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New England Faculty Development Consortium

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EXCHANGE

New England Faculty Development Consortium

Message From The President

A Reflection of a Different Light

Tom Thibodeau, Assistant Provost, New England Institute of Technology

As I sit to write my first message as President of the NEFDC Board, and think about how much has been accomplished by this terrific organization, I am humbled to think that I will be working to continue that record of achievement. I am humbled because I have looked up to our past presidents as energetic professionals, free-thinking organizers, and forward-thinking administrators, and I hope that with the help of the NEFDC Board I can “serve” up to their legacy. It goes without saying that we are indebted to our past presidents, especially our most recent president, Judith Miller. Judy led us with a calm, consistent, and progressive vision of what this organization strives for and provides to our members. She will be missed. Our best wishes go with her to Florida where she has taken on a new challenge as Executive Director of Assessment at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. I’m willing to bet that she

will miss the snow and wind on the streets around Clark University as she walks the beach during January. Or not.

My first official duty as president of the NEFDC is to write this message for the fall newsletter. It is a daunting task. What can I say to add to the discussion? Finally, it came to me as I looked out my kitchen window.

I like to work with stained glass. I wouldn’t call myself an artist, but I enjoy the process of sitting in my workshop, creating a design, selecting a piece of glass, cutting and trimming it to fit into a particular place, and assembling it into its frame. The process of choosing the right color, texture, pattern, and construction is a creative process that I can spend hours working on (when I get a chance).

My kitchen window has the first three small pieces that I created.

Continued on page 2

From the Editors:

As New England becomes enveloped in fall colors, I am reminded once again what a beautiful place this is to live and work. Perhaps reflection of all sorts is on my mind, given the theme of the upcoming NEFDC fall conference, *When Questioning is the Answer: Reflective Practice for College Faculty*. For the Keynote presentation we are very fortunate to have Stephen Brookfield, Distinguished University Professor at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis-St. Paul. In this issue you will find an excerpt from his book, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* [Jossey-Bass, 1995.]

In one way or another, each of the articles in the current issue encourages you to examine teaching and learning, and the role you play in this dynamic, give-and-take process, from fascinating and perhaps unfamiliar perspectives. Our authors invite you to question some of your most fundamental assumptions, which can be an

unsettling experience. But it is from this tentative, slightly precarious perch that we often see new pathways and fresh opportunities.

This issue also marks the inauguration of our new Board President, Tom Thibodeau. Tom has been a member of the Board since 2004 and we are confident that in the months ahead his energy, openness, and humor will be great assets to the NEFDC. Good luck Tom!

We also have several newly elected Board members: Paul Charpentier, Valerie Gramling, and Ken Wade. Welcome! In this issue you will find more information about these colleagues, as well information about becoming a Board member and about our upcoming Fall and Spring Conferences.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and we welcome your feedback and contributions. If you would like to submit an article for our Spring, 2010 newsletter, please send a word document, by January 15th, to Jeanne Albert at jalbert@middlebury.edu.

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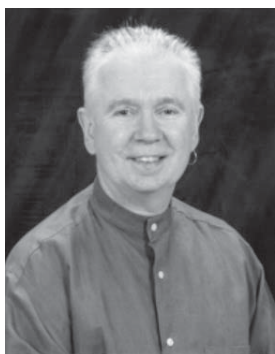
New England Faculty Development Consortium Fall 2009 CONFERENCE

When Questioning is the Answer: Reflective Practice for College Faculty

Friday, November 13, 2009

DCU Center, Worcester, MA

KEYNOTE Presentation by Stephen Brookfield



Dr. Stephen Brookfield is Distinguished University Professor at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis, MN. Since beginning his teaching career in 1970, Stephen Brookfield has worked in England, Canada, Australia, and the United States, teaching in a variety of college settings. He has written twelve books on adult learning, teaching, critical thinking, discussion methods and critical theory, four of which have won the Cyril O. Houle World Award for Literature in Adult Education. His most recent books are "Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts: Promises and Contradictions (co-edited with Mary E. Hess) and "Learning as a Way of Leading: Lessons from the Struggle for Social Justice (co-authored by Stephen Preskill), both published in 2008.

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None of them will end up in a museum anywhere. But I have persevered and gotten better as I have attempted and completed larger projects. I get a great sense of accomplishment when I install a completed piece. The finished piece results in a wonderful thing to look at as it directs a whole new light into the room. My eyes are always drawn to my designs. After a while, as I look at each one, I wonder if I could have chosen a different piece of glass, cut a piece just a bit bigger or soldered a joint a little better. These reflections on the finished piece usually help me do the next project a little better.

It strikes me that the work of the NEFDC Board is very similar: it is a process of design, selection, and craftsmanship that creates a newsletter or conference that helps our members see things in a different light. It is our hope that this "different light" motivates and changes the perspective of faculty members and administrators, and that this new perspective can initiate opportunities for real, positive change on campus. As we reflect on and share our successes (and failures,) we increase the possibility of continuing improvement for all of us.

There is also no doubt in my mind that the work of faculty is even more similar to the stained glass creative process. Faculty try to choose just the

right content, exercise, or assignment to help the student "see" something and finally understand a concept, point of view, or process. However, teaching is not as easy as designing a stained glass project and students are far more complex than a piece of glass (and often harder to see through,) so faculty must continue the process of improvement by reflecting on what they do to improve future instruction.

There are a lot of people talking about reflective practices lately, but it is certainly not a new topic, nor is it a process that can be "completed". I attended a presentation back in September by Dr. Linda Duncombe, from Boston University, who was discussing "Reflective Supervision," and she pointed out something that Confucius once said: "By three methods we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is the noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest."

It is with this reflective process in mind that this newsletter is crafted and why we asked Dr. Stephen Brookfield to lead us at our Fall Conference on November 14, 2009, "When Questioning is the Answer: Reflective Practice for College Faculty." It is our hope that we all might get better at the process of reflection and bring it full circle back to our teaching.

We hope to "see" you there.



Excerpt from *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Jossey-Bass, 1995 by Stephen Brookfield

We teach to change the world. The hope that undergirds our efforts to help students learn is that doing this will help them act towards each other, and to their environment, with compassion, understanding and fairness. But our attempts to increase the amount of love and justice in the world are never simple, never ambiguous. What we think are democratic, respectful ways of treating people can be experienced by them as oppressive and constraining. One of the hardest things teachers learn is that the sincerity of their intentions does not guarantee the purity of their practice. The cultural, psychological and political complexities of learning, and the ways in which power complicates all human relationships (including those between students and teachers) means that teaching can never be innocent.

Teaching innocently means thinking that we're always understanding exactly what it is that we're doing and what effect we're having. Teaching innocently means assuming that the meanings and significance we place in our actions are the ones that students take from them. At best, teaching this way is naive. At worst, it induces pessimism, guilt and lethargy. Since we rarely have full awareness of what we're doing, and since we frequently misread how others perceive our actions, an uncritical stance towards our practice sets us up for a lifetime of frustration. Nothing seems to work out as it should. Our inability to control what looks like chaos becomes, to our eyes, evidence of our incompetence.

Breaking this vicious circle of innocence and blame is one reason why the habit of critical reflection is crucial for teachers' survival. Without a critically reflective stance towards what we do we tend to accept the blame for problems that are not of our own making. We think that all resistance to learning displayed by students is caused by our own insensitivity or unpreparedness. We read poor evaluations of our teaching (often written by only a small minority of our students) and immediately conclude that we are hopeless failures. We become depressed when ways of behaving towards students and colleagues that we think are democratic and respectful are interpreted as aloof or manipulative. A critically reflective stance towards our teaching helps us avoid these traps of demoralization and self-laceration. It might not win us easy promotion or bring us lots of friends. But it does increase enormously the chances that we will survive in the classroom with enough energy and sense of purpose to have some real effect on those we teach.

Understanding Reflection as Hunting Assumptions

Critical reflection is one particular aspect of the larger process of reflection. To understand critical reflection properly we need first to know something about the reflective process in general. The most distinctive feature of the reflective process is its focus on hunting assumptions.

Assumptions are the taken for granted beliefs about the world, and our place within it, that seem so obvious to us as not to need to be stated explicitly. In many ways we are our assumptions. Assumptions give meaning and purpose to who

we are and what we do. Becoming aware of the implicit assumptions that frame how we think and act is one of the most puzzling intellectual challenges we face in our lives. It is also something we instinctively resist, for fear of what we might discover. Who wants to clarify and question assumptions she has lived by for a substantial period of time, only to find out that they don't make sense? What makes the process of assumption hunting particularly complicated is that assumptions are not all of the same character. I find it useful to distinguish between three broad categories of assumptions - paradigmatic, prescriptive, and causal.

Paradigmatic assumptions are the hardest of all assumptions to uncover. They are the structuring assumptions we use to order the world into fundamental categories. Usually we don't even recognize them as assumptions, even after they've been pointed out to us. Instead we insist that they're objectively valid renderings of reality, the facts as we know them to be true. Some paradigmatic assumptions I have held at different stages of my life as a teacher are that adults are self-directed learners, that critical thinking is an intellectual function characteristic of adult life, that good adult educational processes are inherently democratic, and that education always has a political dimension. Paradigmatic assumptions are examined critically only after a great deal of resistance to doing this, and it takes a considerable amount of contrary evidence and disconfirming experiences to change them. But when they are challenged and changed, the consequences for our lives are explosive.

Prescriptive assumptions are assumptions about what we think ought to be happening in a particular situation. They are the assumptions that are surfaced as we examine how we think teachers should behave, what good educational processes should look like, and what obligations students and teachers owe to each other. Inevitably they are grounded in, and extensions of, our paradigmatic assumptions. For example, if you believe that adults are self-directed learners then you assume that the best teaching is that which encourages students to take control over designing, conducting and evaluating their own learning.

Causal assumptions are assumptions about how different parts of the world work and about the conditions under which these can be changed. They are usually stated in predictive terms. An example of a causal assumption would be that if we use learning contracts this will increase students' self-directedness. Another would be the assumption that if we make mistakes in front of students this creates a trustful environment for learning in which students feel free to make errors with no fear of censure or embarrassment. Of all the assumptions we hold, causal ones are the easiest to uncover. Most of the reflective exercises described in this book will, if they work well, clarify teachers' causal assumptions. But discovering and investigating these is only the start of the reflective process. We must then try to find a way to work back to the more deeply embedded prescriptive and paradigmatic assumptions we hold.

Hunting Assumptions: Some Examples

One way to demonstrate the benefits of the reflective habit is to point out what happens when it is absent. Without this habit we run the continual risk of making poor decisions and bad judgments. We take actions on the basis of assumptions that are unexamined and we believe unquestioningly that others are reading into our actions the meanings that we intend. We fall into the habits of justifying what we do by reference to unchecked 'common sense' and of thinking that the unconfirmed evidence of our own eyes is always accurate and valid. "Of course we know what's going on in our classrooms" we say to ourselves, "after all, we've been doing this for years, haven't we?" Yet unexamined common sense is a notoriously unreliable guide to action.

Consider the following examples of how common sense assumptions inform action. All these assumptions and actions are probably familiar to readers, particularly those who see themselves as progressive. After each example of a common sense assumption I give a plausible alternative interpretation that calls its validity into question.

It's common sense to visit small groups after you've set them a task, since this demonstrates your commitment to helping them learn. Visiting groups is an example of respectful, attentive, student-centered teaching.

Visiting students after you've set them a task can seem like a form of assessment - a way of checking up to see whether they're doing what you told them to do. This can come across as insulting to students, since it implies that you don't trust them enough to do what you've asked. Students might change their behavior during your visit to their group as a way of impressing you with the kinds of behaviors they think you want to see. Their overwhelming concern becomes to show you what good, efficient, task-oriented students they are, rather than with thoughtfully analysing and critiquing the task at hand.

It's common sense to cut lecturing down to a minimum since lecturing induces passivity in students and kills critical thinking.

Before students can engage critically with ideas and actions they may need a period of assimilation and grounding in a subject area or skill set. Lecturing may be a very effective way of ensuring this. Before students can be expected to think critically they must see this process modeled in front of their eyes. A lecture in which a teacher models a questioning of her own assumptions, a recognition of ethical dilemmas hidden in her position, an identification of inconvenient theories, facts and philosophies that she has deliberately overlooked, and an openness to considering alternate viewpoints, is the necessary precursor to students doing these same things. Through critically stimulating lectures a teacher sets a critical tone for learning. By first modeling the process herself, she earns the right to ask students to think critically.

It's common sense that students like group discussion since they feel involved and respected. Discussion methods build upon principles of participatory, active learning.

Democratic discourse is a habit that is rarely learned or practised in daily life. When discussion groups form they reflect power dynamics and communicative inequities in the larger society. They also provide a showcase for egomaniacal grandstanding. Students will be highly skeptical of group discussion if the teacher has not earned the right to ask students to work this way by first modeling her own commitment to this process. Before asking students to

engage in discussion, therefore, teachers must first find a way of demonstrating their own engagement in this activity. One way to do this might be by holding several public discussions with colleagues early on in a course. In these discussions teachers would model respectful disagreement and constructive criticism. Teachers would then work with students to create ground rules for democratic discourse that nullify, as much as possible, the inequities of race, class and gender that are inevitably imported into the group from the wider society.

It's common sense that respectful, empathic teachers will downplay their position of presumed superiority and acknowledge their students as co-teachers.

To students who have made great sacrifices to attend an educational activity, a teacher's attempts to deconstruct her authority through avowals of how she'll learn more from the students than they will from her, come across as false modesty. Students know teachers have particular expertise, experience, skill and knowledge. To pretend otherwise is to insult students' intelligence and to create a note of mistrust from the outset. Students will feel happy with their role as co-teachers only after the teacher's credibility has been established to their satisfaction and after they know what she stands for.

It's common sense that teaching is essentially mysterious, so that if we try to dissect it or understand its essence, we kill it.

Viewing teaching as a process of unfathomable mystery removes the necessity to think about what we do. Any serious inquiry into practice appears as reductionistic and asinine. But the teaching as mystery metaphor can be a convenient shield for incompetence. It excuses teachers from having to answer such basic questions as "how do you know when you are teaching well?", "how do you know your students are learning?", and "how could your practice be made more responsive?" Seeing teaching as mysterious works against the improvement of practice. If good or bad teaching are all a matter of chance then there is no point trying to do better. The teaching as mystery metaphor also closes down the possibility of teachers sharing knowledge, insights, and informal theories of practice since mystery is, by definition, incommunicable.

It's common sense that teachers who have been working the longest have the best instincts about what students want and what approaches work best. If my own instincts as a novice conflict with what experienced teachers tell me is true, I should put these instincts aside and defer to the wisdom of their experience.

Length of experience does not automatically confer insight and wisdom. Ten years of practice can be one year's worth of distorted experience repeated ten times. The "experienced" teacher may be caught within self-fulfilling interpretive frameworks that remain closed to any alternative interpretations. Experience that is not subject to critical analysis is an unreliable and sometimes dangerous guide for giving advice. "Experienced" teachers can collude in promoting a form of groupthink about teaching that serves to distance themselves from students and to bolster their own sense of superiority.

The assumptions outlined above are, in certain situations, entirely valid. Their apparent clarity and truth explain why they are so widely accepted. But, as we can see, there are quite plausible alternative interpretations that can be made of each of them. Central to the reflective process is this attempt to see things differently. A reflective teacher seeks to probe beneath the veneer of a common sense reading of experience. She investigates the hidden dimensions to her practice and becomes aware of the omnipresence of power.

NEFDC Fall 2009 Conference Agenda

Special Event: Pre-conference Workshop with Dr. Barbara Walvoord

**Reflecting on Your Assessment
in Departments and General Education:
How to be More Realistic, Effective, and Time-Efficient**

Thursday, November 12, 1:00 - 4:30 pm

Hilton Garden Inn, Worcester, MA

Conference Schedule, Friday, November 13, 2009

<i>8:30 - 9:15</i>	<i>Conference Registration/Continental Breakfast</i>
<i>9:15 - 9:30</i>	<i>Welcome, Introductions</i>
<i>9:30 - 12:00</i>	<i>Interactive Keynote Presentation, Dr. Stephen Brookfield</i>
<i>Noon - 1:00</i>	<i>LUNCH</i>
<i>1:15 - 2:15</i>	<i>Concurrent Sessions I: Workshops/Teaching Tips</i>
<i>2:30 - 3:30</i>	<i>Concurrent Sessions II: Workshops/Teaching Tips</i>
<i>3:30 - 4:30</i>	<i>Poster Presentations/Reception</i>

To register online, please visit www.nefdc.org. At our website you will also find descriptions of the concurrent sessions and pre-conference workshop, directions to the conference site, and information about parking and lodging.

Connecting With Others

There are two dominant national organizations —POD (Professional and Organizational Development in Higher Education) and NCSPOD (The North American Council for Staff, Program, and Organizational Development)—whose members do faculty development work. Both have excellent fall conferences, with many sessions appropriate for faculty members interested in professional development. Visit their websites at www.podnetwork.org and www.ncspod.org.

The NEFDC EXCHANGE

Jeanne Albert, Managing Editor

Donna Qualters, Editor • Naomi Migliacci, Editor

The NEFDC EXCHANGE is published in the Fall and Spring of each academic year. Designed to inform the membership of the activities of the organization and the ideas of members, it depends upon member submissions. Please send submissions to Jeanne Albert at jalbert@middlebury.edu. Materials in the newsletter are copyrighted by NEFDC, except as noted, and may be copied by members only for their use.

Contemplative and Transformative Pedagogy

Arthur Zajonc
Physics Professor, Amherst College

Originally published in KOSMOS JOURNAL, Vol. V, No.1, Fall/Winter 2006.

I approach the question of shaping worldviews as an educator and as one who, like so many, is moved by widespread violence and global economic inequities. What is it about worldviews that results in the identity politics of Iraq where Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds all act along ethnic and religious lines, or in Darfur where issues of identity cut deeper, leading to Arabs perpetrating mass killing and rape against their Muslim brothers and sisters who are “black Africans” from non-Arab tribes? What is it about worldviews that leads to a large and growing divide between the rich and the poor? In the face of increasing per capita GDP, the global median income is decreasing, and 100 million more are in poverty today than ten years ago.¹ What can I as an educator offer in the face of these tragic realities of today's world?

To offer an alternative or “better” worldview is to no avail. In fact, efforts to promote that better viewpoint may initiate or aggravate conflict. In this article I advance a view of the human being in which the individual develops the capacity to move among worldviews, transcending particular identities while simultaneously honoring each of them. Even more, we can learn to live the complexity of diverse identities that are in truth ever-present in us as well as in the world. In reality, the interconnectedness of the world has its reflection in the connections among the diverse aspects of ourselves. When we find peace among the component parts of our own psyche, then we will possess the inner resources to make peace in a multicultural society. Only in this way will the crises I have mentioned be addressed at their roots. I see education—formal and informal—as the sole means of developing this remarkable human capacity for interior harmony, which in the end is the capacity for freedom and love.

The Function of Frames

The content of education is infinite in extent. Every day more information is available, new research is published, political changes occur, and businesses collapse. All of these demand our attention. Education is largely comprised of acquiring and organizing such information, and for this purpose students are taught the skills needed to assimilate and transmit information through reading, writing, and mathematics. But such simple input-output functions are but one dimension of education. Something more is needed to convert information into meaningful knowledge.

Surrounding and supporting the information we receive is the “form” or structure of our cognitive and emotional life that goes largely unobserved. To understand how information becomes meaningful, we must turn our attention to

this hidden container or “frame of reference,” as Jack Mezirow termed it.²

A frame of reference is a way of knowing or making meaning of the world. Enormous quantities of sensorial and mental data stream into human consciousness, but somehow that stream is brought into a coherent meaningful whole. At first sight it may seem that such meaning-making is an entirely natural and universal process, and to some degree it certainly is. Evolution has incorporated reflexes and drives deep into the human psyche. But the way we make sense of the world is also conditioned profoundly by societal forces, among them education. That is to say, we are socialized into a worldview that operates largely unconsciously and behind the scenes, but which affects the way we understand what we see, hear, and feel. According to the Leo Apostel Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Belgium, “A worldview is a map that people use to orient and explain the world, and from which they evaluate and act, and put forward prognoses and visions of the future.”

In the course of a lifetime we may shed one worldview and adopt another. In other words, we can change the structure that makes meaning for us. Thus while worldviews can be understood as deep cognitive structures, they are not immutable. The solutions to Darfur and economic inequality (among many other problems) will ultimately not be found through more information or better foreign aid programs, but only here at the level where information marries with values to become meaning. Human action flows from this source, not from data alone.

An education that would reach beyond information must work deeper; it will need to transform the very container of consciousness, make it more supple and complex. For this, we educators need pedagogical tools other than those optimized for information transfer. At its most advanced stage, we will need to help our students and ourselves to create a dynamic cognitive framework that can challenge established intellectual boundaries, and even sustain the conflicting values and viewpoints that comprise our planetary human community.

Challenging Conventional Divisions

In recent years I have spent time with members of the Native American Academy, a group largely comprised of academics who are also Native Americans. In our meetings we have explored the character of Native knowledge systems and research methods in comparison to those of orthodox Western science. From the first, the differences were marked. The place of our meeting was of special

consequence, Chaco Canyon. It is the site of an ancient indigenous settlement whose remaining structures are clearly aligned according to a detailed astronomical knowledge. Following a long drive we turned onto the approach road, stopping in the middle of nowhere to make a small offering of bee pollen and tobacco. The first evening included a long ceremony performed by a knowledge-keeper from the local Native population, which concluded with a sensitive presentation of the problems we were likely to encounter in our endeavors.

The sacred and the secular so seamlessly blended in the indigenous mind contrasts strongly with the conventional division between science and spirituality in the modern West. In the Western worldview, science is often defined in opposition to spirituality. My work with Native American colleagues challenges that presupposition at its root. Our time is one in which such unreflective assumptions must increasingly be challenged.

Last year I was seated among over 10,000 neuroscientists listening to the fourteenth Dalai Lama address them concerning the interaction between Buddhist philosophers and Western scientists. The occasion was the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, and the Dalai Lama was the keynote speaker because of his groundbreaking collaborative work to bridge the traditional cultural divide between science and the contemplative traditions.

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Because of his openness and that of a growing number of scientists, Buddhist meditative insights have been joined to scientific research in ways that are very fruitful for the fields of cognitive science and psychology.³ This is a second example in which traditional divisions have been challenged with fruitful consequences.

Contemplative Pedagogy

One of the most powerful transformative interventions developed by humanity is contemplative practice or meditation. It has been specifically designed to move human cognition from a delusory view of reality to a true one: that is, to one in which the profound interconnectedness of reality is directly perceived. Global conflict has its deep source in the privileging of worldviews, in the reification of our particular understanding and the objectification of the other. Such ways of seeing our world are, at root, dysfunctional and divisive. Contemplative practice works on the human psyche to shape attention into a far supplier instrument, one that can appreciate a wide range of worldviews and even sustain the paradoxes of life, ultimately drawing life's complexity into a gentle, non-judgmental awareness.

The usefulness of secular contemplative practice is being increasingly appreciated by educators at hundreds of North American universities and colleges. For example, in collaboration with The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, the American Council of Learned Societies has granted 120 Contemplative Practice Fellowships to professors over the last ten years, supporting them in designing courses that include contemplative practice as a pedagogical strategy.⁴ At conferences and summer schools at Columbia University and Amherst College and elsewhere, professors have gathered to share their experiences in the emerging area of contemplative pedagogy. Their efforts range from simple silence at the start of class to exercises that school attention; and most recently, to innovative contemplative practices that relate directly to course content. The 2005 Columbia Conference focused specifically on the role of contemplative practices in "Making Peace in Ourselves and Peace in the World."

Courses are offered that range from theater to economics, from philosophy to cosmology, in which university teachers are experimenting with a wide range of contemplative exercises, thus creating a new academic pedagogy. I have become convinced that contemplation benefits both students and faculty, and that secular contemplative practices should assume a significant place on our educational agenda.

Contemplative practices fall into two major classes, those that school cognition and those that cultivate compassion. We are well aware that our observation and thinking require training, but we often neglect the cultivation of our capacity for love. In his letters to a young poet, Rainer Maria Rilke wrote,

"For one human being to love another, that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but a preparation. For this reason young people, who are beginners in everything, cannot yet know love, they have to learn it. With their whole being, with all their forces, gathered close about their lonely, timid, upward-beating

heart, they must learn to love."⁵

We are well-practiced at educating the mind for critical reasoning, critical writing, and critical speaking as well as for scientific and quantitative analysis. But is this sufficient? In a world beset with conflicts, internal as well as external, isn't it of equal if not greater importance to balance the sharpening of our intellects with the systematic cultivation of our hearts? We must, indeed, learn to love. Educators should join with their students to undertake this most difficult task.

Thus true education entails a transformation of the human being that, as Goethe said, "is so great that I never would have believed it possible." This transformation results in the human capacity to live the worldviews of others, and even further to sustain in our mind and heart the contradictions that are an inevitable part of engaging the beautiful variety of cultures, religions, and races that populate this planet. We can sustain the complexities of the world because we have learned to honor and embrace the complex, conflicting components of ourselves. Our inner accomplishments, achieved through contemplative education, translate into outer capacities for peace-building. From there it is a short distance to the perception of interconnectedness and the enduring love for others, especially for those different from us.

We are increasingly becoming a world populated by solitudes.

When Rilke declares that the highest expression of love is to "stand guard over and protect the solitude of the other," he is expressing his respect for and even devotion to the uniqueness of every person and group. If, however, we are to avoid social atomization or the fundamentalist reaction to this tendency, we will need to learn to love across the chasms that divide us. Only a profoundly contemplative and transformative education has the power to nurture the vibrant, diverse civilization that should be our global future. As Maria Montessori wrote, "Preventing conflicts is the work of politics; establishing peace is the work of education."⁶

¹ Joseph E. Stiglitz, "The Ethical Economist," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 6 (Nov/Dec. 2005), pp. 128-134.

² *Learning as Transformation*, edited by Jack Mezirow (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), Chapter 2. See also Robert Kegan's discussion of "epistemologies" in *The Evolving Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982). In *In Over Our Heads* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1994), see especially his treatment of the "self-authoring and self-transforming minds."

³ Anne Harrington and Arthur Zajonc, *The Dalai Lama at MIT* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁴ See the description of the Academic Program of the Center's website: HYPERLINK "<http://www.contemplativemind.org>" www.contemplativemind.org.

⁵ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Love and Other Difficulties*, edited and translated by John J. L. Mood (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975), pp.30-31.

⁶ Maria Montessori, *Education and Peace*, translated by Helen R. Lane (Chicago: Regnery, 1972), p. 30.

SAVE the DATE!

NEFDC 2010 SPRING CONFERENCE

Teaching For Learning

Friday, May 21, 2010

**Westford Regency Inn & Conference Center,
Westford, MA**

Keynote speaker: Dr. G. Christian Jernstedt
"How Learning Changes Brains"



Dr. G. Christian Jernstedt is Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences at Dartmouth College, Adjunct Professor of Community and Family Medicine at Dartmouth Medical School, and Director of the Center for Educational Outcomes at Dartmouth. He specializes in human learning.

Dr. Jernstedt's research is in the area of learning as it occurs both in formal classroom settings and in the natural environment. This research is directed towards understanding the breadth of learning, including its cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects. He examines what leads to learning, what happens during learning, and what outcomes emerge from learning experiences. His research has examined classroom and other intentional learning, technologically enhanced learning, service-learning, and experiential learning programs.

Dr. Jernstedt has received both of Dartmouth's awards as well as national recognition for distinguished teaching. He offers seminars and lectures throughout the country on learning and teaching, potentials of the human mind, and institutional and program assessment and development.

Preparing for Yesterday?

Bill Searle
Professor of Business, Asnuntuck Community College

Preparing for yesterday? Too often in higher education we do just that. We prepare students for the one future we know will not be accurate—one based upon a simple projection of the present.

We can do better. After all, as we have engaged in reflective practice, many of us have come to realize that we teach to affect the future. Now is the time to extend our reflective questions toward the future. Incidentally, the phrase “reflective questions toward the future” is neither an oxymoron, nor an attempt to coin more jargon. These questions exist.

Each of us has an image of the future, but most of us have not made it conscious. Just as examining other aspects of our teaching helps make us more aware of biases and blind spots, so will reflecting upon our personal images of the future make us aware of the shortcomings of our unexamined and subconscious image of that future. Also, making our vision of the future more conscious and more complete gives us the same chance to change our teaching that is the basis for all reflective practice.

Here are some questions to get you started.

What do you believe the year 2035 will be like? This is the overarching question, and it is not an arbitrary year. Students entering college this fall will be barely entering middle age by 2035, and this is only if we do not extend life another 15 years (because then in 2035 they won’t even be middle-aged.) This is the central question, but which specific questions give us insights into what we see for that year?

- What are the paradigms that we live by today that will be challenged in the next 25 years? Additionally, what paradigms in our disciplines will be challenged by then?

- What will it mean to be human in 2035, assuming that we continue to have tremendous advances in bionics and brain-computer connections, life-extension technologies, and artificial intelligence?

- What will be the 15 big challenges facing our world? How will these challenges impact our country, our communities, and our families?

- How will people learn? How will they determine truth from that which is not true? What will it mean to be an educated person?

- How will relationships change, and what will they be like? How will people interact, and who will they interact with? What will it mean to “be a colleague” or to “be a friend”?

- What will robots be doing with us, and for us? Who will control them, and how will they be controlled? What will we be looking for them to do from 2035 to 2060?

- What will it mean to be a citizen of a community, a state or province, a country, and the world? How will the definition of a “good citizen” change?

- What will the key ethical and moral issues be? How will life extension affect the living? What will it mean to be dead? If we can manipulate an unborn baby’s genetic code, should we? What if other countries choose to do so?

- What will be the big advances in science, and what kinds of things will be “right over the horizon”? How will these advances in our understanding of science affect other disciplines?

There are certainly more questions you can ask, and if you know a futurist, she/he can help. The key is, as with all aspects of becoming a reflective practitioner, to be explicit. The more explicit we can be about what we expect to come, the easier it is to determine some things we can do—today, as teachers and mentors – to prepare people for the future. Small actions, taken today, can lead to major changes in thinking, skills, and behavior in the future.

As we very properly examine the questions that define our teaching, that form our character, and that drive our own learning, let’s create space for the future. As has often been said (and less often practiced), that is where we hope to spend the rest of our lives.

For a single best source of futures information, visit the World Future Society at wfs.org.

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Storytelling and Contemplation in Higher Education

Catharine Wright
Writing Program, Middlebury College

In an introductory creative writing class that starts with creative non-fiction, I explain to the young writers who hand in straightforward descriptions of sports accidents (in response to an assignment about encounters with the environment), that you can show yourself thinking on the page. It's a forgiving genre this way—think of a situation, use first person, describe, *and reflect on your response*. This is why we like to read creative essays, I remind them, to see the fruits of contemplation—narratives that make order out of disconnected events, that connect people, places and issues in our lives. It's the narrator's reflections that turn the situation into a "story," as Vivian Gornick so clearly articulates in *The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative* (13).

Many of these sophomores are shy about writing. They don't mind giving me three pages of description and action, but hold back on deeper reflections. It takes a thirty-minute contemplative exercise in class (starting with attention to the breath, then some guided reflection that brings their writing projects into their body, followed by drawing and writing on paper) [1], followed by an individual conference with me on their piece, for them to articulate its many layers. For one student, his exploration of limits on the ski slope—the boundaries of thrill seeking—is really about his shift from being a teenage consumer to an Environmental Studies major. He is now after a more sustainable course, seeks more than thrills. Another student sees her pleas to a "higher power" as she lay in the woods cradling a dislocated arm as representative of her inner conflict around science and spirituality. She is a Biochemistry major who considers herself non-spiritual; she wonders why she prays when she needs help. Why didn't you tell the reader this before? I ask them after the words tumble out. They shrug. They are new to the meaning of what they're saying, and also new to the genre of creative non-fiction. One of them reminds me that I warned them away from overly emotional, recent situations. She wanted to be sure not to reveal too much emotion.

Any creative writing teacher will know why I cautioned students against the danger of writing about recent emotional events. There is always the problem of getting distance, what Gornick calls a necessary "detachment" (7). I had reminded my students of this; I got descriptions that were disciplined, that avoided whining. In fact, they avoided reflection altogether. New writers, how are they to know the difference between detached reflection and heavy-handed emotion? In an academic environment, how many faculty or staff would have their own concerns about where to draw the line? After all, academia values objectivity. We do not even recognize emotion as part of the reflective process. Our emotional lives are reserved for home and select friends, and if we are conscious of our spiritual life, we

explore that aspect of ourselves with a discrete group of like-minded individuals. We don't generally go public or professional with those parts of ourselves.

Certainly our emotional and spiritual lives should be private to a degree. We don't want our classrooms, or the academy at large, to devolve into a kind of support group or poetry slam where we "put it out there" all the time (though support groups and poetry slams are important aspects of our culture). We need times and places set aside for such conversations, not only to protect the public from self-absorbed displays, but to protect the individual from the everyday concerns of the marketplace while she is crafting her consciousness. Our emotional and spiritual lives, vulnerable and sacred, require our deepest, guarded attention. Without times and places to attend to them, and without experience or guidance in how to conduct ourselves in such a time or place, we fail to fully know ourselves. In talking about the importance of place and stories among the Laguna people, Leslie Marmon Silko says that through communal storytelling people know that "You are never the first to suffer a grave loss or profound humiliation. You are

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never the first to understand that you will probably not be the last to commit or be victimized by a repugnant act" (Silko, 1013). Silko points out that hearing stories and participating in storytelling in fact gives us the detachment that

[1] For a theoretical discussion of such a practice see chapter seven, specifically the discussion of "cognitive breathing," p. 196, in Arthur Zajonc's *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry*.

Gornick says is necessary of good creative non-fiction. Good stories remind us of our place in the world. Gornick wouldn't need to spell out the need for detachment if community consciousness was part of mainstream America's ethos. But as Joseph Campbell points out, we have no ethos in contemporary America (Campbell, 10).

At one time we understood the liberal arts institution or university to be a place where students seek and find insight and perspective on their individual and collective lives. In *Education without a Soul*, Former Dean of Harvard College, Harry Lewis, laments: "We have forgotten that we teach the humanities to help students understand what it means to be human" (Lewis, 3). Instead, he argues, "Professors have become more specialized in their interests, which are ever more distinct from what ordinary citizens understand or care about" (9). Clearly students do still gain insight into human issues in college, and many discover interests that remain with them throughout their lives. Many of our students make the shifts in personal awareness that my students articulated in conferences on their writing. But they are aware of the risks in discussing such a shift, unsure if the personal aspects of these issues are in fact part of their education. Sifting through and synthesizing the physical aspects of their experience, their emotional experience, and their more detached reflections on the experience to perceive its relevance to their personal and public lives, not to mention their community or global citizenship, is a halting journey.

Mentoring students in this journey has required, of me, recognition that all of the aspects of myself are valid and in fact necessary to my teaching. I cannot mentor what I don't practice. This has been no easy process, and is still incomplete. I can only say that it was easier when I was a young, fearless adjunct at large universities, grew more intimidating as I became integrated into a prestigious liberal arts college community, and has the excitement and surprise of a kind of rebirth as I now discover that faculty across the disciplines, whether it be through attention to contemplation, social justice, or sustainability, are taking steps towards this process at institutions across the country.

Most of us are taking baby steps, inventing as we go. If we are to make genuine contributions to the tentative, traumatized condition of our planet and its populations, we must mentor first ourselves, and then our students and communities in a journey toward synthesis. Applying Gornick's theory, the "situation" is the current state of the world. The narrators are our professorial selves in the classroom. The story is our divided understanding of what we pay attention to: "objective" information, subjective response. It is a story with a long and privileged history, rightly called the "ivory tower." We are currently required, in the words of Paulo Freire, to bring "objectivity and subjectivity in constant dialectical relationship" (32). To create spaces in our discourse for reflection, detachment and connection. *The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society*, which articulates secular, organized but flexible

methods to bring contemplation into the classroom (contemplativemind.org), has resources available to us to achieve these goals.

A growing number of faculty are already participating in what scholar-activist Paul Hawken describes as a "dispersed, inchoate, and fiercely independent....global humanitarian movement (4)," a movement that he estimates is "the largest social movement in all of human history" (5). Within higher education, we see aspects of this inchoate movement in pockets concerned with social justice, sustainability, service learning and contemplative pedagogy. Small acts that we can take to help integrate and deepen what we are already doing are to engage in what Physicist Arthur Zajonc calls "cognitive breathing" (197) or some other contemplative practice alone or within a community (at Middlebury we have a new group for faculty meditation), and/or to write our own first person, non-fiction story that addresses an aspect of our research that concerns us. How do we convey professional knowledge and inquire into its social relevance while acknowledging and humanly representing ourselves as humble narrator? Who is it, in both social and the spiritual sense, that is writing? How do we reach beyond the limits of our discipline to make connections with other groups? How can we contribute to a storytelling, myth-making culture that values equitable, sustainable practices?

Our current academic modes of reflection and communication are inadequate to build the bridges to the future that we seek. And we do not have time to become authorities about the process before we begin. We must venture out into the deep waters with our students, sharing information, perspectives, experiences, mentoring, guiding them, and mentoring also the unexplored aspects of ourselves.

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Meet Our New Board Members:

Paul J. Charpentier
Southern Maine
Community College



Paul has been working at Southern Maine Community College since 1995 where he has taught in Culinary Arts and Lodging Restaurant Management and currently serves as the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs and Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence. Last year he served as co-chair for the college's NEASC accreditation team and currently chairs the Distance Education Steering Committee. His primary interests in faculty development involve supporting an innovative, student-centered culture among faculty, staff, and administrators. His research deals with intra-organizational collaboration in colleges as a means to bridge the departmental parochialism that is often the norm and an obstacle to the dissemination of promising practices. In joining the NEFDC Board he hopes to help create new, and strengthen old, collaborative initiatives between institutions and individuals.

Ken Wade
Champlain College



As an Associate Professor, Ken has taught a wide spectrum of courses in Information Technology, Business and Communications. He is a member of the campus-wide Faculty Assessment Committee and is in frequent and close contact with faculty and administration across all divisions and does extensive reflection on the nature and evidence of excellence in teaching. He is the former president of the Faculty Senate and Staff Council.

Valerie Gramling,
Graduate Student Liaison
University of
Massachusetts, Amherst



Valerie is a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in English Literature. At UMass she has had multiple teaching experiences: large lecture TA, instructor for her own course, online instructor. Since spring 2006 she has also been a Teaching Assistant at UMass Amherst's Center for Teaching, where she assists with teaching assessment and faculty development through the Midterm Assessment Program (MAP), the Lilly Teaching Fellowship, and faculty grant programs for diversity and teaching development. Valerie's involvement with the Center has allowed her to interact with new and tenured faculty and TAs across the university, discussing the challenges they face both in the classroom and within their departments. Her work at the Center has made her more concerned about the issues facing graduate TA and instructors, particularly the varying levels of support and preparation for teaching, even as graduate students throughout the University are being called upon to teach more classes.



Now I see That Teachers are Human: Faculty and Students Talk

Judith Kamber

Dean of Professional Development, Northern Essex Community College

Have you ever heard this as you listen to students talking in the hallways or around campus? “Doesn’t she know we have other classes we have to study for?” “I can’t believe he wouldn’t let me take that test when I came back. I was sick.” “How could I possibly read that much in two days?” “I have no idea what she is talking about.” “A hundred dollars for a text book: that’s not going to happen.”

On the other hand you have probably heard faculty conversations that go like this: “How can he expect to pass the course if he doesn’t do the reading?” “I made it clear there was no make up on that exam. I didn’t hear from him for five days.” “I stood there and asked a question about the reading and was met with nothing but blank stares.” “Some students don’t even buy the textbooks.”

Listening to these conversations over years made me think that it would be interesting to bring faculty and students together to share their perspectives on teaching and learning and classroom issues.

First I should say that colleges really do try to find out what is going on with students. We do classroom focus groups, surveys, CCSSE, NSSE, interviews, and we collect a lot of valuable data all of which helps to understand what is and isn’t working in the classroom. The piece that was missing for me was the opportunity to have a face to face dialogue, over a sustained period of time, on a more equal footing: what if we weren’t studying the student, or for that matter studying faculty practices? What if we could create a small, safe setting where teachers and students talked to each other for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the others’ perceptions of the same issues?

In a conference call with my COPPER Colleagues (Communities of Practice: Pooling Educational Resources; a Carnegie CASTL project) we were discussing various initiatives on our campuses that support dynamic learning environments. I spoke about our recent initiatives for supporting an engaged college community, which included using Appreciative Inquiry for the development of our Strategic Plan. I also casually spoke about my interest in bringing together teachers and students in dialogue with one another that would use an Appreciative Inquiry framework for that conversation. Donna Duffy, psychology professor at Middlesex Community College in MA, Carnegie fellow, and our COPPER project leader, leapt at this suggestion and enthusiastically suggested that all the colleges in the project could create these discussions at our institutions and share our findings. The institutions included Minnesota State University-Mankato, Glendale Community College CA, Northern Essex Community College MA, Pine Manor College MA, Middlesex Community College MA, and Salem State College MA. Thus *COPPER Collegial Conversations* was launched.

The project was never designed as a strict research proj-

ect but rather an opportunity to engage students and teachers in collegial conversations about the teaching and learning experience to better understand the point-of-view of each other. We agreed that in preparation for the project I would conduct an Appreciative Inquiry workshop for our COPPER team when we came together in advance of the International Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference in Alberta, Canada in fall 2008. Following the AI session we designed the format of the Collegial Conversations, including a set of questions (available at the end of this article) that were broad enough to be relevant to any teacher and student and would focus on what was happening when things went well. We decided that it was important not to overwhelm students by too much of a faculty presence and agreed that the groups should include three faculty, five students, a facilitator and a scribe. We decided to meet monthly, provide lunch and adhere to certain guidelines about confidentiality. We agreed that each college would plan the project in the fall and begin meeting in the spring and that the scribe would provide the notes to his/her own group and post the notes on a shared Blog where faculty and students could respond and comment.

We have transcripts for each session from each participating college and what we found was remarkable similarities and themes among both the students and faculty. Many of the themes for students included a fear of failure, nervousness about speaking out in class, the exhilaration of getting excited about a class or subject, the amount of school work when they were also working at a job and caring for family, their desire to be noticed as an individual, and the energy generated when they also got to know fellow students. Faculty talked about their satisfaction and joy when students succeed and their disappointment when things are not going well. Faculty spoke of their excitement about trying new things, experimenting and working with colleagues, and the drain of too much committee work.

Students were constantly surprised by how deeply faculty cared about them, the well-being of the class and their passion for their discipline. Faculty were impressed with the thoughtful and perceptive observations of the students and their willingness to be candid. Both students and teachers discussed things that they opted to change after having had these conversations. For example, teachers mentioned how annoying it was that 10 minutes before the class was over, in anticipation of leaving, students began to gather their belongings. A number of students said they hadn’t thought about it but when they began noticing they too thought it was pretty rude. The students spoke to the faculty about having more choices in assignments and the class design. Some of the faculty reported that they were in fact re-designing certain elements of their courses to do just that. The following are some general comments from our conversations:

Student: "I guess I never thought much about whether or not it was important to the teacher if I had learned something in that classroom. I am surprised that it matters so much."

Teacher: "I experience such excitement and satisfaction when I see that a student understands and is interested in the material."

Student: "I feel kinda bad now that I have heard how much teachers prepare for a class. I never knew that teachers spent that much time getting ready for teaching a class. I didn't know they cared that much about how it goes."

Teacher: "When a class doesn't go well it's all I can think about on the way home. What could I have done differently?"

Each of us came away from these sessions with unforgettable stories. The strategy of having a small group of faculty and students meet several times during the semester to explore a limited number of questions in depth seems to have great value. Students and faculty get to know each other as people and productive, authentic, and thoughtful exchanges can evolve. The following is a condensed version of a story that unfolded in the last five minutes of our last session at NECC:

Teacher: An advisor can be very helpful in helping establish goals and help get you to where you want to go.

Student: You should know your own direction by the time you are in college.

Teacher: I didn't! It may be worth a conversation.

Student: They can give bad advice. They won't give you the curriculum that you want.

Teacher: I am new at advising. I have a lot of questions and I always call the advising center. They have really helped me because I'm often the first one to be in contact with the students and I don't know everything.

For a while the conversation went on to other matters when this same student asked, "Where is the Advising Department anyhow?"

Teacher: What are you doing after the meeting today?

Student: Nothing for a while.

Teacher: I could go to the advising department with you and maybe introduce you to some people.

Student with much enthusiasm: "Yeah, that would be great."

Many of us who experienced these conversations are hoping to continue some adaptations of the conversations this year. It is a unique approach that is inexpensive in cost but invaluable in insights.

The following are the Session Questions:

Session 1.

Describe the most valuable learning experience you have ever had on this campus. What made it so valuable? What was it about you that made the experience so valuable?

Session 2.

How do you know that you are ready or prepared for a class meeting? Describe what it takes to be successful in a class meeting.

Session 3.

What is one thing that keeps you excited about coming to class? What is one thing that keeps you working hard in class?

Session 4:

What was the project like for you as participants?

What are the results and what have you learned from these discussions?

Were the recorder's notes accurate?

What, if anything, happened serendipitously during these sessions?

Suggestopedia Revisited: Sonatas Center Students

Wendy Wagner
Visiting Assistant Professor of German Language and Literature,
Clark University

God gave us music so that we, *first and foremost*, will be guided upward by it. All qualities are united in music: it can lift us up, it can be capricious, it can cheer us up and delight us, nay, with its soft, melancholy tunes, it can even break the resistance of the toughest character. Its main purpose, however, is to lead our thoughts upward, so that it elevates us, even deeply moves us.

... Nietzsche in 1858, at the age of fourteen years
"Über Musik" [On Music] (in: "Aus meinem Leben" [From my Life])

The suggestive effects of music on the human spirit, the mind, the heart and the soul have been known for a long time. It is the particular effect of music on our linguistic abilities which in the 1960's fascinated the Bulgarian psychiatrist Dr. Georgi Lozanov. He called his method Suggestopedia (Suggestion + Pedagogy). "This method incorporates music extensively, as well as best teaching practices now recognized by the Multiple Intelligence and Brain Compatible learning methods."¹ Classical music as the background creates teaching and learning conditions which "harmonize the functioning of the body and the

brain"², increase concentration, create a natural readiness and excitement for learning, promote general well being and result in accelerated learning and higher level student performance. To Albert Einstein, "Music became not only an outlet every time he felt the pressures of work but also an inspiration for his mathematical and scientific ideas. For example, he appreciated the logical structures of Mozart's sonatas, feeling that they resembled mathematics in their composition."³

Lozanov's research has found that music from the Baroque era with about 60 beats per minute results in

85-100% language learning efficiency in only 30 days.⁴ Certain composers and their music from the classical period are recommended to enhance certain aspects of the foreign language learning process. Händel, whose music is formal, ceremonial, and conventional, might be appropriate to achieve feelings of conformity. The sparkling tunes and rhythms of Haydn's music (Cello Concerto No.1 in C; Symphony No.66 in B Flat Major) are said to assist when students are new to the environment and the subject matter. Mozart's music is helpful during test taking (Sonata for two pianos in D Major), for essay writing or sequencing tasks, and to relax students engaging in dramatic readings (Oboe concerto in C Major, K 314.) Beethoven, whose music can be characterized as suggesting resolve and will power, is most effective for use with non-assertive students, increasing self-esteem for individual exploration of material (Piano Concerto No.5 in E-Flat major Op. 73 -Emperor; Moonlight Sonata.) Bach, whose music is helpful in stimulating intellectual abilities (Symphony in G Minor Op.6 No.6), might be best played to support complex structured tasks⁵.

While Lozanov focused on the effects of classical music on the foreign language acquisition process, a number of researchers have found that listening to classical music makes learning easier in general⁶. From the soothing effect of Brahms' lullaby on a fussy baby⁷ to the reduction of hyperactivity in 8th, 9th, and 10th grade remedial English classes⁸ to content-related achievement and problem-solving tasks in secondary education, classical music as a soundtrack enhances learning.⁹ Teachers report that classical music characterized by "pleasant harmonies and mid-level to slightly upbeat tempo"¹⁰ create a positive classroom atmosphere, and produce greater student cooperation and more enthusiasm for learning. Other studies point to students' enhanced spatial abilities¹¹ when listening to classical music.

In reflecting on this body of research as well as on classical music suggested specifically to create a mood or enhance learning¹², I have been searching for music which would create positive emotions and mental alertness in students of a wide range of age and subjects. I was searching for music that would promote relaxation while keeping students alert and focused, feeling centered but energized and actively engaged in class at all times. I was looking for pieces of music which could be used in their entirety, and, outside of having positive effects on learning, would also sensitize students to high culture in an authentic way. I finally decided that the baroque and classical sonata allowed me to implement the Lozanov method of Suggestopedia (=Accelerated Learning) in a new way.¹³

Most commonly, sonata refers to piano solos or to pieces composed for piano and violin or piano and cello. In general, sonatas have three (Allegro – Andante/Adagio/Largo – Allegro/Presto) or four (Allegro – Andante/Adagio/Largo – Minuet/Scherzo – Rondo) movements. I found that the "Allegro" movements, generally at a faster pace, stimulate both intellectual acuity and energetic participation, while the slower paced

"Adagios", "Largos", or "Andantes" keep students in a state of relaxed alertness. The "Minuets", "Scherzos" and "Rondos" allow for lively discussions. Also, and perhaps most importantly, unlike Symphonies or Concerti, Sonatas have a fairly even pitch throughout all movements, so that the music is latently there and never either too loud or too quiet. Although some studies suggest that classical music has no significant effect on undergraduate students' math test scores or other subjects¹⁴, it appears that the overwhelming majority of research on music and learning contradicts these findings.

My own experience in higher education suggests that if sonatas are played when students enter the classroom, the music sets a welcoming atmosphere, calms students and sharpens their focus on learning. It also expands their cultural awareness. Student performance in my German classes has been higher with sonatas as a soundtrack than when I taught in environments which did not allow me the use of classical music. As a matter of fact, the effect of classical music integration in the classroom in my case reached beyond the classroom into student dorms and libraries: some students adopted sonatas as background music for their own study time, thus improving the quality of their assignments.

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13. I am currently Visiting Assistant Professor of German Language and Literature at Clark University, Worcester, MA.

14. <http://music.arts.usf.edu/rpme/effects.htm> accessed on 09/20/2009

WWW.NEFD.C.ORG

Have you visited the NEFDC web site lately? It is maintained by Board member Keith Barker from the University of Connecticut. Information on the annual Fall and Spring Conferences, contact information for the board, membership forms, and related data are all available online. Take advantage of this valuable resource and bookmark us at www.nefdc.org

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In addition we have two Graduate Student Liaisons to the Board who serve staggered two-year terms.

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Keith Barker, NEFDC Board Clerk
Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
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