I compared this to early childhood education and realized this, too, was a fundamental role of preschool Montessori and kindergarten teachers who apply developmentally appropriate practices. One of their main roles is to facilitate learning by setting up and structuring the learning environment, then stepping back, and fostering the students' learning through active and interactive experiences.

In my teaching, I allow students to revise and resubmit their major assignments. I believe in a mastery learning approach. I want to know that when my students leave my course, they have mastered the knowledge, content and skills that are outlined in my course objectives and learning outcomes. I am aware that some students may not master all of this in their first attempt;

however, with support and constructive feedback, their second submission is almost always significantly better and meets my high standards. I realize that this approach to learning has emerged from my background in special education. When working with students with special needs, tasks are broken down into small steps and the student must demonstrate mastery of each step before moving on to the next level. In addition, a central theme of Special Education is to provide support and accommodations so that students can be successful in their learning. Universal Design of Learning extends that practice of supporting students with special needs, by providing access and support for all learners to maximize opportunities for success.

Through these discussions at the Thompson Center, I concluded that the fundamental outcome of exemplary or effective teaching lies in ensuring that all students are provided with the opportunities to maximize successful learning. Effective teaching is *teaching for all to learn*. This led me to further reflect upon what I value and practice as a professor, and has motivated me to explore research on effective teaching across a range of contexts or levels from preschool through graduate school. This process embodies the central purpose of the scholarship of teaching and learning. This research and reflection will help assist in improving my own teaching practice, and, through disseminating and sharing this work with the Thompson Center and with the larger professional community in higher education, will add to the body of knowledge to further enhance exemplary teaching practices in a range of educational contexts.

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Consistent Themes and Principles: Teaching for All to Learn

Over one hundred articles and research studies on exemplary teaching in early childhood, K-12, special education, higher education and on-line learning were reviewed. Almost all of the studies focused on teaching at only one specific level. By identifying the key components of effective teaching in each context and then comparing and contrasting the research, this meta-analysis synthesizes the themes that permeate across all levels of instruction resulting in establishing central principles of exemplary practice. A sample of the many studies is summarized below.

Based on extensive research, the National Association for Education for Young Children (NAEYC, 2009; Copple & Bredekamp , 2009, 1997) developed Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs serving children from birth through eight. The guidelines are based on the following principles:

1. Creating a caring community of learners
2. Teaching to enhance development and learning
3. Planning curriculum to achieve important goals
4. Assessing children's development and learning
5. Building reciprocal relationships with parents

At the K-12 level (elementary and secondary classrooms), the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 2002; Vandevoort & Berliner, 2004) have put forth rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. The five core propositions include the following:

1. Teachers demonstrate a commitment to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

The National Science Foundation (1995) conducted a meta-analysis of science and math teaching and proposed the following norms for exemplary practice:

1. Exemplary teachers understand the nature of the discipline and current theory relating to practice.
2. They know how content is selected and taught.
3. Exemplary teachers provide vibrant learning environments that encourage critical thinking and reflection.
4. They offer a variety of assessment tools and strategies interwoven with instruction.
5. They sustain democratic environments by honoring individuals and cultivating community.
6. They apply reflective practice and contribute to the profession.

King & Watson (2010) in "Teaching Excellence for All our Students" in K-12 settings, cite Marzano's (2007) statement that accomplished teaching is an "interaction between art and science." Their research resulted in the following five principles of practice:

1. Excellent teachers are accountable for their student achievement and empowerment.
2. Excellent teachers have a belief in the power and intersection of accomplished teaching and the unlimited potential of each student.
3. Exemplary teachers use the theory of learning to guide their practice and student learning.

4. Accomplished teachers have content expertise and the ability to connect content to the students' lived experiences in and out of school.
5. They have expertise in pedagogy that builds confidence, affirms effort, and uses data to guide a step-by-step, personalized teaching and learning process.

The goal of special education extends beyond the rights of all students to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) as mandated by federal law. It strives to ensure that all students can be successful in their learning. Student-centered individualization, intensive instruction and explicit teaching of academic, adaptive and functional life skills (Hardman, Drew & Egan, 2005) are components of effective special education practices. Promoting achievement in inclusive general education settings for students with special needs includes setting high but realistic expectations, providing access to the general education curriculum with support, providing a range of techniques and approaches to meet all needs, implementing ongoing assessment and frequent monitoring and encouraging acceptance of all learners' strengths and needs (Vaughn, Bos & Schum, 2011). Traditionally, this was achieved by providing supports, adaptations, accommodations and modifications specific to their individual needs. A shift toward Universal Design of Learning is occurring where the physical, social and learning environments are designed so that all learners, not only those with special needs, have access to learning by reducing barriers through multiple means of representation, expression and engagement (CAST, 2008; Rose & Myers, 2002). The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2009) has developed research-based ethics, content standards and guidelines for special education teachers that include, but are not limited to:

1. Understanding theories and principles of development and learning and individual differences
2. Using a range of instructional strategies
3. Knowing how to modify instruction
4. Actively engaging students
5. Ongoing assessment
6. Working with families and other professionals
7. Supporting learning of academic, social and life skills

Research studies on exemplary teaching in higher education echo similar themes and principles as in K-12. One difference, however, is that higher education does not include any reference to parental or family involvement. In fact, due to FERPA laws, information on university students cannot be shared with family members without the written consent of the student.

A study on teaching in higher education by Chickering and Gamson (1991) and cited in numerous other studies, identifies seven key principles for effective teaching at the undergraduate level:

1. Effective teachers encourage student-faculty contact.
2. They encourage cooperation among students.
3. They encourage active learning and significant time on task.
4. Effective teachers offer prompt feedback and communicate high expectations for all their students.
5. They respect diverse talents and a range of ways of learning.

Additional studies and research on teaching in higher education (ALTC,2008; Devlin, 2010) identify these criterion in evaluating exemplary teaching:

1. Approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn.
2. Development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field.
3. Approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning.
4. Respect and support for the development of students as individual.
5. Scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced teaching and learning.

Feldman (1988) cites that both students and faculty agree on many basic essential qualities of effective teaching including; knowledge of subject and discipline, course preparation and organization, clarity and understanding, enthusiasm for subject and teaching, sensitivity and concern for student learning and progress, availability and helpfulness, quality of examinations, impartiality in evaluating, and overall fairness of students. Hilgemann and Blodget's (1991) summary of research on excellence in teaching includes: rapport and respect; interactive strategies, adding human dimension, student support, teaching strategies, teacher competence, teacher flexibility, clarity of goals, relevance of knowledge, and classroom environment.

Bailey and Card's (2009) study focusing on on-line teaching found that the key elements for effective on-line instruction include:

1. Fostering relationships
2. Engagement
3. Timeliness of feedback
4. Communication
5. Organization
6. Effective use of technology
7. Setting high expectations.

Reupert, Mayberry, Patrick and Chittleborough (2009) state that students want a personal touch in their on-line learning and value personal stories and experiences from the instructor; they also require timely feedback and want to be treated as individuals. They concluded that it is not sufficient to have skills in technology; it is equally as important to be skilled in effective communication, engagement, flexibility, self-disclosure, and the use of a variety of methods and approaches.

Teaching for All to Learn: Exemplary Practices Across Contexts

In analyzing and synthesizing the research across all levels of instruction (P-20+), exemplary teaching involves a high level of content and pedagogical knowledge, skills and professional dispositions. The central theme that emerges across all contexts is that a hallmark of exemplary teaching is *teaching for all to learn*. Good teaching involves knowing content and how to deliver it. Excellence in teaching begins with that strong knowledge of content and pedagogy, and is combined with a commitment toward learning and student success.

Based on analyzing and synthesizing all the research reviewed, the ten guiding principles that transcend across all contexts/levels (P-20+) are summarized below. Exemplary teaching involves:

1. Being grounded in educational values, beliefs and philosophies that support teaching for all to learn.
2. Ensuring critical and higher level thinking that incorporates learning that is relevant, purposeful and meaningful and meaning making.
3. Focusing on learning and learning outcomes.
4. Facilitating learning by structuring activities that are learner-centered and provide ownership and responsibility by the learner.
5. Creating learner-centered active engagement by providing a range of techniques and authentic learning opportunities to meet the needs, interests and styles of all learners.
6. Assessing and supporting learners' strengths, interests, needs and learning styles to ensure their success.
7. Demonstrating respect, fairness and care of learners' development and learning to ensure success.
8. Creating a community of learners.
9. Establishing intentional and purposeful curriculum planning.
10. Engaging in reflective practice.

These ten principles of *teaching for all to learn* can apply to any level or context of teaching. The way in which they are implemented, however, will be different based on the context, level, discipline or type of students being taught. For example, creating a community of learners in a kindergarten class may involve circle time and involving the children in developing classroom rules. In an on-line higher education setting, a community of learners may be fostered by having discussion board topics and informal blogs. Creating learner-centered active engagement in a secondary literacy classroom may occur through the use of literature circles or by engaging students in readers' and writers' workshops. In a graduate political science course, it may involve students participating in a range of civic responsibilities and engagement and developing policies that could be implemented within the community. Assessing and supporting learners' strengths, interests, needs and learning styles to ensure their success in a special education setting would include developing and implementing an Individual Education Plan (IEP). In an undergraduate Spanish class, it may involve providing a pretest to assess the level of Spanish skills students have at the start of the semester to determine the level and method of instruction that would be most appropriate. The theme that is embedded throughout each of these examples is that exemplary teaching practices occur when teachers *teach for all to learn*.

In conclusion, this meta-analysis of research demonstrates that there are consistent themes and guiding principles of exemplary practice for *teaching for all to learn* across all contexts. These principles provide a common language and frame of reference for conversations to occur between and among educators in the early childhood, K-12, special education and higher education fields. We need to share our knowledge, stories and teaching experiences with our colleagues in our own departments, across departments and across the university. In addition, we need to be open to learning from teachers in other contexts, including those in K-12, early childhood and special education. Lessons can be learned from each level and applied to our own context.

I believe that I know which of my teaching practices are most effective. I know what areas I would like to continue to develop. I know some strategies that others in my own field use to ensure their effectiveness in the classroom. I know less about the exemplary practices that are used by my colleagues in Management, Sciences or Health Sciences. I want to listen and learn from them. My goal is to continue working with the Thompson Center to develop a study to examine the ways in which faculty members who have been identified as "exemplary" through teaching awards and Golden Apple Recognitions implement these practices in their face-to-face and on-line teaching across a range of disciplines at the University of Michigan-Flint. What strategies and techniques are being used to support student learning? What assignments and assessments are used to focus on critical and higher level thinking in a general education course compared to a graduate level biology class? In what ways are fairness and respect implemented in a full on-line class? Such a study will enhance my own teaching, as I can use this new knowledge and experience it as an opportunity to reflect and compare these strategies to my own. More importantly, such a study will provide a forum for ongoing conversations, critical thinking and the development of new ideas and strategies throughout our university community and the profession at large.

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What I Learned as a German-language Student

Continued from page 12

fortunate to experience models of intricately interwoven and balanced pedagogy, which have embedded skill development in interesting content and encouraged learners to build on and be motivated by their individual interests. However, I saw how well the German language instructors at all level balanced structured learning, driven by the logic of the subject, with individual initiative and interest.

The demands of learning can be overwhelming and require many simultaneous changes that are almost impossible to achieve all at once. Success is almost always uneven, and I realize from my own experience how important it is that we recognize certain learning successes even when other types of progress or mastery are missing. As a colleague reminds me, our expectations and judgments are often corrupted by the fact that we are teaching things that seem obvious and easy to us, since we have been working on them for decades, and our expectations for quick and complete transformations are surely misplaced.

Being a non-traditional student may carry with it additional burdens, but also significant advantages. Motivation and rich life experience are generally assets. However, for those of us who are older learners, translating rich life experience, long-practiced autonomy, and established life practices and routines into conventional educational and pedagogical structures can be problematic; our study routines or subject knowledge can be rusty; and we generally aren't buoyed by shared culture and close relationships with fellow students. And most non-traditional students carry many life responsibilities. I had the rare and very liberating opportunity, at least while in Germany, to live a simple, unencumbered life reduced to basic routines and language learning.

I have re-experienced the fact that learning is a long, slow process that requires tremendous stamina and persistence, a persistence that must be underpinned by commitment and a certain degree of confidence or optimism. For some students, the labor market and economic necessity may provide commitment. Other students have an inner drive towards high achievement or hard work. Another durable source of commitment comes from the understanding that learning expands our human sensibilities and abilities and how we make our way in the many aspects of our lives. I still often feel as though I should give up because I will never reach advanced fluency and that generally I am too slow and far behind. But more often I understand that real learning is a tortuous labor of many years, even decades, and I value the incremental and cumulating openings it gradually creates. What has sustained me is the new language itself and what I can do with it, and I hope that our students, too, value the openings into themselves and the world that their new languages afford them.

Becoming a Teacher-Scholar

By Lois Rosen, Professor Emerita
Department of English
Founding Director, Thompson Center for Learning & Teaching

Word of Introduction

A memorable chance comment from a student triggers this essay from Lois Rosen, retired English professor and the founding director of the Thompson Center for Learning and Teaching. How fitting that the concluding essay of this issue of The Scholarship of Teaching would come from one of our heroines of teaching excellence at the UM–Flint: And as her article demonstrates, Dr. Rosen is still learning and practicing new things even after more than 30 years of teaching, aptly reminding the rest of us to go beyond those "yellowed lecture notes" of yesteryear.

An education student doing her internship in a local school once told me, with chagrin, that the teacher she was observing did nothing but lecture at the students, using "yellowed notes that were older than the students sitting in front of him." I never forgot that image of the droning lecturer, the yellowed notes, the passive students. But how many of us, stressed by the need for scholarship and involved in far too many committees, find it easy to continue to re-use lecture notes, syllabi, tests, and classroom activities term after term? As scholars in our disciplines, we find it mandatory to keep up with advancements in our field in order to be successful members of the disciplinary community. I would argue that as teachers, we must also keep up with advancements in the discipline of teaching or we'll find ourselves, like the teacher at the opening of this piece, using strategies that are "yellow around the edges" and putting a classroom of today's students to sleep (or to text messaging, emailing, and tweeting).

Over my thirty-some years in the classroom I've seen an enormous pedagogical shift from the straight lecture-test approach with which I was taught in college in the 1960s to one emphasizing much more active involvement by the student and requiring more creativity and planning by the instructor. Tagg and Barr, in their seminal article, "From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education" (*Change*, November/December 1995) characterize this as a shift from colleges as institutions that exist to provide instruction, to colleges as institutions that exist to produce learning. This shift includes the use of such student-centered approaches as cooperative/collaborative learning, writing across the curriculum, group and individual projects, writing assignments and presentations instead of quizzes and exams, and all manner of in-class activities to create an environment for learning that stimulates critical thinking and inquiry instead of memorization and regurgitation.

Teachers are encouraged to assess students' learning and response to the course by using brief Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) throughout the semester, such as the "minute paper" or mid-term course assessment. Student feedback on learning produced by these assessment techniques during the term rather than when the course has ended (and it's too late) may lead instructors to make alterations in the course itself or the manner of instruction. Rubrics help make grading easier and more consistent, especially if writing assignments replace the traditional mid-term and final exams. Student outcomes assessment has become the norm as we gather data from many sources to document students' growth both in our own courses and in the programs of our departments and colleges.

In recent years, the uses of technology in teaching have gone far beyond replacing overheads with Power Point presentations. Now we can draw on the Internet in the classroom to support lectures or assign it for independent study. We can build course websites, design online and hybrid courses, use clickers to assess learning, and use email to communicate with students 24/7. We can harness social media for educational purposes, using tweeting and text messaging to enhance active learning.

And we must not forget that our students have changed. Millennial Learners, Generation X, or the Social Media Generation, they all have far different expectations of the classroom than students did when I first began to teach at UM-Flint in 1984. They enjoy and work well with active learning approaches and prefer to learn with one another in groups. They expect the use of technology in their courses because they've never known a world without it. Most of all they want their classroom experiences to be realistic, valuable, and have genuine applicability to their future.

Other changes are more teacher-centered. Now, teachers at all levels are encouraged (or required) to demonstrate their commitment with a teaching portfolio and a teaching philosophy statement, to become reflective about themselves as teachers and their classrooms as sites of learning. Another addition to the many recent shifts in pedagogy is the growth of the SoTL movement, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, that promotes teaching as a scholarly endeavor and

a worthy subject for research, but this is research into teaching and learning, made public with articles and presentations in the many venues that presently exist for SoTL publication.

Luckily, keeping up with new developments in teaching is easier now than ever before. The Internet is a fantastic resource for this. Try Googling "teaching (your field)" to find links to numerous resources for supplementing your courses and enhancing your teaching. Check out the IDEA papers online at <http://www.theideacenter.org/> or Stanford University's *Speaking of Teaching* newsletter at <http://ctl.stanford.edu/handbook/speaking-of-teaching-newsletters.html> for in-depth articles on teaching methodologies and issues relevant to higher education instruction. MIT's OpenCourseWare at <http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm> offers a wealth of syllabi and course materials in every field taught at MIT. Also consider subscribing to the journal of teaching in your discipline; every area has one, e.g., *Journal of Engineering Education, The History Teacher, The American Journal of Physics.* Or check out one of the SoTL journals such as *MountainRise: an electronic journal dedicated to the scholarship of teaching and learning* at <http://mountainrise.wcu.edu/>.

And, of course, attend the programs offered by the Thompson Center for Learning and Teaching. These are not only based on the newest research into teaching excellence, they are geared to issues and programs relevant at UM-Flint. Go to a Lilly conference and report back to your colleagues. Apply for a Thompson Center grant or fellowship to allow for fuller engagement with teaching innovation. Design a SoTL project to carry out research into the dynamics of your own classroom. Become a scholar of teaching as well as a scholar in your discipline.

Along with all these changes in the academic environment have come rich opportunities for faculty to keep learning and growing as teacher-scholars throughout their professional lives, equally committed to their teaching and their scholarship. There's not much of an excuse today for yellowed lecture notes to appear on anyone's teaching table.

Reflections from a Novice Lecturer

Continued from page 13

One of the things that I emphasize to my students during class are the many roles of a teacher: not only does a good teacher convey curriculum content, he or she serves as a role model that ultimately must strive to make a difference within his or her community. In addition to serving as a lecturer, I have the honor of serving as a mentor to a group of fourteen young men who aspire to become teachers within the Flint community. These students are preparing to enter the Education Department, graduate from University of Michigan-Flint, and teach within the Flint community. On my most exhausted day, these students remind me of the road a student takes as he or she becomes a teacher. Their candor, honesty, and ambition to become the best teacher they can be reminds me of lessons that I learned from my mentors, and reminds me of what it means to be in Flint, and more specifically, teaching at University of Michigan-Flint. Lessons from seasoned educators now are clearer.

Advice from my mentors reminds me of the teacher that I want to be. The hope and promise of Flint and tomorrow's educators sustains me. I will continue toward my goal of making a difference within the lives of my students, while continuing to learn from them within my role as a lifelong student.

UM-Flint's STAR Program

Brian Johnson is a lecturer for the School of Education and Human Services and serves as assistant program manager for the Smart Teachers as Role Models (STAR) program.

The mission of the program is to recruit under-represented populations to serve as teachers in the Flint area in order to address substantial educational inequities within local elementary and secondary schools. The program provides a leadership development co-curriculum for a cohort of students enrolled in UM-Flint's teacher education program. STAR is a part of a national initiative that aims to mobilize resources and work with educational institutions to provide high-quality planning, research, leadership, communication and technical assistance for teacher education programs, and seeks particularly to increase the number of young men of color who pursue elementary teaching as a career.

For more information, please visit www.umflint/edu/education/star.

Call for Manuscripts

The Scholarship of Teaching is a publication of professional reflection about all matters relating to teaching and learning. Original essays, commentaries and articles reporting informal research on your teaching may explore what you find compelling, perplexing and inspiring about your work in and outside the classroom. Previously published original articles may be reprinted with permission.

Theme for the 2012 Issue:

Engagement and Active Learning: Can They Save Us?

"The overarching theme of UM–Flint's 2011-2016 Strategic Plan is engagement."

Executive Summary, 2011-2016 UM – Flint Strategic Plan

Clearly, engagement – a hydra concept with many meanings and implications – has become central to UM–Flint's vision of its ongoing and emerging roles. And nationally, talk of the power of engagement is on many lips. Our Pre-Convocation Workshop this year is on the theme "Engagement for Significant Learning and Community Transformation." This is a conscious commitment that is at once context and architecture, admonition and hope.

So what does "engagement" mean to our teaching? Might it be the magic bullet that will transform not just our students but all our constituent communities, through us?

While this theme is intentionally flexible, here are some additional questions to consider:

- Can everybody do it?
- Whom are we engaging?
- Does it work in any course?
- How have you, as a teacher, come to terms with the necessities to rework your practice toward greater student engagement and active learning?
- How do you define active learning?
- What are its costs and benefits?
- What have you learned about how to make engagement activities and active learning strategies work?
- What are your doubts? What troubles you?
- What have been your epiphanies and victories?

We are looking for success stories, reflections, critiques , even well-written confessionals – in short, as always, we aim for this issue of *The Scholarship of Teaching* to provide compelling reading and intellectual liveliness around a topic that is affecting us all.

Submission Guidelines:

Please submit your manuscript electronically to janworth@umflint.edu or in hard copy to Jan Worth-Nelson, Thompson Center for Learning and Teaching, 241 French Hall. Final manuscripts must be sent electronically. Articles using references may follow either APA or MLA format. Manuscripts will not be blindly reviewed.

Deadline: March 1, 2012