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ABSTRACT

Designed to promote discourse on teaching, learning, and professional development, this spring 1992 issue of Massachusetts Bay Community College's (MBCC's) "Educational Forum" documents modes of inquiry and faculty development activities that MBCC has found promising. The following articles are contained in the issue: (1) "Education Through College Theatre," by Roger A. Wolf; (2) "The Art of Revision: Learning From a Craftsman," by Charlene M. Murphy; (3) "Teaching Real-Time," by Ann Farrey-Hart; (4) "Circle Up!" by Paul G. Johnson; (5) "Passivity to Activity," by Maxine Elmont; (6) "Some Perspectives on Problem Solving," by Helen M. Seery; (7) "Older Students in College," by Edward G. McCourt; (8) "From Watertown to Wellesley Hills--Diversity at MBCC Then & Now," by John J. Sullivan; (9) "African-American Students and Higher Education," by Lorna E. Andrade; (10) "Fore and Aft," by Gerard H. Saunders; (11) "Focus on ESL (English-as-a-Second-Language) Students," by Susan Andrien; (12) "Cultural Misunderstandings and Language Barriers in the Classroom," by Lisa Gonsalves; (13) "The ESL Population at Mass Bay: An Overview and Some Concerns," by Elaine Wilson; (14) "Critical Reading: Modeling the Process," by Jennifer Nourse; (15) "Frankie and Johnny Can Be Readers," by Joseph Saling and Kristin Huie; (16) "Everything We Need to Know We May Be Able to Learn (and Teach) in K-12," by Glenn Gabbard; (17) "Reading 'R' Us-But Who R 'We'?" by Susan Andrien; (18) "Peer Tutoring at Mass Bay," by Mass Bay Students; (19) "Tutoring Is Communication," by Laura Duck; and (20) "A Tutoring Case Study," by Julieta Giner. (JMC)

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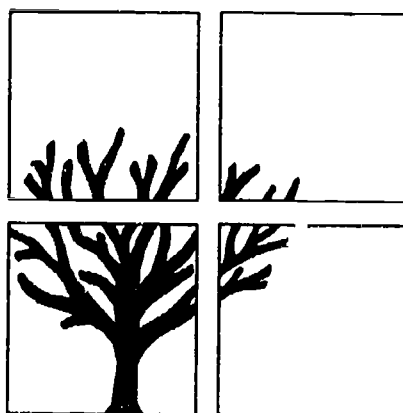
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Editor's Notes

Elizabeth F. Fideler

As James C. Palmer and George B. Vaughan put it in the title of their new monograph (AACJC, 1992), Massachusetts Bay Community College is *fostering a climate for faculty scholarship*. Faculty reflection on and writing about their individual and collective efforts to understand and improve the teaching/learning process at the College fall within Vaughan's broad definition of scholarship: "the systematic pursuit of a topic...an objective, rational inquiry involving critical analysis."

In addition to inviting professional discourse in this journal on various aspects of community college education as practiced at Massachusetts Bay, the College also has other less formal publications to which faculty (and occasionally students) regularly contribute their work. Two of these are newsletters--*Teaching & Learning-A Forum on Practice By and For Educators* and the *Critical Literacy Bulletin*. This issue of *Educational Forum* is made up of generally short (and always thought-provoking) selections from both newsletters.

From *Teaching & Learning*: six pieces by faculty teaching in subject fields as varied as theatre arts, mathematics, and court reporting, who share useful insights and/or instructional innovations, followed by four articles on the challenges presented by the increasingly diverse student population now enrolling at Massachusetts Bay and at community colleges across the country.

From the *Critical Literacy Bulletin*: three selections presenting different perspectives on students who speak English as a second language (ESL) and raising tough questions about various aspects of their college experience; four commentaries on critical reading, one of the keys to learning that faculty simply expect college students to possess; and a three-part examination of peer tutoring experiences, written by students who are peer tutors at Massachusetts Bay.

Consistent with the journal's emphasis on thoughtful questioning rather than polished answers or neat formulas, this issue documents types of inquiry and faculty development that Massachusetts Bay finds promising.

Elizabeth F. Fideler is Associate Dean for Teaching/Learning and Professional Development and General Editor of the Mass Bay Press.

Education Through College Theatre

Roger A. Wolf

Professor, Speech and Theatre Arts

A colleague stopped by my office the other day to suggest a certain play that he thought we might want to consider for stage production and for studying in English and history classes. "But, you'll need some good students," he warned, "ones that are good at memorizing." I was appreciative of his interest. But I was again frustrated about a discipline that has a process so little understood. How many people, even educators, when they think of theatre students, bring to mind such a thing as memorizing dialogue? Or painting flats? Maybe the smell of grease paint?

The fact is that I seldom even have to ask students to memorize lines. They just do that tedious task with few questions. Our "Blanche" in *A Streetcar Named Desire* couldn't even explain how she managed to memorize her thousand plus lines of dialogue. And seldom these days do we deal with the old fashioned box set, coloring and splattering flats. Grease paint? Often our actors need to wear little, if any, makeup.

What then, are we up to? What are college students learning from stage productions? What kind of process is followed and what is learned? How does it vary from production to production? To begin, many readers may not know that our students do any of the following as they prepare for the typical comedy or drama:

- Keep a journal of thoughts and observations relating to their character
- Write a biography of their character from birth to the present
- Develop a list of "concretes" that include age, physical health, relationship profiles, fears, dreams and goals
- Dream up abstracts that complement their character, such as color, animal, fabric, sound, music, and smell

- Decide on the most important line of dialogue...the one that reveals the most about the character's world
- Structure a "spine" which becomes the actor/character's nerve center for the entire play

I want to explain how college theatre is education--how each production offers mini-courses in psychology, sociology, history, economics, literature, poetry, and more. But as I dig out and piece together rehearsal notes, production journals, and call board scraps, I feel overwhelmed. I am preoccupied with current rehearsals and distracted by memories of past productions, each of which had a special way of educating. So, I've decided to put down some thoughts about past productions...loosely connected notes from my journals/notebooks and recollections of the overall production experiences. Each makes me think of education through theatre at the college.

The Shadow Box - Michael Christofer's dark comedy of three cancer victims and their families, set in a hospice.

The foul-mouthed old lady in our production was played by a "mature" student whose real-life daughter played her stage daughter. Rehearsals between them were revealing and moving. Our daughter and mother team worked through feelings of guilt, blame, jealousy, loss, and approaching death. Exciting.

The gay patient, his lover, and his ex-wife were a challenging trio. The actors had many sensitive discussions. Comparison to the AIDS epidemic was frequent.

The middle-aged man, his wife, and thirteen-year-old son were played by actors in their early 20s. They developed their dramatic spines through exhaustive self-analysis and discussion.

Blood Wedding - Garcia Lorca's modern tragedy...passion, hatred, and death, set in rural Spain.

Students grappled with verse drama as it focused on will versus fate. They studied symbols and motifs as they fit into non-realistic theatre.

Ritual was studied as a use for modern drama and Brecht's Theatre of Alienation was incorporated. Students realized an almost entirely foreign type of theatre.

The murder scene was developed as an original dance by the choreographer and students.

The Long Christmas Dinner - Thornton Wilder's gem of a little play about the passing of generations as they celebrate the holidays.

We discussed family traditions and how many are taken for granted. Actors interviewed grandparents and other relatives and reported back with wonderful anecdotes and tales. "I'll always appreciate family reunions now," one student remarked.

The Night of January 16th - Ayn Rand's dramatization of a murder trial with an audience-composed jury.

Far from the traditional stage, students constructed an environmental courtroom setting. At one performance, the verdict was served by a jury that included the college's President.

Actors invented and developed complex characters from sketchy script notations and then mingled with the audience during the performance and intermission. Our college's head of security made his stage debut as a court officer.

The "leading lady" had to be replaced forty-eight hours before opening. The student learned two hours of lines and business in one night. Lots of coffee and drilling.

Picnic - William Inge's searing drama of sexual frustration in a backwater Kansas town.

Students worked with pure realism. Believable relationships grew slowly through extensive biography discussions and seemingly endless improvisation exercises. They seemed really excited to study the morals and mores of the 1950s and to work on a thoroughly period piece.

West Side Story - America's celebrated musical of inner-city love and violence. Book by Arthur Laurents. Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. Music by Leonard Bernstein.

Dance was the mainstay of this spring musical. Dancers were sought and auditioned before actors and singers.

While the dialogue and story-line of "West Side Story" are a bit dated, actors developed fascinating characters from individual research and biographies.

Students were developing a new and rich appreciation of ballet as an art form.

Camino Real - Tennessee Williams' most unusual, perhaps most exciting and least understood work.

Don Quixote, Camille, Cassanova, Lord Byron, Kilroy, and a host of characters of literature and folklore dissolve in and out of focus, as in our dreams.

While audiences seemed confused as in past productions, our actors had clear visions and were fantastically enthusiastic. They performed on and against a fanciful set that was an enormous challenge to designers and technicians.

A Streetcar Named Desire - Tennessee Williams' most appreciated drama...of a woman slipping into madness.

The students were developing a real appreciation for fine writing. They delineated the many symbols employed by the action, studied them, and then re-wove them back into the fabric of the play.

Greek and Roman mythology were studied in order to understand Williams' references. Modern Southern culture was also scrutinized.

Several students visited Provincetown and sat on the porch of the bungalow where Williams penned much of the script. Some actors watched every Williams play they could find on film.

Each actor kept a "Streetcar" journal. Our "Stanley" decided the character had an oral fixation and "Blanche" decided that her character had been sexually abused by her father.

Desire Under the Elms - Eugene O'Neill's classic tragedy of jealousy, incest, and murder.

Students read and studied Euripides' *Hippolytus*, the model for the play. Dramatic devices of the ancient Greek theatre were incorporated into the staging and

performance styles. Dialogue that seemed wooden on the printed page slowly became electrified through performance.

With a modern play, actors learned and mastered the forces of ancient tragedy.

The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas - Larry L. King and Peter Masterson's lively musical about the closing of a famous Southern brothel.

We developed our production (April 1991) more or less ignoring the clumsy film version. The whole company took in the Nashville Network on television, and radios were programmed to country stations.

Students hooted and hollered Carol Hall's lyrics, most of them experiencing a free-form musical for the first time.

They understood that "Whorehouse" makes a quiet statement about the dangers of censorship and two-faced moralizing. But they also understood how exciting college theatre can be...it's fun, it's work, it's time consuming, it's confusing, it's frustrating, it's gratifying. *It's education.*

The Art of Revision: Learning from a Craftsman

Charlene M. Murphy

Professor, English

In July 1990, the Fourth International Hemingway Conference was held at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston. Noted Hemingway scholars gave insightful presentations on such diverse topics as "Gender Issues in Hemingway's Fiction," "Hemingway's Narrators," and "The Nonfiction," but it was through my own participation in special seminars on "How We Teach Hemingway" that I returned to Mass Bay with some exciting new ideas for my composition classes (Freshman English I and Freshman English II).

Seminar participants were divided into four groups of ten to twelve and each group focused on a specific Hemingway work. My group's focus was Hemingway's first book, *In Our Time*. Writing a short paper, preparing responses to discussion questions, making a brief presentation, and sharing classroom materials were the requirements for admission to the seminar. It was through the sharing of classroom materials that I was able to obtain copies of Hemingway drafts of excerpts from *In Our Time*--specifically the three vignettes originally titled "Religion," "Humor," and "Crime." These copies were first made by Dr. Michael Reynolds, while doing research for his book, *Hemingway: The Paris Years*.

As soon as I saw the draft materials, I realized the possibilities for teaching the revision process in an exciting and motivational way. Since these drafts were composed when Hemingway was a *young* man dedicated to teaching himself the craft of writing, I thought that my composition students might be inspired to follow suit as they surely would face similar struggles in shaping a piece of writing. I was not disappointed by the student response!

At the end of the third week of classes in the fall 1990 semester (while students were preparing and supposedly revising their own drafts of the first required essay in ENG 101), I distributed copies of the first two drafts of the vignette originally titled "Humor." As a class, we orally analyzed the changes--changes in setting, changes in word order, and the addition of specific details to replace generalities. Next, I asked

students to compare the third version to the second version, make a list of the changes, and then write a summary of the kinds of changes made. Most of the students were able to indicate the following--changes in word choice, addition of details, more concise wording, and almost constant reworking of phrasing.

In the next class, I distributed the final, published version of the vignette, and students once again orally noted additional changes from the previous version.

I was very pleased with the student responses, both oral and written, to all of these activities. The majority seemed to catch on very quickly to what was really meant by the revision process and also to see the value of the effort.

When it came time for individual conferences (prior to submitting the first essay for a grade), I thought that the student essays were much better than those usually written at the start of the semester.

Since the fall semester was the first time I had tried the Hemingway manuscript analysis with my classes, I thought that it would be a good idea to ask students what they thought of the activity. The following statements are representative of the responses I received from my three ENG 101 sections.

Question 1: What did you think of analyzing the Hemingway manuscripts as a learning activity?

I think that analyzing the Hemingway manuscripts as a learning activity is a good idea. It made me more comfortable about writing because I was able to see that even famous writers have problems at times.

Hemingway was teaching himself through his revisions. Every word he added or dropped had a specific use. By going through his manuscripts, from the first idea to the finished product, I feel that if Hemingway had difficulty with certain words and phrases, then my own work isn't hopeless. Also, he teaches just by crossing out a few words.

I think it was a good activity because it shows us that the paper belongs to us and we can change anything we want.

I think that analyzing Hemingway was both a good educational tool and also a real eye-opener as to the difference between a final copy and rough drafts. It is kind of like seeing behind the scenes of a movie and seeing what really goes on to produce what we see at the theater.

Question 2: What specifically did you learn?

Hemingway has taught me that even the great writers make many alterations before they are finished revising. It's accomplished by being able to add, delete, and move around material. He also clues us in on being scrutinizingly careful to be able to find the correct and most accurate description (e.g., 'smiling sweatily').

I learned that you should take your time because you shouldn't settle for anything less if you know you can make it better.

I learned that it is okay to write more than one draft (or as many as necessary) and also that simplicity and specifics are key elements.

I learned that a good way to keep the attention of the reader is the use of detail. Hemingway uses details very well, constantly changing them to make sure he has the best possible combination of details in just the right order.

I learned that writing takes time and a lot of revision. It is important to revise your draft until every sentence is in the right place. I learned that it is important to leave some things out and to add certain things in order to make an essay more understandable to the readers.

Question 3: How might you apply what you learned to your own writing?

In the past I would make one draft and then copy it over word for word in final draft form. Now I feel I will probably spend more time revising my essays to make them the best I possibly can.

I must think more while I write as well as before I start, to read and re-read what I write to make sure it's what I want to say and that I've said it properly, and to use detail when necessary to keep the reader's interest.

I will use a lot more revision and re-reading in future writing. I will try to be more in tune with the message that I wish to convey as I saw Hemingway do. It seemed that Hemingway was always changing his sentence structure and choice of wording to enhance the whole paper and not just to use any old word.

I would apply the habit of rewriting my drafts so that I can make them clear and more detailed, since I have a habit of not fully explaining my point to my readers and leaving them confused.

The Hemingway Room at the John F. Kennedy Library is a wonderful local resource. Ninety-five percent of Hemingway's original manuscripts are available for research, and Hemingway scholars are currently making impressive use of the opportunity. New books and numerous articles have been published based on material recently made available through the Collection.

It is interesting to note, given Hemingway's disdain for literary criticism, that he apparently intended that others be able to learn from his drafts and manuscripts because he told his wife, Mary, that he would like his materials to be available. Upon giving the papers to the Kennedy Library, Mary said, "I thought it would be interesting if, for example, the various drafts, one after another--many of them written in that big sprawling hand...--were available...if people wish to study how somebody develops something to the point where it is finally published in the way that the author thinks is the best..." (Desnoyers, 1989).

My Mass Bay students seem to have done precisely what Mary Hemingway suggested they should!

Reference

Desnoyers, M. (Fall 1989). *The John F. Kennedy Library Newsletter*.

Teaching Real-Time

Ann Farrey-Hart

Coordinator, Court and Conference Reporting Program

In April of 1990 I submitted a Scholar in Residence proposal to add the teaching of real-time writing to the computer offerings of the court reporting students at the Framingham Campus. My proposal stated that additional types of employment are becoming available to court reporting graduates because of the unique skills possessed by competent court reporters--namely, the ability to record the spoken word verbatim along with the ability to be simultaneously connected to a computer and provide real-time translation. Such speech-to-print technology is especially important to late-deafened adults who are unable to use sign language interpreters. It is imperative that court reporting training programs become aware of these needs and train students accordingly.

The focus of this proposal was to make the students aware of the numerous late-deafened adults in our state and country--about three quarters of all deaf people in the United States lost their hearing after the age of nineteen--and to make them aware of their ability to enhance the lives of the hearing impaired by providing real-time translation in various settings. Computer-compatible training was stressed from the beginning, and the goal was to graduate students with their own personal computer dictionaries and real-time writing capabilities.

No sooner had I implemented the plan for incorporating real-time technology training in the curriculum, when, in December 1991, the National Court Reporters Association in Vienna, Virginia required all NCRA-approved court reporting programs to include Computer-Aided Transcription training on in-house equipment, as well as the teaching of a true conflict-free theory (i.e., no two words are written the same on the shorthand machine). The NCRA announced: "With President Bush signing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), real-time reporting via a conflict-free theory is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity."

The ADA mandates that all government legal proceedings be made accessible to deaf people who participate in trials, including jurors and witnesses. For some 28

million deaf or hearing-impaired Americans, the court reporter is the **only** existing intermediary between the spoken word and themselves. Mass Bay's Court Reporting Program is right on line, figuratively and literally!

The NCRA Board of Directors further requested that all court reporting schools immediately adopt a conflict-free theory and implement in-depth Computer-Aided Transcription training sufficient to allow students to possess, upon graduation, a personal computer dictionary and skills necessary to produce an accurate computer transcript.

At the end of the fall semester, 1991, it is clear that our initial proposal was indeed timely and will continue to be implemented. The proposal included the acquisition of real-time translation software for the existing three IBM computers, which already contained court reporting software. The program also needed more than the three computer shorthand writing machines then available. We now have six IBM computers with court reporting software and real-time capabilities and seven computer writing machines. I have to thank Julie Mariasis and Terry Kramer for helping to acquire the additional computers along with Cindy Butters and Marge Stewart for allowing the acquisition of the additional software and computer writing machines.

We still have dreams of doing bigger and better things with our court reporting computer software. A friend of mine at a very large community college in St. Louis wrote and received a grant to provide real-time translation for the hearing impaired/handicapped students on their campuses. Real-time translation is being conducted by court reporting students in classrooms for hearing-impaired and learning-disabled students in the Excel Program. It is a "win-win" situation. Both the court reporting students and the learning-disabled students have benefitted.

We know it will take time to restructure our curriculum so that maximum time can be used in preparing court reporting students for the ever-changing technological society. Now real-time depositions are being conducted for instant daily transcripts. Real time is being requested for hearing-impaired students in colleges. Large national conventions and conferences are hiring real-time writers to "open caption" their speakers. The broadcast industry will be needing more employees trained in real time for closed captioning programs.

As the current president of the National Court Reporters Association, Heywood Waga, puts it, "The waves are getting larger, but we must be ready."

Circle Up!

Paul G. Johnson

Part-time Instructor, Sociology

For me, an ideal class is a blend of presentation along with audible response and participation from the class. Sometimes the ideal is reached, sometimes it is not. I have been asked to share my thoughts on the use of small groups as a vehicle for class response and participation.

Reasons for Using Small Groups in a Classroom

One reason for using them is my own experience as a student and teacher. I recall a class in philosophy at Boston University that was listed as a seminar. There were only eight students in the class, a small group setting in itself. We were seated around a table. For two hours once a week we sat and listened to the professor lecture, and if we asked a question it was clear from his response that he considered it an intrusion. I vowed that if I were ever a teacher I would never teach that way. As a student I found it painful.

During subsequent post-graduate studies I learned from educational research, i.e., Benjamin Bloom from the University of Chicago, that students who had the opportunity to participate vocally in a class were more mentally tuned in than those who just sit and listen. One researcher found that students who just listened to a lecture retained ten percent of it, whereas those who had the opportunity to raise questions and make comments retained seventy-five percent. Those who take notes perhaps gain even more, but nobody else benefits.

As a teacher, the problem for me in the classroom was that some students could sit through an entire semester and not volunteer a word whether there were fifteen or fifty in the class. Being called on induced a state of panic in them. Uttering a word or two they felt like failures in comparison with other more articulate students. On the other hand, in a small group of three, four, or five even the most reticent expressed themselves. The threat was gone or considerably diminished. And groups of two were even better.

Then in 1989 Mass Bay was host to a workshop on collaborative learning. The one I attended utilized small groups as a vehicle for this, and it was effective. It also reinforced what I had learned years before.

In addition to drawing upon my educational background, I would also note that the courses I teach at Mass Bay are ideally suited to seeking class participation. In a sociology class where we are considering kinds of groups in society, it would make no sense to have the class sit in rows. Rather than just *talk about* groups it is apropos of the topic that each student be a *part of* one. In a class on gender roles and sexism in September, the class fairly exploded with thoughts on Lisa Olsen and the Patriots' locker room issue. It would have been a waste, it seems to me, to keep that energy bottled up in silence.

Another sociology issue where utilizing small groups seems appropriate is in a cross-cultural comparison of the Japanese and American workplaces. The use of small groups in Japan, called Quality Control Circles, emphasizes consensus or democratic decision making and is better understood by students when they function within a similar setting.

In a course on Comparative Religions it is natural to encourage students on occasion to compare their own religious beliefs, doubts, and backgrounds, and small groups serve well to facilitate this comparison. The ecumenical buzz word for this is 'dialogue'. With students from different faiths and countries participating, the class itself becomes an ecumenical movement.

When I teach a course in Ethnic and Racial Studies, it is an essential part of the learning process that students get to know each other. Small groups help make this dynamic occur in the context of timely issues, such as whether there is prejudice when TV sports announcers describe a white quarterback as 'intelligent' but an Afro-American one as 'a natural athlete'.

Side Effects

Having used small groups for a while, I have heard of and observed several other worthwhile results. One is that students can clear their minds for new ideas. Questions and different points of view that might clog up the forebrain are vented in small groups thereby making the students ready to take on more.

Closely related to this is that students get to know their own minds. Enabled to find words for their feelings while interacting with classmates, they get a firmer grip

on the subject matter. It is like digesting food. They do this during a test also, but such distillation is for the eyes of the instructor only. No one else learns from it.

Then, too, students can relate the subject matter to their own experience. Principles or issues being discussed are applied to each student's world by each student. This, too, occurs in a test, but there is no cross-fertilization.

And I too benefit. Visiting the small groups and hearing them report, I get to know the language they use in talking about the subject for the day. Sometimes academic nomenclature is helpful to capture a particular meaning. However, in my experience, translating jargon into everyday speech engages student interest more, and interest is essential for learning.

Evaluation and Preparation

On the way home after a class, I often reflect on the balance between my presentation and class participation. I get an uncomfortable feeling if I have talked too much. What I find myself doing then is asking, "How could I have gotten the class more involved today?" Putting such a query to myself is like opening a door or inserting a new program into the computer. Ideas, possibilities come to mind which can be used another time.

Lecturing on familiar subjects is not difficult, but generating participation requires planning and preparation. Some strategies that I have found helpful are: asking the groups to consider what the point of a story, cartoon, or paragraph in the text might be; asking them to uncover the underlying issue that might be lurking in what is being presented or in a news article; and placing several concepts on the blackboard along with definitions and characteristics and then having the groups relate a current event or experience to what is on the board.

Preparation also includes attempting to anticipate what students might come up with so as to connect with it. Often that emerges spontaneously, or if it doesn't, I can take it up at the next class, having had time to reflect on what was said. I don't feel it necessary to cover every base in one class period. I am not an encyclopedia but a human being who happens to be a teacher. For me, learning is, indeed, a collaborative experience.

Passivity To Activity

Maxine Elmont

Professor, Behavioral Science

Too often educators believe students do not think. Perhaps what we mean is that they do not think correctly, they are not thinking the way we prefer, or they need to increase their thinking skills. Teachers have preconceived ideas about how students should do things and forget that they come to us with years of thinking and behaving in particular modes. We are not going to change these styles overnight. Even if we believe that we may have some impact on these processes, we must recognize that change takes time.

The initial questioning of information is an indication that students are ready to become actively involved in the teaching/learning process rather than blindly accepting what is being presented.

The eventual goal is that students will move beyond observation, comparison, and compilation further up the skills hierarchy. They will internalize the ability to organize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate material, thoughts, and/or behaviors. Most educators dream of their students becoming aware of thinking skill, increasing these abilities, acquiring greater competence, autonomy, confidence, and becoming effective thinkers and decision makers (Borchard, et al., 1988; Boylan, 1986; Miles and Rauton, 1987).

I set the tone for active involvement in the learning process to occur the first time I meet a class by asking my students to think about why they registered for the course and what they hope to gain from it. Everyone is expected to answer the two questions. There is always quite a range of responses to the why: "I was told to take it." "Sounded interesting." "Heard you were a good teacher." "It fit into my schedule." Their expectations, however, do not show as much variety.

The fact that they have few expectations for me or the course gives me the opportunity to point out that most of them will have some idea of what they want when they purchase a car or piece of clothing. And, since education is an investment in themselves and their future, they may wish to ponder why they make so few

demands from something which costs them considerable time, effort, and money. I then explain most emphatically that I have expectations for them. This allows me to focus on the syllabus and any further interactions among the students or between the students and myself regarding these objectives.

To allow for different learning styles, I base student grades evenly on test scores and research assignments. With regard to the tests, choice and freedom tend to be more limited than with the research, which allows students considerable choice. The research assignment outlined below is an integral part of all the courses I teach:

- Select three topics
- Select articles from professional journals
- Summarize
- Critique
- Relate the articles to the text, citing pages
- Use two 5"X8" cards for each article
- Plan to share your research in class in addition to passing in the cards

Choosing research topics involves risk. Those students whose success rate is not particularly high usually prefer to play it safe by having the instructor select the research topics. Then they can place blame elsewhere if they do not do well: "You said choose three topics you would like to *learn*. I would have picked different topics if you had said pick three topics you are interested in within this course."

Offering much encouragement, I ask the class to think about three areas in which they would like to do extra reading. Topics should have some relevance to the course. Once their topics are finalized, I schedule a class meeting in the library. There students receive a bibliographic orientation in relation to the indexes and professional journals.

Students are placed in groups by topics. The presentations correspond to the syllabus. For the majority of students, I have found this to be a positive learning experience, one which they have encouraged me to continue: "I enjoyed doing the cards. I was able to learn about a subject that I picked and also get graded on it." "The cards allow students to take a closer look at what they are interested in as well as familiarize them with certain library resources. As in any class, this type of system

only works for the student who *cares*." And, "...continue using the cards and discussing the topics in the small groups."

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Some Perspectives on Problem Solving

Helen M. Seery

Instructor, Mathematics

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) in its Standards for the Teaching of Mathematics and the Agenda For Action has recommended that "problem solving be the focus of school mathematics," and also that basic skills in mathematics must encompass more than computational facility.

Although no universally accepted definition of "problem solving" exists, Georges Polya, in *How to Solve It*, offers a four-step model to provide a framework for mathematical problem-solving instruction. The four phases are:

1. Understand the problem
2. Create a plan
3. Carry out the plan
4. Look back

Using Polya's model as a framework, I offer some perspectives that have evolved through my experience as a learner and a teacher of problem solving.

To understand a problem, one needs to be able to read the problem, and then to read beyond that which is written. There are simple textbook exercises that can be "solved" upon inspection and with a single arithmetic step. I think of these as warm-ups, but not "problems." Most textual examples and real-life quantitative-type problems do not come to us in ready-to-use formats.

The able problem solver needs to identify and distinguish the necessary and sufficient pieces of data from the irrelevant, to understand the problem in context, and to understand mathematical concepts well enough to choose the mathematics appropriate to the problem.

To create a plan, the able problem solver needs a repertoire of problem-solving strategies and plenty of opportunities to practice them. The seasoned solver will have

attempted, persisted with, and resolved many, many problems. By so doing, an effective set of problem-solving heuristics will have been developed.

To carry out a plan, the able problem solver will need sufficient ability to communicate the ideas of the problem into a workable mathematical format. This involves the ability to use properly the language of mathematics as well as the ability to calculate properly the quantities involved. The NCTM strongly encourages the use of calculators and computers at all levels of mathematics education.

To look back involves the problem solver in various modes of awareness. Metacognition, awareness of oneself as the learner, helps the problem-solver discover habits or attitudes that might impact success.

The problem solver needs to reflect on the reasonableness of a solution. Mathematical problem solving models real-life situations with an emphasis on quantitative aspects. However, problems based in reality come with qualitative components, and the able problem solver needs to develop the ability to appreciate and relate the two. Because problems may have many or no solutions, able problem solving requires a high comfort level with ambiguity and uncertainty.

Although Polya's model does not specifically mention the affective component of success in problem solving, I suggest that an environment that promotes a risk-taking, blame-free atmosphere will encourage and transform the tentative problem solver into an able problem solver.

We see that the focus of able problem solving incorporates the other major goals of mathematics education, which are the encouragement and development of reasoning ability, communication skills, and seeing and making connections. These goals build upon those of general literacy by adding the extra dimension of quantitative thought, numeracy.

Older Students in College

Edward G. McCourt

Associate Professor, Tourism and Meeting Services Management

One of the most significant developments in higher education over the past two decades has been the dramatic increase in the number of older students on college campuses. Twenty years ago, students twenty-five years of age or older were a small segment of most student bodies. As we enter the 1990s, statistics show older students making up nearly half of those in our classes.

The surge in enrollments among older students provides higher education with several benefits. Increases in enrollments among older students offset the decreasing numbers of younger students coming in from the baby-bust generation. Older students enhance the diversity in college classrooms and enrich the learning process. The varied interests and goals of older students prompt the expansion of existing programs and the development of new ones.

As older students increase their presence on college campuses, educators are called upon to recognize the uniqueness of this population. Older students come to us with educational goals, learning styles and special concerns that distinguish them from their younger counterparts. Our challenge is to understand the special characteristics of older students and, where appropriate, to make adjustments in our expectations for and approaches to them.

Younger students are often unclear about their educational goals. Many have come to college in response to peer or family pressure. Others know that an educational credential will help in securing later employment, but they are frequently confused about career paths. For these reasons, younger students often see college education as a continuation of their elementary and secondary experiences and as preparation for future life. They are typically passive learners and are less likely to be critical about the product we deliver.

Rarely do older students come to us without clear objectives. The twenty-eight year old may be back in school seeking a credential that will permit career advancement. The middle-aged housewife is getting occupational or professional

training that will allow her re-entry into the work force. The senior citizen is participating in the increasingly popular life-long learning concept, and his coursework is very much tied up with his sense of self-worth.

These students are not preparing for adult life; they are living it. Their work or family management experiences have required them to be self-directed, and they carry this orientation into their learning activities. Older students perform best in learning settings that provide for their active participation. For them, an instructor-centered environment that requires observation and listening is not as attractive as one in which they can relate life experiences to subject matter, pace the instructional process, and practice what they are learning.

Closely related is the issue of time and the older student. Unlike their younger counterparts, older students recognize the finite nature of time. They also tend to have greater work and family responsibilities. As a result, they are generally more selective and realistic about the education programs they pursue. Short-term career or self-development programs are particularly popular with these students. Given this sensitivity to time, older students might also be more critical of the educational product when they perceive that their investment of time (and money!) has not been productive.

Twenty of the thirty-six students in the 1990 Travel and Tourism Program at Mass Bay are older students. Several factors may account for the apparent popularity of the Travel and Tourism Program among older students. First, participants can earn a program certificate in six months. This is certainly a reasonable time commitment for the older student. Secondly, older students see the program's goals as realistic. Entry-level travel industry positions, and particularly those at the retail level, are as accessible to people who are thirty, forty or fifty as they are to those in their early twenties. Finally, the program emphasizes an active learning process--older students share their travel and business experiences in class, they complete much of the automation training through a self-paced, computer-assisted automation training program, and they participate in a sixty-hour internship.

Typically, our older Travel and Tourism students are more critical than their younger counterparts when they perceive a program flaw. When a guest speaker is disappointing or when an internship does not meet with expectations, older students are much more likely to let us know. They are certainly more sophisticated consumers, and they dislike misuse of their time.

While the older student characteristically comes to college with a goal and a commitment, this resolve can be undermined immediately by a poor self-image or other underlying problems typical of older students. The unemployed older student or the one who is frozen in an unhappy career may have considerable doubt about succeeding in school. Some students may wonder if their instructors or younger counterparts will accept them. Other older students may even be encountering family or peer ridicule for returning to college! Discouraged at the outset, these students are more likely to get off to a bad start.

To some extent, probably all older students are anxious about grasping concepts and skills and keeping up with the pace of studies. Many overcome these fears quickly and build the required confidence to succeed. In spite of hard work, others experience their worst nightmares as they fall behind. Weakened emotionally, these students often assume that they have an inability to learn. Such a conclusion is often incorrect.

As adults mature, their abilities to see and hear become impaired. Eyesight begins to weaken after the eighteenth year and more noticeably after age forty. Hearing loss, while more gradual, is consistent throughout adulthood. These changes can have a dramatic effect on the rate at which some middle-aged and senior citizen students learn. As educators, we must be mindful of these physiological changes in developing materials or learning strategies that are appropriate for the older student. Nevertheless, we must guard against erroneously concluding that the slower rate of learning among some older learners equates to an inability to learn!

In the Travel and Tourism Program at Mass Bay, we have adopted certain practices to help older students with their special concerns. Travel industry print resources or CRT displays can put a tremendous strain on even the sharpest vision. Therefore, we enlarge the small print of tariff sheets or deck plans that are being reproduced for instructional purposes. When older students are being acquainted with the computer, we make sure they know how to adjust the monitor to ensure display clarity. Most middle-aged and senior citizen students are naturally anxious around computers. Any special attention given when automation is introduced can do much to allay their fears and get them off on the proper footing.

We have tried to address the issue of low self-esteem among older students by tackling one of its root causes, the matter of student evaluation. Whether young or old, students are usually unanimous in their uneasiness over testing. Perhaps because

they have been away from school or because of difficulties keeping up with the required pace of learning, older students are particularly anxious about being evaluated. Nevertheless, career and other adult life experiences prompt the older learner to seek feedback on progress toward goals.

We administer quizzes and tests to our students, but we try not to be too rigid about the time element. Given the slower rate at which our older students learn, it follows that they need extra time to respond properly on tests and quizzes. Our older students react most favorably when their progress is measured on individual travel projects. Typically, students research a destination and plan an itinerary. Then, using all travel lab print and computer resources, they book and document the travel arrangements. This measurement form is perhaps most popular because it allows students to use problem-solving skills in a self-directed format.

These perspectives on the goals, learning styles and concerns of older students have touched on just some of the issues related to this student group. Continued development and clarification of this topic are both necessary and desirable. To a very large extent, our future success as educators will be measured largely by how well we recognize and act upon the special needs of this rapidly growing segment of the college student population.

From Watertown to Wellesley Hills--Diversity at MBCC Then & Now

John J. Sullivan

Assistant Professor, History

Introduction

I don't presume to have any special answers, unique experiences, or magic solutions to some of the teaching problems we have. But I have been asked to share some of my experiences as a classroom teacher, a liberal arts specialist, and a historian.

History

This year is somewhat of an anniversary for me. I began teaching at Mass Bay twenty years ago at the Watertown campus. My first class was composed of older students, hardened Vietnam combat veterans, a published black poet, a couple of women's rights activists, a few hippies, a professional singer, a Playboy Bunny, a taxi driver, an astrologer, a drug dealer, and an assorted collection of young recent high school graduates. They were challenging, anti-establishment, irreverent, passionate in their causes, and active learners. And they taught me a little bit about how to teach. I've never had such a motley crew since that time. Incidentally, the poet continued to write and publish; a couple of the vets went to law and journalism schools (one is a local editor); one of the women's rights activists went to work for the Duke; one hippie married well and moved to Westwood; the professional singer became a nurse; the Playboy Bunny received a graduate degree and went to work for A.I.D., U. S. State Department in Zimbabwe, Africa; the taxi driver dropped out and disappeared; the astrologer became a "Jesus freak" and a paralegal for a New York law firm; the drug dealer remained a drug dealer.

Problems

Then Mass Bay moved to Wellesley Hills. We recruited a basically younger population of recent high school graduates. We found them to be increasingly unprepared and lacking in the basic reading, writing, and thinking skills. We found

them to be more passive learners, and the need for remedial and developmental support increased proportionately. The college began to make up for some of the inadequacies of the Watertown days and began recruiting more minority students. And, finally, we developed a new area of recruitment among international students and encountered a parallel need for English as a second language (ESL) skills. Like many of you I am now witnessing an increasingly older student profile, many returning adults, more middle income students, more sophisticated students, frequently with interesting histories of job, travel, and educational experience. They challenge us in very different ways than the students who need remedial or developmental skills. We may be seeing many more active learners.

Profile

Characteristics of my current class: average age 21.2 years; recent high school graduates, some with woefully inadequate skills and some with unusually sophisticated skills; international students from eight nations, a few of whom have strong needs for ESL services; a learning disabled student who is receiving help; and several adults (from 21 to 70 years old) with impressive work, travel, and educational backgrounds--students who expect and demand a higher level of knowledge and a more sophisticated level of teaching than many of our unprepared students have expected.

Now the problem for me is how to teach such a diverse class, one composed of several weakly motivated, severely unskilled students, a couple of international students who have trouble writing and reading English, the learning disabled student, the elderly grandmother who is studying purely for the love of learning, and the re-entry adult entrepreneur who has traveled to several nations, has owned two businesses, and is retraining to start a third profession. It is not an easy task!

What Works

What has worked for me? I have used just about every audio-visual machine ever made. I have assigned peer tutors and field research projects, and have used every conceivable type of objective and essay exam. I have handed out essay questions ahead of time (and have even considered handing out essay answers ahead of time to see what the results would be!).

For the second year in a row I have required journal writing in all my day and evening classes. I used my once-in-a-lifetime sabbatical leave and a grant to write two

65-page handbooks for my Russia and China and Africa and the Middle East survey courses. The handbooks consist of competency-based learning techniques which guide the student from day to day and week to week with specific goals and competencies.

And this semester in two sections of American History I am using computer-assisted testing modules in the computer lab where the students, in preparation for in-class written exams, take practice exams at the computer and receive a grade and an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. So far the project has been well received by the students.

Sample Student Profile Questionnaires

I had the opportunity to distribute to four class sections an anonymous questionnaire which asked about background information, reasons for coming to Mass Bay, interesting life experiences, and life goals. I was surprised at the responses. To summarize the responses, I grouped students according to three categories: "those with accomplishment," "those who have had a tough life," and "those who are passive."

In the "accomplishment" category:

- a 39-year-old divorced mother with two kids from the first marriage who inherited five kids from the second marriage, was a sales director, real estate broker, and restaurant owner, and is studying at Mass Bay for a third profession
- a 21-year-old Russian emigre who hopes that Citizens for Limited Taxation, budget rollbacks and tuition/fee hikes don't kill his chances for transferring to a four-year college
- a 22-year-old Iranian exile who hasn't seen his parents in the two years since leaving Iran
- a 27-year-old American Buddhist who helped build a Buddhist monastery in upstate New York and wants ultimately to get a master's degree in ecology and help save the world

- a 20-year-old woman who spent a year studying in Florence and wants to be an international buyer

In the "tough life" category:

- a 21-year-old who was sexually abused, attempted suicide, received his G.E.D., got accepted to Annapolis, then blew his chances when he got arrested for conspiracy, trafficking, and distribution of cocaine. He worked for a few years, got his life together again, and came to Mass Bay to get a second start.
- a 23-year-old male who sleeps three-four hours per night, goes to college full-time, and owns his own bartending and catering business
- a 35-year-old mother with two daughters who is an incest survivor and who wants to study nursing in order to help others
- a 20-year-old who works full-time, is homeless, lives in her car and occasionally at her friends' houses, and who wants to get a medical degree
- a 20-year-old female reformed drug addict from New York who wants to be a writer and help others

And, finally, in the "passive" category:

- a 20-year-old male whose most interesting life experiences were "been to Disneyworld twice, got my ear pierced, and never been dead"
- an 18-year-old male whose most interesting life experiences consist of "my family is boring, work stinks, I don't have enough money to travel. I used to buy drugs from a cop. I wanna (sic) make a lot of money, so college is, I think, the smart way to go."

These are the students we deal with on a daily basis at the community colleges.

African-American Students and Higher Education

Lorna E. Andrade

Associate Professor, Associate Degree Nursing

As the student population of community colleges continues to shift and as the percentage of minorities in this population continues to grow, we need to wonder about our inability to retain or graduate many African-Americans. Nationally and locally, attention is focused on the alarming problems we encounter with black students today. Many young black students lack the necessary skills in math, reading, and writing. More importantly, they also lack intellectual discipline. To explore this dilemma it seems important for those of us who believe in equal access to ask ourselves some of the questions that "traditional educators" ask:

- Where did these students come from?
- Why can't they conform to the college culture?
- Why do these young blacks often seem ungrateful for their chance at higher education?

To understand these problems, we need to look deeper into the history of blacks in higher education in this country. By understanding this history of exclusion and elitism, we can learn more about how young blacks can become more positively involved in their educations, rather than remaining hostile outsiders.

Brief History of Blacks in Higher Education

According to Allen Ballard in *The Education of Black Folk: The Afro-American Struggle for Knowledge in White America (1973)*, the historical background of blacks in white colleges begins in 1826, when the first black college graduate was given his degree at Bowdoin College. By 1910, some 693 black students had graduated from white colleges, the bulk of them after 1890. The explanation for this poor showing

was admission policies that excluded blacks. For example, City College of New York, founded as an institution to serve the poor, had a total of only two black graduates by 1910.

And although the small group of blacks exposed to white higher education from 1900 to 1960 did have considerable impact on the condition of their people, they were not many nor were they able to make the sweeping changes that would have been necessary to effect true integration.

It was difficult for these black college graduates to assimilate the knowledge acquired at white colleges and use it to uplift the black masses because, as W. E. B. DuBois suggests, the white universities, as centers of American culture, were unable to incorporate the former American slaves into that culture. Repeatedly throughout black literature, references are made to the great psychological pressures exerted on blacks at white colleges. William Melvin Kelly, a black graduate of Harvard in the 1950s, refers to his experience there as one where

a Negro not only loses his Negro consciousness or at least the sore edge of it, but [also as one where] perhaps he will acquire something else: the opportunity to develop a certain aristocratic attitude even toward white men. He comes to believe in a quiet way that Harvard is the best school in the country and he is one of the select. Yale Negroes feel the same way about Yale; Dartmouth Negroes feel the same way about Dartmouth and so on.

Obviously the feeling of selectness and aristocracy that excludes even those blacks who attend other colleges cannot prepare black graduates to help uplift the rest of the black people.

Some black students, in an effort to compensate for these pressures, organized black social groups on the white campuses. In fact, the first black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, was formed at Cornell in 1906 to combat the ostracism from their own culture, as well as from the culture of white-oriented institutions, that blacks felt.

The Problem Today

Clearly, the promise of a better life that college offers is complicated by psychological pressures for blacks. As profound as these pressures are, however, they cannot be allowed to prevent today's black students from seeking better lives through

higher education. Yet for black students leaving high school without basic skills in reading, writing, and math, the option of a college education seems like an empty promise.

Although the same deficiencies are seen in many white students, such lack of academic knowledge in blacks, combined with some frightening statistics, suggests we need to work much harder at convincing our black youth that they can (and must) achieve anything they set their minds to. For the burden carried by black youth is heavy. The growth of the underclass in black urban centers is growing alarmingly:

- 1 in 2 live in poverty
- 1 in 2 grow up without a father
- Nearly 1 in 2 teens is out of work
- 1 in 4 births is to a teenager
- 1 in 21 men will be murdered

(Note: These statistics have greatly increased since they appeared in *U. S. News & World Report*, March 7, 1986.)

Thus, it seems difficult to expect a black student to be grateful for his opportunity to succeed in a white college when he has so much else in his black life to contend with. To help here, we must recognize that these young blacks are trying to get an education in order to better themselves and improve their family lives. We must emphasize self-help among blacks and impart to them the belief held by their peers in the middle class that they can make it if they try. The key to fostering this kind of self-reliance is teaching techniques that emphasize self-assessment and active involvement in learning. Black students can gain particular strength from examining where they have come from and where they wish to go.

Self-Help Through Learning Contracts and Journals

Through my work with students at Mass Bay and with Wampanoag students on Martha's Vineyard, I have found that requiring students to execute a learning contract forces them to assume control of their own education. In addition to the contract, the learning journals they keep record their progress as learners and reinforce the belief that they can make it if they try.

What Is a Learning Contract?

As with any contract, a learning contract stipulates what will be done and how. The student, with some guidance, writes the agreement outlining how she will take control for her learning.

At the start of a course, I explain what learning contracts are. The student chooses to remain in the class with a learning contract or withdraws (usually to re-enter later with clearer dedication to learning). An example of a learning contract follows:

I will use the structural experience of this course to learn from. I will make the most of my own learning by engaging in a specified behavior and by being open about my feelings and reactions to what is taking place in order that others may have information to react to when giving me feedback and building conclusions about my area of study. I will set personal learning goals and work actively to accomplish them. I will take responsibility for my own learning and not wait for someone else to make me grow. I will practice new skills and seek out and be receptive to feedback. I will keep a journal that records my observations.

It is important that the student's own words be used in composing these contracts; in forming the language to describe their learning goals, students are beginning to take control of their destiny.

Using Learning Journals

A learning journal, used in conjunction with the contract, acts as a step toward freedom and responsibility. It expands students' consciousness of the body-mind-spirit unity and demonstrates to them that they can be people with knowledge.

In the journal, students write informally and record results that they see stemming from their experiments with new behavior. They also learn to express their feelings and concerns more freely, which helps them to develop internal feedback techniques to monitor their progress.

The Last Step

As time progresses, students should be encouraged to follow up their work with a "self-knowledge review." Three major areas to include in this review are education, work, and attitudes toward others. Some topics they should address are:

- How far have I gone in school?
- What is my major field of interest?
- Which are my best and poorest subjects?
- What further educational plans do I have and why?
- What extra-curricular activities have I participated in and enjoyed?
- What have I done for work experience?
- What have I liked?
- What would I like to try?
- How do I feel about myself?
- How do I want to change this?
- How do others feel about me?
- How do I want to change this?
- What are my hobbies and interests?
- What do I want to do?

Perhaps when black students are encouraged by us to see that they are capable on their own, more will be able to continue in their education and use it to help educate other blacks about the inner riches and resources found through higher education.

Fore and Aft

Gerard H. Saunders

Professor, Law

Recently, I was asked to address a group of new Mass Bay faculty on the subject of community college teaching in general and the Mass Bay experience in particular. I assume I was deemed a good resource person since my tenure at the College is approaching thirty years. In addition, I happened to be available at the precise time when this presentation was scheduled.

In the course of my preparation, I reviewed the monumental changes which have occurred in the past three plus decades. In the early sixties and for a fair time thereafter, the professional life of the Mass Bay professor was not all that much of a challenge. First, we had a relatively select group of students. There was a formal admission procedure which, believe it or not, rejected a significant number of applicants. Many programs required reasonably decent SAT scores. In those days, the idea of open admissions would have been unthinkable. Second, the classroom teacher was given respect simply because of his title and his word was law. Third, virtually everyone who attended was a full-time student whose goal was an associate degree without which transfer to a four-year college or university was impossible. During the Viet Nam era, failure to maintain an acceptable GPI would result in a male student being inducted into military service, with the opportunity to discover firsthand the exciting challenge of wartime survival. Talk about power! Those were the days, my friend!

The shift in the balance of power was at first barely perceptible, but in the eighties, the change became an avalanche. The college is no longer able to dictate what the educational experience will be, nor is the professor regarded as some omnipotent being. There are simply too many schools and too few students, and we have not been able to escape the basic laws of supply and demand. The tail no longer wags the dog. The fact is that we are now not unlike any other business engaged in a highly competitive environment. Some will cringe at the comparison, but we have to

understand that students are consumers; they will shop elsewhere. If enough shop elsewhere ... well, you get the picture!

What can we do to insure our continued viability as a preferred choice of potential students? Just as the car salesperson IS General Motors to the customer who enters the showroom, the professor in the classroom IS Mass Bay to the student. This is not to devalue the contribution of support services. It is merely to call attention to first impressions which are so critical. While the primary goal is still excellence in teaching, teaching skills must be seasoned with liberal amounts of encouragement, patience, and caring...and there is a lot to care about.

There are so many environmental considerations which may negatively impact on our students. A large majority have significant financial constraints necessitating heavy job commitments. There are times when a dedication to succeed in school cannot overcome exhaustion. We used to tell our classes: job or school, take your pick! Do we really have to be that rigid? I think not. Why not bend just a little now and then? Be assured that the result need not be an abandonment of standards.

Financial difficulties are far from the only problem our students face. Years ago, a student who did not speak fluent English was an oddity. Not so today. We have a significant number of students who speak English as a second language (ESL). I believe all of us have a particular responsibility to these students, not only because it is good to care. The fact is that the entire college community benefits from the presence of representatives of many diverse cultures. If these people are lost, it is to the detriment of everyone.

Recently, I had an interview with an advisee of Japanese origin. She asked me to sign a drop slip. I asked all the usual questions. It turned out that her professor would not let her use a dictionary when taking exams, nor was she allotted any additional time. The professor's response was that he could not give her preferential treatment. At the end of the meeting she wondered out loud how her professor would feel if he were "put into a classroom in a foreign country and didn't know the language very well." A fair question?

ESL students do not represent the only group that poses a unique challenge. There are the single parents, those returning to school after years of absence, those in need of retraining, older people, and disadvantaged from all walks of life. And if that

weren't enough, a shocking number of those who come to us right out of high school are simply not prepared in the most basic skills.

We have a choice. We can throw up our hands. After all, it's not our fault! We have another option. We CAN give that extra few minutes of office time. We CAN personally arrange for tutoring. We CAN make a conscious effort to structure our classes in a way that ALL students are given a fair chance to succeed. We CAN take a few minutes out of class time now and then to give an old-fashioned pep talk. We CAN experiment with creative motivational techniques. We CAN develop ways of grading that are perfectly valid but may stray from the traditional. We CAN, at least now and then, try to put ourselves into the place of those we teach. We CAN do a lot of things.

I guess it all boils down to this: the good old days are gone forever. But were those days all that good? I suppose they were to those who revelled in the comfort and security of a structured, programmed, highly predictable environment. But for those who want an opportunity to improvise and create, and those who look forward to the chance to fashion their own tools for success, this is, indeed, the best of all times.

Focus on ESL Students

Susan Andrien

Coordinator, Writing Program

More and more frequently in faculty meetings on teaching, our attention turns to the growing population of students who speak English as a second language (ESL) and to questions about how we can teach them more effectively. Most of us seem to have an overwhelming sense that we could use some training, some help, or some information about these students and their needs. As one faculty member said in a recent meeting, "When it comes to teaching students with language differences, we as teachers are the underprepared population."

If we look at the national trends for higher education, it's not surprising that we find so many more ESL students in our classes. According to Ernest R. Leach, president of Fresno City College, "The combined impact of birth rates, domestic migration and immigration will dramatically change our community college consumer markets in the 21st century, both in total numbers and ethnicity of students to be served." Leach suggests that educators in all states look to California as a "bell-weather state" for community college populations nationally, noting that California community college students represent a *third* of all community college students in the nation. In California, traditional racial, ethnic, and linguistic "minority" populations are now in the *majority*, and demographic projections are that this trend will continue. In 1987, the Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education projected that during the period 1980-1995, while "the white population will decline about 2%, blacks will increase by 40% and other non-white groups, almost entirely Asian and Hispanic, will increase by 176%."

For an issue of the *Critical Literacy Bulletin*, we asked faculty to contribute short anecdotes that would reflect some of the experiences of our own population of students who speak ESL. These stories follow.

Some Scenes from the Classroom

Masaaki carries a hand-held computerized translator to help him wade through the written work in his classes. He types the word in English, and the screen flashes the equivalent in his native Japanese.

The students were reading an interview with a soldier who had been part of the massacre at My Lai during the Vietnam War. Masaaki was close to the door, and I passed his desk on my way to the hall. He had his translator out. "The reading's going okay?"

"I have a question about one word."

I leaned forward, happy that he was asking for my help. The word had a box drawn around it, separating it from the rest of the text. *Gook*.

My slight interruption had already distracted the rest of the class. Everyone watched, curious. "The word is gook," I told them, drawing a couple of smiles. "It's a slang word, a derogatory term for a Vietnamese person. Probably it is used to describe other Asian people, but here, the soldier is talking about Vietnamese." Masaaki looked back down at the text. He understood, and I felt that I had called him a gook in front of the entire class. Some of them still stared at Masaaki. "It's like calling an Italian a guido, or a black person a nigger." Now the students were staring back at me. "One more racist word."

My friend runs a writing center in Chicago at a small private college. She told me that ESL students often come to her with questions about surviving in a culture so different from their own. For example, she would explain how to use laundromats, etc. One story I remember she told was of a student who was afraid to eat in an American restaurant. The student explained that she had watched outside these restaurants and had observed that an official-looking man always came up to the people who entered and asked them a question. When they answered the question, he smiled in satisfaction and escorted the diners to a table. She longed to enter, but she was afraid that she would not know the answer to the question that gained admission for these knowing people. She asked my friend, her teacher, where she could learn the answer to this question.

All semester, my ESL class had been writing informal journal entries. To build on this experience, I assigned a project that was the culmination of several of these entries. They had to write a letter to someone in their own country describing an issue that they feel is the most important for the US to focus on to ensure a good life in the 21st century. Then, they had to show how that issue is of parallel importance in their own country. They also had to show connections to other issues covered in the course, to practice dealing with one issue as a way of exploring related situations.

Over a two-week period, the class wrote the informal reactions in their journals and expanded on them in class. I was confident that the final projects would benefit from this constant practice and rehearsal of the ideas they would present.

When I got the results, I was very surprised. The journals were rich and interesting; they explored some of the complexities of the issue and raised thoughtful questions. Students clearly had a lot of great things to say, and I looked forward to the final projects.

The letters, on the other hand, were weak. The richness was missing; the connections simplistic. Students seemed to consider assignments as separate entities, rather than parts of a larger whole. This leaves me with lots of questions about journals: how do students view them? Why are they able to tap into such complex thinking, while formal assignments so often fail to do so? How can we bring the power of journal writing into students' formal work?

From a reading class, the vocabulary journal of an ESL student: "I was reading an article about weed, and I found the word *fluttered*. Now I learned that not only the geese flutter, not only the birds, also the humans can be flutter. Like I was a few moments before I had to speak in the classroom in front of the people. Flutter is a good word, makes me think about action.

The second word is *drought*. Seem to me everybody can have some time in a place is drought, like the Mexican desert in the northeastern part of the country. Sometimes I think my brain is drought, seems hard to find the way I like to tell things or try to be better. But I can't be flutter and be drought or can I?

Alas is a word almost nobody use. I don't remember if somebody said that word to me before I read it, anyway *alas* make me feel somebody in pain or suffering, but sounds like a poem in other way, maybe the people express better than me.

When I did my project I found the word *gossip*. Seems to me an interesting word but the connotation could be better. Another word was *pious*, which I think I heard before inside the church some day, maybe Sunday morning but I don't know where."

From an ESL writing teacher: Whenever one particular student's work would come to the top of the pile to be corrected, I would always put it back on the bottom. I didn't want to face her writing because it was always so rambling and illogical. Nothing I did in class or said to her in conference seemed to make any difference.

In addition to her problems with writing, this student also had a major attitude problem. She was openly hostile to other students and in small groups would angle her desk to face away from the rest of the group, conducting her discussion with her classmates over her shoulder. Though I encouraged her to participate more willingly, her behavior continued basically unchanged.

What do you do with a student like this? The first semester I had her in class, I took the easy way out. It seemed I would never be able to untangle her logic, so instead we talked about verb forms and verb tenses. The result was that we still ended up with a paper that made no sense, only the newer version was more grammatically correct. Regarding group participation, I just continued to encourage her, hoping that eventually some progress would be made.

When this student appeared in my class again this semester, I realized that I had to do something differently. I had believed that this student didn't really have the necessary ability to succeed and that it would take a superhuman effort to make a difference. What I really needed to grapple with was my own unwillingness to try.

The semester is over now, and I have seen two major changes in her behavior. In the peer groups, I simply continued to encourage her. My reward came mid-semester, when during a class activity she asked me why we weren't breaking into groups and indicated her preference for doing so. Though she still has a long way to go, I can see her becoming more and more at ease with her fellow students.

As for her writing, I tried an approach which I had used successfully with other students but which I had hesitated to use with her. On her early drafts of essays, I began to put only the briefest of comments, requesting clarification or a statement of her main point. She now started to seek me out, and on one occasion cornered me in

the hallway, demanding what I meant. In this, and in a subsequent conference, I felt that I was going into a battle too long postponed, facing and exorcising a personal demon, my belief that the student just couldn't "get it." In fact, though our conferences together became long, drawn-out sessions, this student could now "get it." "It," meaning organization, just didn't come very naturally to her. In her subsequent papers, although they were loaded with grammatical error, I finally saw a flickering of intelligent thought. This experience taught me the value of not prejudging my students and also helped bolster my confidence in the methods I am using.

A few years ago when I was working in a writing lab at a four-year school, I worked with a student named Tanja (pronounced *TAN-YA*). Her writing was virtually flawless, but her English teacher kept sending her to work on "ESL errors." Somehow the sentences that Tanja wrote were held up to an extraordinary scrutiny; even though they were correct, my teacher friend would somehow misread them as if he were translating from a language he did not know very well. One day this teacher came to see me, obviously concerned to the point of distraction. "I don't know what to do with her," he confessed. "She can't even pronounce her own name. It should be *TAN-JA*--but she can't get it right."

By the way, Tanja spoke English as her first language. Her father was a diplomat, so the family traveled a lot. She'd spent part of her childhood in Venezuela, and thus was bilingual.

About four years ago, I was hired to interpret for BJ, a deaf student who was placed in an ESL class because he used a sign system to communicate--the issues of language, translation and interpretation were interesting, similar to a point. BJ, who was born in the midwestern United States, would sometimes have difficulty with such class topics as "How did you come to America?"-- but otherwise he functioned well in the class. (For those unfamiliar with the role of interpreters, my job was to accompany the student to class and translate the spoken language into sign for him.)

The class members were from various countries: Chile, Vietnam, Iran and Japan, to name a few. Their names were difficult to pronounce--I could only guess at the spelling --and each student's accent presented a real challenge for me. One older man

in the class (I'll call him X) really stood out in my mind. He seemed to have a lot of trouble with the readings and would always "hold up the class" with his questions, which he would follow with more questions. While the other students would seem satisfied with a brief explanation of a grammar point or an explanation of some detail of American culture, X would press for more. It appeared to the class that he wasn't "getting it" or that perhaps he needed his own tutor. (I should mention that the other students were mostly 18-22, while X was in his 40s.)

His accent was very difficult to follow; I usually had to wait until his exchange was complete before I could interpret his message for BJ. I remember the tension that built in the class at these moments--BJ getting noticeably impatient; X growing impatient, too; he knew the condescending teacher was trying to move the class along.

One day the students were doing a group activity. BJ was in the same group with X. The group members were discussing their work, talking about what they had done for a living in their own countries and what jobs they now held in the US. What a humbling experience it was for BJ, no stranger to the discrimination that affects those unable to communicate, when X revealed that he had been a doctor in his own country. He had left with virtually nothing to begin life again in America. X now worked as a dishwasher at a nearby hospital to pay for this ESL class.

After that day, I would still hear a collective sigh from the class when X raised his hand to ask a question, but I noticed that the people from the group with whom he had shared his story would jump in to help him. And I noticed that BJ would react with particular attention, "listening" to X as if he had something valuable to tell us.

In the journal of a Chinese-American student, I read the following: "My friends from my neighborhood can't understand me now that I am going to school. They call me a *banana*--yellow on the outside, but white on the inside."

In my ESL reading class we read a Sufi parable of bees and wasps. The point had to do with the fact that, unlike the bee, the wasp does not make honey. In this class there was a student who spoke English as her first language. She asked, "Isn't there some other kind of wasp--a person of some kind?"

I explained that the term WASP is an acronym for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, a particular ethnic group in this country. The student looked around and said, "Only one of them here--you." I replied that I'm Jewish.

I was standing in the hall having a conversation in my first language, Spanish, with one of the men who works in maintenance here at Mass Bay. This acquaintance is important to me; it's rare for me to be able to speak freely in my native language with someone who really understands what I am saying. Along came a colleague and started waving his hands in my companion's face. "Speakie English, boy! You in America now!" he said. He meant it as a joke.

From the reading journal of an ESL student: "I don't know how to write poems. But I really wish I know it. I still reading a book, I couldn't finish it yet. I started reading a couple years ago, but I spent many times trying to understand it. It is a very hard job, when you speak a different language than the one the book it's wrote. When i start trying to learn how to read, I spend half an hour in each page.

With this kind of book I spend more than the half hour for page, and sometimes I couldn't find the meaning of one word in three or more dictionaries, and I remember one word I never found the meaning in my native language, but now I assume it. Unfortunately for me, learning other languages is a no end work. Even in my native language, is the same hard work.

I am still reading the book, his author is Walt Whitman and the name of that book is *Leaves of Grass*. I am glad I got this book. It was a long time ago in my country where I heard a friend of mine talk about this book. He recommended it to me and I am agree with the author, because he is a poet and a philosopher. I found hundreds of words in this book totally news to my acknowledge, one of these words is *countenance*.

He wrote in his book, "Was somebody asking to see the soul? See your own shape and countenance, persons, substances, bearts, the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and the sands."

When he first came to this country, Essam from the United Arab Emirates related how he could not understand why the server at McDonald's kept telling him that they did not have chips while Essam was staring at a full tray behind the server. The server's irritation subsided when Essam accepted "french fries" instead of "chips."

A few years ago, I was teaching an evening course at UMass/Boston that included the usual mixed bag of night students, including an Iranian man who was very conscientious. One night he was absent from class--no big deal--but I found him waiting outside my office door when I returned to drop off my folders and leave for home. I was impatient, waiting for him to tell me whatever his excuse was and be on his way -- it was 9:30 pm, after all. After some time, he came to the point, "I missed class and I apologize. I thought at first I could not speak to you. But after awhile I thought more. After all, I have committed no crime. You will not arrest me. So I came to tell you that I missed class, but I will be there next week."

In one class, I faced five ESL students: George, Romel, Raquel, Ge, and Abdel. "Oh boy," I thought, "how am I going to deal with their lack of language skills?" I assumed that these students would all have difficulty in the class keeping up with the other students. By the fourth week of classes, I discovered that two of them were very literate in English--one wrote with better grammar than I use; one spoke clearly and beautifully in class. Another student showed progress from week one through week thirteen, both in written and spoken forms of English. Two of the five needed lots of help that I couldn't give them (one of these dropped the class on December 7th; the other is sticking it out through the final. and so far has done D+/C- work).

What strikes me about all this is that I know I am now experiencing these students' abilities differently as a teacher. I now incorporate conversation--written and spoken --into my classes. Students work frequently in small groups, so I also have the opportunity to observe similar "conversations" between these students and their peers. Once, not too long ago, I would have gone through the whole semester blithely assuming that all five students were very deficient. I never would have discovered how diverse their English abilities were--where they were able (writing? speaking? reading and comprehending?) or deficient.

I wonder--if I had not talked, not listened, not written to all five of these students, would I have lost four instead of one?

Cultural Misunderstandings and Language Barriers in the Classroom

Lisa Gonsalves

Assistant Professor, English

Faculty and staff were invited to share their questions and concerns about students who speak English as a second language at a meeting hosted by ESL practitioners. They also shared their suggestions and recommendations to improve Mass Bay's services to this growing population of students. Most concerns fell into three broad categories: language barriers in the classroom, cultural misunderstandings between faculty and students, and special concerns about effective teaching methods and student coping abilities. Those recommendations and concerns are reprinted here as a way of continuing the dialogue for the Mass Bay community at large.

Classroom instructions present a real barrier for ESL students. Making sure the students have translated the assignment properly and that they understand what is being asked of them is a major faculty concern. ESL student reluctance to ask for assistance further complicates matters. Unfortunately, slowing down for ESL students is just not possible in some courses. The result of this is that often, faculty do not recognize the scope of the problem until it is too late for the student to get the proper tutorial help.

One suggestion which grew out of this concern was that ESL classes and support services should explain the American educational system and the need to ask for assistance. The meeting participants believed that this was important because in some cases, the cultural attitudes of students affect their ability to ask for assistance. This and other cultural differences need to be addressed more directly.

Participants also wondered if it were possible to have a late start ESL or basic writing course so that students who are identified as having difficulties after the first week in the semester would have a "place to go." It's particularly important to provide some curricular options for international students who may need to drop an inappropriate course, because their visas often require a certain number of credit hours per semester.

The question of proper credit loads for ESL students was a major concern among meeting participants. It was recommended that students in ESL classes have a credit limit or that they take lighter course loads. One suggested way to accomplish this was that faculty identify courses in their disciplines which they would not recommend for ESL students or that the number of credits offered for basic ESL language courses be raised. This discussion led to the suggestion that there be a college policy on credit limits, not only for ESL students, but for all students at risk. Reservations were expressed, however, about making policies too restrictive; perhaps the best approach is to strengthen advising and to "strongly recommend" appropriate credit loads and course selections to students.

Another language barrier which ESL students face in the classroom is the proper understanding of concepts or technical language. Faculty find that ESL students have a difficult time relating their English vocabularies to disciplinary concepts. Often times they do not understand the concepts or technical language necessary for the subject they are majoring in. Meeting participants suggested that ESL students could be helped to overcome this particular barrier by studying specific vocabulary and special terminology in their language classes. Also, the ESL reading assessment could be related to content courses and student majors.

Special Concerns

One special concern among meeting participants was the level of support services being offered to ESL students. Most faculty felt that more support services were needed and that more effort should be made in directing students to the services that already exist at Mass Bay. The following suggestions to improve ESL support services were offered:

- Counseling services for ESL students should be expanded and more multi-cultural counselors hired.
- Coping courses should be built into student schedules.
- Maybe students who speak ESL need more of the kind of services that disabled students receive (such as alternative methods of testing, peer support groups, support services).

- The academic honors society could be encouraged to provide peer academic and "cultural" tutoring for ESL students.
- The college should hire a social worker to help students deal with their non-educational commitments and difficulties.

The meeting ended with suggestions for a variety of workshops that will focus on issues related to students who speak English as a second language and a commitment to raising the awareness of the college community to these issues.

The ESL Population at Mass Bay: An Overview and Some Concerns

Elaine Wilson

Assistant Professor, English as a Second Language

The list below gives the countries of origin for English as a second language (ESL) students enrolled at Mass Bay in Fall 1990.

Argentina, Zambia, Morocco, France, Brazil, Thailand, Netherlands, Haiti, Cameroon, Uganda, Philippines, Greece, People's Republic of China, Peru, United Kingdom, Iran, Colombia, Rwanda, Hong Kong, Zaire, Venezuela, Sweden, Ecuador, Japan, Cape Verde, and Spain

International Students: 134 total

Permanent Residents: 224 self-identified

Breakdown of Students from Some Major Countries of Origin (*approximate numbers*)

90 from Haiti, the majority *permanent residents*

70 of Hispanic origin, the majority *permanent residents*

20 from India, the majority *permanent residents*

35 from Japan, the majority *international students*

10 from Greece, the majority *international students*

10 from China & Hong Kong, the majority *international students*

15 from African nations, split between *permanent residents and international students*

As you can see from these statistics, there are two distinct groups of ESL students at Mass Bay: the international students (those who are here on a tourist visa or a student visa) and the permanent residents (those students who have green cards, who are able to work full-time and who generally do).

I'd like to talk about the differences between these two groups by referring to some of my students' papers. First, I'd like to talk about the international student group. A Japanese student wrote :

In Japan, children who are going through adolescence are referred to as "meal, bath, sleep" children. This is because these are the only words they speak to their parents; they tell their mother when they are ready to eat, when they are ready to have a bath, and when they are ready to go to sleep. I was worse than the usual adolescent because I rarely spoke to my parents at all; I usually stayed in my room.

I chose this paper to discuss because I believe it demonstrates a key difference between the international student and the permanent resident. Most international students have strong emotional and financial support from their families. Most of these students, even if their language skills are weak, exude a certain type of confidence about their future: having a supportive family back home provides them with kind of a safety net.

The majority of the international students come from a strong academic background and have studied English previously in a formal setting. In addition, many of these students have good negotiating skills; they quickly learn the ropes of the academic bureaucracy and generally are pretty good at getting what they want. Even though their families are thousands of miles away, they quickly develop support groups among themselves.

On a recent evening I noticed a mixed group of Asian students taking a break together in the cafeteria. After their break they went back upstairs to study or to work in the computer center. Unlike the permanent residents, who go to work immediately after morning classes, these students put first priority on their studies; school becomes a home away from home for them. It's my impression, though I have no solid numbers, that most of these students transfer after one or two years. Mass Bay is a way for them to get their feet wet in the academic world. I think most of these students value their Mass Bay experience highly. Many of them speak highly of their patient and understanding professors.

One student, Aki, is a case in point. This young man is a real go-getter: he has an excellent academic record, managed the international student festival last year.

organized the international student petition against tuition increases, works in the computer center, and was still here quite late last night when I left. Aki plans to transfer within the next semester or two, and I am confident he will succeed wherever he goes. His confidence and determination are almost tangible.

I guess my final remarks about this group of students is that I'm not really worried about them; they're bright, intelligent, fun to work with, and usually move on quickly.

Now, where do the permanent residents fit into the scheme of things? The characteristics of this group are completely different. Again I'd like to refer to some students' papers, for example, one written by a young married woman from Haiti who has a twelve-year-old son.

When I first came to the United States, I realized the importance of speaking English. I was working in a nursing home and someone made a mistake with one of the patients and blamed it on me. I was so scared and frightened I didn't know what to do. I knew it was the other woman who had made the mistake. I just took the head nurse by the hand and brought her to the patient's room. Tears were running down my face and all I could say to her was "Me, no, Me, no." I said this over and over and finally she understood me.

The student who wrote this called me yesterday morning to report that her son had skipped school and had finally come home after disappearing for 24 hours. She wouldn't be in class because she was waiting for the juvenile officer and the social worker to come to her house.

Another student from India wrote:

When I tried to get my first job, I didn't even know how to fill out the application. The manager looked at me and told me I wasn't qualified, but I didn't understand what he meant so I just kept sitting there. Finally he got angry and said goodbye, goodbye. Then I got up and left.

I chose these two excerpts because I think they represent the importance of work and holding down a job to the permanent residents. Unlike the international students, most permanent residents do not have strong financial support from their families; the majority leave after their morning classes and head out to work 20-30 hours or more

per week. For this group, studies and work must share equal footing and homework is another complicating factor. Although they may speak of "Haitian time" and their cultural concept of a slower pace of life, most of them are thoroughly Americanized and rushing around like all the rest of us. Many of this group, also, are here on their own--especially the Haitians and refugee Asians--so they're missing out on the emotional support of their families, as well. Again, unlike the international students, many of the permanent residents have had little formal training in English and their academic background is weak. They may have graduated from a Boston area high school, but this doesn't always mean that they are prepared for college. Many have difficulty negotiating their way around the academic world, initially at least.

This is the group that causes me the greatest concern. By and large, they have no safety net; they are here to make a change in their lives, to build a career for the future. For many, their skills are so weak that graduation in two years is not even a remote possibility.

How else can I describe this group? They are highly motivated, sincere, and so appreciative of even the smallest personal attention given to them. Most have an old world type of respect for teachers, despite the fact that academic success does not come easily to them. One of my students is a woman from Taiwan in the LPN program. She was a nurse in her home country, and wants to get certified here. She works 40 hours a week in a nursing home, has a daughter on scholarship at UMass and another daughter in high school; she is the sole support of her family. Li is a very intelligent woman and is managing to do fairly well on written exams; but the clinical area, where she must speak English clearly and accurately, is where she is having problems. I know how much she is struggling financially, and I also know she feels on the edge of desperation because she may fail in the clinical area.

How we can help students like these is one of the greatest challenges facing us now. When I first came to Mass Bay in 1987, I had about 30 students. Today (December 1990) there are 83 students in the ESL program. This is a problem that won't go away--we need to develop a strategy to deal with it, and steps are being taken in this direction, I am happy to say. I think it is an issue on every one's mind to some extent.

Critical Reading: Modeling the Process

Jennifer F. Nourse

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Recently we offered a module in Critical Thinking Strategies entitled "How Does Situation Affect Thinking?". The purpose of the module is for students to have the opportunity to examine the ways in which their expectations about a reading can shape their reactions. Because most students already have strong opinions about the television show "Sesame Street," we chose a reading that would challenge those opinions. Students were first asked to freewrite about "Sesame Street": what did they think, feel or know about the show? The responses were overwhelmingly positive, including everything from "I *love* 'Sesame Street'!" to raves about its educational qualities in a fun format. Some even started humming the songs and reminiscing about their favorite characters.

Problems began to arise, however, when students were asked to read the introductory paragraphs of an article entitled "Why 'Sesame Street' is Bad News for Reading," by reading specialist Jane Healy. Citing cognitive research, the article challenges the value of the show's fast-paced approach for building the reflective abilities that children need as they learn to read. In groups, students were told to discuss the *author's* perspective. For the most part, they *reacted* to the text rather than understanding and interpreting it; their perspective--and their anger with the author--got in the way of understanding what she was saying. They were sure she was wrong--after all, they (or their children) had watched Sesame Street and *they* could read.

For the next week, students read a larger part of the Healy article and wrote about their new understanding in their journals. After looking more closely at Jane Healy's argument, many were *beginning* to understand her stance and the reasons behind it. But it wasn't until we asked students to watch a videotape of "Sesame Street" and look for specific evidence of Jane Healy's arguments that lightbulbs started going on. No longer were they considering the show solely through the memories of their childhood, or through their experiences as a parent or babysitter. In their new situation, as

students analyzing the show, more of them were able to distance themselves from their own perspectives and finally understand what the author was saying about the show. Of course, many still disagreed, or felt that Healy's perspective as a reading specialist was too narrow, but it wasn't the point to *agree* with her, but rather not to let the disagreement interfere with *understanding* the text.

Based on this experience, students made some interesting observations about the process of reading critically. Although their personal feelings about Sesame Street did at first interfere with their ability to understand the article, many students thought it was a valuable step to identify their own biases and concerns about the topic. After reading the article, they noted that their initial reaction based on a few paragraphs was generally wrong. This realization highlighted the importance of reading the entire article before drawing conclusions. Finally, students were intrigued by the experience of watching this well-known show from a critical perspective, and surprised by how much they could see that they had never seen before--both in the article and in the show itself.

The various stages of this process of critical reading were interesting to me as a teacher. Often in the past, I have expected my students to leap directly into the role of critical readers on first contact with the text. It was powerful to see students' "failure to understand" text as just a stage in their eventual success as discriminating readers. I'm now thinking about how to bring what this assignment provided--some sense of context, recognition of prior knowledge, conscious application of the new concept to an actual experience--to other assignments I give.

Frankie and Johnny Can Be Readers

Joseph Saling

Learning Center Specialist, Writing

Kristin Huie

P/t Writing Lab Facilitator

A long time ago, a longer time ago than many of us have been teaching, people started discovering things about writing that changed our professional sense of what it meant to say "Johnny and Frankie can't write." Why are we so slow in making the equivalent discoveries about reading?

When we say students can't write, we now realize that what we are saying is they haven't mastered the process. They haven't learned to view writing as situational. They haven't developed a range of strategies to carry from one task to the next, nor have they learned how to adapt those strategies they do have to make them fit the situations they find themselves in. They don't know yet about the role of the reader in their writing process. Maybe they are afraid of the reader, who, up to this point, has been a teacher with a red pen who has the power to give them grades. They haven't learned yet that, to write well, they need to have something to say, nor have they learned that they do have something to say that is worth hearing. Thus they can't write.

Are there equivalent issues affecting Johnny and Frankie when they read? When Johnny can't read maybe it's because he hasn't learned about the situational nature of reading. When Frankie has problems, maybe she hasn't learned that there is a whole gamut of strategies and that these strategies vary in their appropriateness depending on the situation. More importantly, neither of them has learned that they can get something from reading that might be worth the effort if they would only choose the appropriate strategies and environments. Maybe most importantly, they haven't learned that it's okay to bring to the text a whole lot of things that make them who they are and define the way they respond to the words on a page.

How do we get our students to read? How do we make it important to them to do so? Many of us have never understood what it means to say we need to find ways to make reading important. For many of us, reading has always been important. We were read to as babies. We liked the interaction with others that reading allowed. We

were encouraged to develop the play of our imagination. We read as children and were surrounded by books; many of us were surrounded by people who read. We were rewarded in grade school or in high school for our ability to read, and the more we read, the more we knew, and the more we knew, the more we had to bring to the text to make sense out of the way the words were arranged. Consequently, we got more reward.

But that's not been the case for Frankie or Johnny. There was no reward in reading, only work, and work that was often met with criticism. Reading is often associated with the same teacher who marked up their papers, only in this case, what the teacher did was embarrass them or make them feel dumb because they found the way the words were put together difficult to deal with. Worse yet, criticism came from all sides. "Put down that book and go outside and play!" "How can you read that if you don't know what the words mean? Why don't you learn to use a dictionary?" "No that's not what the author meant. Show me where you got that from the text." "Your reading scores indicate you are reading at a fourth grade level." No wonder they watched TV instead.

. So how do we reverse a lifetime of negative sanctions? How do we help our students find out that reading is important to them, that it has something to offer them, that they can get somewhere by reading? We can do some speculation if we start by considering reading not as an isolated skill but as a process that includes other activities that define literate behavior, such as writing, speaking, and thinking. Then maybe the things we know about teaching writing might help us help our students.

Let's start by saying that we in education are all responsible for the literate behavior of our students. Then, let's borrow a truism from writing instruction: writing teachers should themselves be writers in order to understand their students' struggles with putting words on paper. Now we can say reading teachers (all of us who teach and require our students to read as a part of that teaching--and who among us does not?) need to be readers. What that means is that reading teachers (all of us, remember?) have to do more than read a book now and then, or read articles in journals dealing with their fields. We have to be reflective readers. That is, we need to develop a metacognitive awareness of how we read.

What are the reasons we read? Obviously, we think we might get information we can use (or, when we have time, that we might simply enjoy relaxing with a good book). How do we know? Someone (and it may be someone speaking to us through

a review or someone speaking to us in person) has told us we can get something from it and often has told us what we can get. What kinds of text cause us trouble? We are troubled by text with vocabulary that is too hard or too new to us. We are troubled by texts that work from assumptions we don't share or aren't aware of. We are troubled by texts that somehow seem to violate expectations we have for what a text should be, or that don't seem to repay the efforts we put into understanding them. How do we deal with these troubles? How do we make sense out of what the writer is saying? How do we select the text we are going to read? How do we know when to skip passages? How do we decide what is important to make notes about?

The best writing teachers share their writing with their students--not just the finished product, but the stages along the way--the process. Why shouldn't we share what we know about our own reading with the students we teach? There are a lot of blanks to fill in. Not many of us know the answers to all the questions above or to all the questions we can raise when we explore our own reading. But knowing the questions and finding the answers is the first step we can take to make Frankie and Johnny not just lovers, but lovers of reading too. Maybe we can all work together to find out what we do and don't do when we read, what we need and don't need in order to make sense out of text. If we do, then we can work with Frankie and Johnny and Maria and Tony and. . . .

Everything We Need to Know We May Be Able to Learn (and Teach) in K-12

Glenn Gabbard

Associate Dean, Freshman Year Experience

As community college educators concerned about the literate abilities of our own students, one of our obligations is to question the pedagogical assumptions and methodological commitments that underlie language instruction for young children in the public schools. Much has been made recently of education across the life span: the recognition that formal education has a role to play in the learning processes that continue throughout our lives. In order to prevent this notion from becoming empty apostrophizing, community college educators need to be involved in schooling across the life span. When we struggle with the reasons why our own students are unable to perform literate tasks at a level that we deem "college-appropriate," we must always recognize that our students' literacy is a deeply ingrained process that began at birth and was shaped by a school setting that may or may not have enhanced these abilities. These are abilities in reading, writing, speaking, and listening; more importantly, these are abilities to learn and acquire knowledge.

The current movement for school reform is an opportunity for public schools to examine some of the assumptions critical to how learning takes place in the schools. A growing number of schools are challenging the practices, like tracking and standardized testing, that prevent groups of learners from determining a collective direction and purpose for the knowledge that they generate and develop. Classroom research, collaborative and cooperative learning and whole language create new ways for teachers to learn more about how learning takes place, instead of relying on highly suspicious data gleaned from battery after battery of standardized tests.

I am particularly excited by the notion of whole language: the idea that language abilities are so interconnected that we cannot teach one in isolation from the other. We cannot teach reading in isolation from writing, speaking, or the other language abilities. Intrinsic to all of those language abilities is a need for meaningful context. From this perspective, it's easier to see that language is a vehicle by which knowledge is acquired. Whole language educators also believe that language is innate, that young

children will learn language because it is a human quality, and that we need to examine how innate language abilities can be enhanced rather than contradicted by schooling. That's pretty powerful stuff when you really think about it, and it is deeply interconnected with the need to reform not just language programs, but also the very nature of the hierarchical distribution of power within the schools. One of the basic premises of whole language is that standardized assessment simply will not work and that we need to look at the whole learner. We cannot understand the progress that learners make by looking at a series of equally fragmented standardized tests. We need to consider methods of ongoing qualitative assessment in natural environments.

If we agree with the notion that education does take place across the life span, then we need to look at what's going on in public schools and the powerful movements that shape them and may revolutionize them. If we accept a unified theory of literacy for young children, then it's impossible to escape the fact that these same principles can apply to the adult learners whom we serve. There's not much research available on the development of language abilities for young adults who have been the products of inappropriate language preparation in the public schools. Because of this, we have an exciting opportunity at the community college (particularly because of open admissions policies) to examine how language does develop and to find more effective instructional practices that enhance the development of literacy in young adults. We also can develop a very powerful partnership with educators who are wrestling with the same notions, but with younger children.

One of the concrete things we can do is to get involved actively in what is popularly known as school-college collaboration. Usually this means formal agreements that foster some kind of consultative arrangement between a research university and a school. This is not enough, in part because such arrangements are generally hierarchically based, with the knowledge flowing downward from the research institution to the recipients below. What I would suggest instead is for community college educators to clarify the unique knowledge about learning and teaching that our institutions offer to public school educators, and to become deeply involved in reciprocal curriculum development with the public schools. This may seem like more work for community college educators and indeed it is, in the short run. Ultimately, however, if such partnerships are developed, and are successful, our work can only become easier and more exciting. For one thing, we would work from a better understanding of our place in the lifelong continuum of education; and for

another, we would realize the same benefits of collaborative work that make our students so much more active in collaborative classes. We can't do our work alone-- we must widen our own community and work with public schools so that we can better understand how literacy can be enhanced for students of all ages.

Reading "R" Us--But Who R "We?"

Susan Andrien

Coordinator, Writing Program

When I first came to Mass Bay in 1987, I knew (or thought I knew) a great deal about writing and how to teach it in college. "Reading," on the other hand, was something I'd thought little about on the college level. Years before, I had run a reading program in the Boston Public Schools, but all that I'd learned there was shaped by my background in writing. This background had taught me to resist the accepted wisdom that people learn to write by having their mistakes corrected. I'd read Paolo Freire, a Brazilian educator who taught literacy (with success that got him exiled) by encouraging his illiterate peasant students to examine the roots of their culture, the forces that kept them out of the literate class of society. I'd read Mina Shaughnessy, a writing teacher at City University of New York when open admissions began, who made a study of her "basic" writing students and learned that "errors" are usually evidence of conflicting systems of rules. (For instance, many students who come from oral cultures incorporate the rules for written English into their language to create a new set of rules that baffles those of us who still teach the language of 19th century Britain--but as Shaughnessy noted, these students apply the new set of rules as consistently as William Safire does his.) Like most other teachers in my generation, I'd read John Dewey, who taught me that learning is a social process--not a matter of facts memorized but a question of concepts made relevant and negotiated between teacher, student, and fellow student in a social context (in the same way that ideas are negotiated in every discourse between speaker and listener, writer and reader).

Great--so what did I know about reading? Only this: I don't know how to teach it in college, and apparently neither does anybody else I've talked to. Like writing and critical thinking, reading seems to be part of the great body of assumed knowledge, the unexamined prerequisites for academic life. Until the early 1970s, nobody had to think much about this set of expectations--it just was--at least, it existed in every student who "belonged" in college. Not many of us thought much about the things that defined us as smart enough for college; why should we? Speaking for myself as a

student who entered college in 1971, I was glad enough to be among the chosen. I really didn't want anyone to examine what made me a "college-bound" student. I was satisfied that either I had what it takes, or I'd fooled them.

But now I know that what went on in the late 1960s and early 1970s was nothing short of a revolution in education. Until that time, nobody much questioned the fact that only privileged kids got into college; as it turned out, the privileged were the only ones who spoke, read, wrote, and understood the language of privilege, which is also the language of the educated. For some reason, most of us were willing to accept that coincidence without question. Open enrollment was an incredibly important concession to the ideal of democratization that found a voice in the 60s. I now suspect that the only reason it got by is that almost nobody believed it would make any difference. And, sadly, that conclusion may be the end of the experiment--clearly, open enrollment in itself can't accomplish real equality. We know all too well how easy it is for the open door to become a revolving door, and even the ideal of public higher education has become questionable to many people, including a lot of our employers, the taxpayers.

The principle that everyone is entitled to a chance at a college education may not last long enough to allow us to take the steps that could make open access a reality, but I think we are closer to knowing what those steps are. We learned as teachers of writing that communities of educators (Jerry Saunders, Roger Van Winkle, Mary Williams and I, for example) can sit down together, look at student writing, and hammer out ways to talk about those invisible abilities that make writing awful, mediocre, adequate, OK, good, very good, competent, and excellent. No longer are these judgments "just common sense--something that smart people *know*" (as the high school supervising teacher who trained me said)--they are *defined outcomes*. Which means that they can be taught, systematically, in classes that start at a very basic level and may end up at the most sophisticated point. You *can* get there from here.

Reading is a lot harder to figure. It's the most invisible thing we teach--it's a skill; it's private; it's silent; we can't generalize that it should go on in any special way--fast or slow, focused or reflective, comprehending or questioning. All those factors depend on the reader's judgment, according to what's needed in the situation. It is, in a way, the very essence of the academic culture--a question of intellectual discernment. But we can't just leave it at that. We, all of the members of the academic community, need to get together and figure out what good reading means to us, or else.

Or else we'll be excluding from higher education everybody who can't read like a rich kid. And I think we all know by now that when the decision to exclude comes down, it doesn't mean that our "real" students, literate and American and motivated (although perhaps sidetracked by life's temporary vicissitudes) are coming back.

Peer Tutoring at Mass Bay

Mass Bay Students

A special issue of the *Critical Literacy Bulletin* was written entirely by peer tutors working at Mass Bay. Their writing provides a view of teaching and learning that is often invisible from the front of the classroom. In particular, their work is relevant to the theme of literacy because it is the philosophy of Mass Bay's tutoring program that all tutors are, first and foremost, language tutors. Since language is the means by which teaching and learning is transacted in all disciplines, tutor training sessions often focus on critical literacy issues. These articles and observations emerged from the tutor meetings.

Tutors Write About Tutoring

I've learned that students appreciate tutors who are patient, dedicated and good to work with. One of my regular students has, on countless occasions, told me that I am patient and how he likes our sessions. I work with him in Algebra. We pick out some exercises in the homework and I watch him go through them, helping a little whenever he gets stuck. It is very helpful for him to do a problem with someone there to check the way he is doing it, to ensure that he is doing it correctly. I patiently watch him and interrupt him if he makes a mistake. Usually he can then see it (without my actually showing him the error) whereas he would not see it otherwise.

I was sort of worried when a student I was helping told me that he had a learning disability. I felt like running. How could I help this student? I didn't even know what a learning disability was. I muddled through the session and hightailed it out of there. When I noticed that the student had signed up for another appointment with me I didn't know what to do. I'm usually happy when a student signs up again. I figure that it means I was helping, doing my job. This time it made me feel a little nervous.

Then next time I had the chance, I talked to Deanna and asked if another tutor could take the appointment. After I explained why, we sat down and talked for a few minutes. Then she suggested that we bring up the topic at the tutor meeting we were having the next day. I asked the other tutors if they had any advice that could help me. They just jumped right in with different ways of explaining things. They kept saying that what I needed to worry about was the fact that some students learned differently and needed some help. That was my job anyway as far as I could tell.

Then one of the other tutors jumped in before the meeting was over. She wanted to be really sure that everyone understood one thing--that no matter who we tutored, we should expect *everyone* to live up to the same standards. We would be cheating anyone who had a disability of any kind if we expected less of them. She knew; she had a disability and got really angry when someone didn't expect the same things of her. She refused to be cheated. "Those people don't help," she said. "People who understand that I need to do things a different way; that I need to take a different route to get to the same place. They're the ones that help. They demand the same things of me that they'd expect of anyone else."

Then I understood. I had already known that my job was not to teach other students, it was to help them to understand and learn *their* way. Working with a student with a learning disability just helped me to see what my job was more clearly.

Although I just became a tutor it didn't take me too long to discover what these students needed. They need more space to move freely in. By saying this I mean there shouldn't be a limit placed on what they should do in their class. We left instructional learning in high school. In college we should be taught how to apply what we have learned to real life situations. If I'm correct this is why we are taught the basics in high school. I feel that sometimes in large classes students feel like machines that listen to what the teacher says and then regurgitate it. In tutoring, students can slow down, think through the process themselves and come up with an answer.

I think it hinders students' learning when they feel like there is only one way to do something--the way the professor does or says that something. I feel there should be some diversity in college so the students can learn and understand the material better. This holds true for all courses, not just one.

It's really not easy to be a tutor. I've been tutoring for two semesters, but sometimes I still have difficulty communicating with tutees. The greatest difficulty for me is that some tutees come to meet me, and what they expect is for me to do their homework. They don't read the textbook; they just come and hope you will do all their work for them. Basically this is a wrong expectation from a tutor; it is very easy to feel tired when you tutor students. I hope everyone learns that tutors are here to help you, but not to read the book and do homework for you.

I've experienced many good and bad tutoring sessions. A good session for me was when the individual came totally prepared. For one thing, he or she seemed active and willing to perform. The best sessions for me were those when the students asked many questions. I like when they participated. The students in a good session were considerate and showed effort to learn.

In a bad session, in my opinion, the student might be prepared to discuss the material, but was not willing to try to make progress. Most of the time the problem had to do with a lack of confidence. It took me a long time and some frustration to learn to hear their thoughts. Most of my tutoring sessions were for writing classes. The student was to write a paper on a short story or an incident that had occurred to them. In the bad sessions, the tutees expected me to do the thinking as well as the writing. I had to let them know what my job was as a tutor. For some, they felt discouraged and didn't sign up again. This goes to show how some of these students felt--to make an effort and then choose not to seek help anymore.

Even though I've experienced both good and bad sessions, I tried to improve during both sessions. Turning a bad session into a good one is possible if you listen very carefully to what the student is saying and ask lots of questions.

Last semester, I tutored a young woman in Introduction to Computer Science. She is a kind of easy-forget person. Every time we met, we went over how to deal with a problem, how to start to do a program, and what should be done first. But the next time she came to see me, she completely forgot, even though I began by asking her

the same question. Therefore, I realized that I couldn't use a regular way to help her. I tried to use some examples from our normal life to explain some concept. This worked out much better.

Tutoring is an interesting and enjoyable as well as a pretty tough job. Interesting because you'll meet lots of different people and assist them in struggling with their academic difficulties. Once the students you tutor overcome their hard time and thank you for the help, the satisfaction that you get is very great and can't even be described in words.

However, tutoring sometimes would be pretty frustrating as you meet some students who just come to you at the last minute to ask for help in order to pass the test or exam. And I don't really like to tutor those people who think tutors can work a "miracle"!

After doing research for a class presentation for one of my own classes on bilingual education and ESL classes, I started to think more about Mass Bay's ESL program. I know one person who finished the ESL program and is now taking regular classes; and I myself, who began in this program, am currently tutoring two ESL students. The ESL students who come here are usually older; they know their native language well and immigrated to the US recently. Their conversation level is good. Yes, they make some grammar mistakes or mix tenses but they can make themselves understood. Writing and reading is a lot harder for them. And even when they graduate from the ESL program they have to work twice as hard to keep up with the academic classes.

Most of the ESL studies I have read focus on educating younger children but Mass Bay needs special attention for the older students by talking with them, reading books or helping them with writing assignments. I still feel frustrated that my help is not enough. One student I work with has to take the TOFEL exam next month and besides practicing tests I don't know what to do for her.

For me English is my second language and I write and speak the way it feels right to me. How can I bring over that feeling?

I feel that a number of students fear the idea of needing a tutor. I feel that many students don't know what tutors are. They think of tutors as maybe assistants to teachers. I feel that students should be informed by the teachers that tutors are very useful and friendly. And that tutors are not critics. Since I've been attending Mass Bay, I have never heard an instructor mention anything about the tutoring program that we have at Mass Bay.

I've had a total of five different sessions with three different students . . . I must admit that I learned a lot from the five sessions that I had. I not only became familiar with the word *tutor* ; but I also learned the material that I tutor in all over again. Also my respect for teachers grew much larger. I understand the tough job they have in teaching students of all different calibers and I envy them.

I've come away from this experience realizing that being all-knowing in a subject does not necessarily make a good tutor. It's how you use the knowledge that counts. In tutoring the key is interpersonal relationships--how you talk, act and react make the session. I have also discovered that the tutor shouldn't take full responsibility for the outcome of a session. With my first student I felt that I had failed, but I had not. I went in and did the best I could with what I had to work with. The student also has ownership in the results and if he doesn't do his part, that is not a reflection on the tutor.

Tutoring Is Communication

Laura Duck

Mass Bay Student

Part One

This is the second semester that I am tutoring. Before I was integrated into the tutoring program at Mass Bay, I had assumed that the majority of the job would center around the subject I tutor. I was wrong.

Tutoring is a very big people job. The subject matter comes secondary. If the student is not comfortable with the tutor or the situation of working with a tutor, the student cannot be expected to learn much. Once the student has lost his intimidation, it is easier for him to ask specific questions, give me feedback, and even to tell me when I am not explaining a problem well enough. It is my job to make the student feel comfortable with me as a tutor.

Confidence is another need of the student. Self-image is not something that comes directly from solving radical functions or describing how ATP is derived from a sugar molecule. Often, as a tutor, I feel that I am playing the role of the cheerleader I never was in high school. The key to instilling confidence is to be very natural (almost subliminal) in my compliments, and sincere. These students are not five-year-olds. A false compliment may make the tutee feel worse than no compliment at all. I know that I have been successful in this role when the student tells me, "Okay, I can do that. . . I'll finish those at home," or "I want to try this one by myself." Those words make me feel good.

Finally, (and obviously), I try to convey my knowledge to the students. Many people are able to do well in class, but can they convey their education to others effectively? In this way, I feel that I am learning as well.

I never quite know if I have been articulate enough to meet the student's needs. More than once I have explained a math or science concept in an unsuccessful way. After five minutes of deep thought (and several dents of the shape of my head in the wall), I explain the same idea in a different way . . . and the student *then* usually understands the concept within a minute. This is the most important lesson that I

could ever learn about tutoring: If a student does not understand a problem, it is probably not the student's failure. It is probably only that *my* method of communication is not adequate for THAT student.

In closing, my biggest hope is not necessarily that I am a good tutor, but that I am an effective tutor.

Of myself, I must say that I have learned a lot about myself. I've learned that tutoring is something that I really enjoy . . . and I'm told that it is something that I do well. My abilities as an Algebra and Precalc student have been perfected in the past semester, and I have decided to declare mathematics as a major. I am also seriously considering teaching as a profession.

Part Two

When the professor asks the class, "Are there any questions?" and the room is silent, the explanation could be any one of three options:

1. The class is full of geniuses.
2. The class is so lost that the students don't even know the right questions to ask.
3. The class is too intimidated to ask any questions.

The first possibility is that the whole class--the ENTIRE class--already fully, totally understands the concept expressed in the lesson. I doubt that this is the scenario at all in the classroom, because if the students are all geniuses, why are they still in college? This situation, then, is unlikely.

The second circumstance is that the students are confused and don't even know the right questions to ask. Professors should take notice if this is happening in their classes. Are Lit professors quizzing their Lit 101 students on symbolism in the material before the class has discussed how to find symbols when reading? Are Chem professors expecting their Chem 101 students to know how to balance equations or assign oxidation numbers before the students have entered the class? Please remember, these are 101 classes. If you have not taught these concepts in your class since the beginning of the semester, or if you do not KNOW that the student has been exposed to these ideas in a prerequisite class, please do not expect the student to be responsible for the given concepts.

The third state is the most critical situation. We have all had a teacher whose purpose has been to intimidate the class. Students who ask questions are put down either for themselves or for their questions. These professors are known for their phrases of "Well, that's a dumb question," or more subtly, "If you don't know that by now, you must be stupid or something." These professors who, after a 50-minute lecture, do not understand how a student could still be unsure about the material, or why a student would return to the professor with a similar question to the one just answered.

How can we eliminate these nightmares? Professors must learn the skill of asking significant questions of a quiet class to measure the progress of their students. We students need professors who will make us unafraid to ask questions. We need professors who are willing, and patient, and nonabusive when answering our questions. We could create a school filled with classes of authentic geniuses, and we could eliminate the predicament of the confused student. Mass Bay needs professors like that.

A Tutoring Case Study

Julieta Giner

Mass Bay Student

When John first came to me for tutoring help, it was under the threat of being formally withdrawn from his math class by his professor. During our first session, I wondered how it was possible that he was placed into this particular level of math. It seemed too advanced for him. I asked him when he had taken math last, and he told me that the semester before he had completed the self-paced math course.

We struggled through our first two tutoring sessions. Everything we covered appeared as though it was being covered for the first time. John had no clear understanding of some of the basics necessary for this math level. It wasn't that he hadn't covered this material, it was just he hadn't covered it sufficiently. He didn't feel comfortable with it. He wasn't able to identify the process necessary to solving a particular problem. It was as though it was all vaguely familiar.

I explained the processes necessary, and talked him through problem after problem. By the second week, I was in agreement with his professor; he should withdraw from the course. I was frustrated. At the end of every meeting we would set aside some problems that he should review at home so that during our next session we could address any problems he was having. It appeared that John was not taking any time to cover this material because every session when I asked whether he had any difficulty with the problems, he stared at me blankly. I believed he wasn't even trying them. Since he appeared unwilling to make any effort to try for himself, I debated dropping him as a tutoring student. I had other students who wanted my help. It seemed fruitless to continue. During a tutoring seminar, I addressed that problem to my fellow tutors. From this I realized that I had to take another approach in my tutoring methods. I had been coaching John through every problem. It was time that he gained some confidence in himself. Stating that I was not going to be in the class with him to help him through an exam, I told John to solve a few problems while I just sat back and offered no help. This seemed contrary to what I, as a tutor, should

be doing, but it seemed clear that the only way to build some confidence in him was to show him that he was capable of solving these problems.

Using this approach, I was able to meet John's individual needs. We continue with weekly tutoring sessions. John may still need to withdraw from his math class, but as a tutor I don't feel defeated, since reality dictates what may be accomplished. We have made breakthroughs in his understanding of past material essential to his current level. More important still, no longer does he feel too intimidated to question why something is, rather than just accepting it. To me, this is a step in the direction of comprehension. In our last session, John made an enormous breakthrough. With a smile on my face, I was able to shout, "Success!" and I saw that not only was I proud but so was he.

Suggestions from Julieta

Do:

- ▶ Ask questions. Make sure to ask what's to be covered today; is it possible or realistic to cover all of it?
- ▶ Do one time and talk through a couple of times.
- ▶ Tell the tutee to use any possible method that works for him, for example:
 - Study 20 minutes at a time.
 - If nervous before a test write down formulas, rules right on the test as a reference should it be needed.
 - Use number lines; use association; give studying tips.
- ▶ Encourage note-taking during a tutoring session.
- ▶ Stress that books are necessary to a tutoring session.
- ▶ Provide encouragement.

Don't:

- ▶ Explain while working it out yourself and then go directly into the next problem without the tutee trying the problem.

- ▶ Cover too much material and expect the tutee to understand since you understand.
- ▶ Use negative comments: "This is simple, even a fool could understand it."
- ▶ Answer a question but do not ask if the student understands rather than going over the same material again.

Summary

Not only are there good and bad tutors, there are good and bad sessions. A tutor must be encouraging to the tutee since a number of times it is just a mental block that disables the tutee from understanding. Be willing to go over the same thing over and over again. Make sure the tutee can do it on their own. Stress that the tutee must study on his own also. This session is not a replacement for studying time. A good tutor cannot be expected to have a good session with a tutee who expects the tutor to do their work for them.