



Thought and Action: The Scholarship of Teaching

By Amy Driscoll

With the paradigm shift from teaching to learning in higher education (Barr & Tagg, 1995), some of the focus on pedagogy has been diminished over recent years. Fortunately, a number of CSUMB's founding faculty (David Takacs, Gerald Shenk, and Dan Shapiro) not only acknowledged the importance of a focus on pedagogy, they created the initial conditions for the scholarship of teaching to be valued and rewarded on our campus.

CSUMB has become one of the few universities that seriously evaluates the scholarship of teaching for promotion and tenure. Early teaching cooperatives on campus fostered the kinds of inquiry and dialogue urged by the literature on scholarship of teaching. Shulman and Hutchings (2004) consider such scholarship a "catalyst for thought and action," and the co-ops have been directed to that function.

The campus now has a tradition of annual teaching co-ops that foster the scholarship of teaching. In recent years the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment has sponsored

a series of thematic teaching co-ops. Faculty have examined their teaching for effects on student civic engagement, for their pedagogical use of technology as part of the Visible Knowledge Project, for use of curriculum and pedagogy that fosters equitable and sensitive attention to race issues, and for general student engagement and learning.

During fall semester 2004, nine CSUMB colleagues analyzed their teaching approaches and the learning environments created by their pedagogy. The co-op was focused directly on gathering data and evidence of their teaching approaches, data to be used in decision-making about courses and pedagogy. The faculty began by interviewing their students in one course about the students' previous successful learning experiences and then comparing those with their own priorities for teaching. The interviews introduced students in their courses to the semester-long study of the faculty member's teaching.

Every two weeks faculty examined specific aspects of their teaching: use of time; clarity of questions, directions, and class focus; and interactions with students, all aspects of teaching that have direct

links to student learning. Students assisted in data gathering; faculty recorded and listened to audiotapes of their own classes; and finally, faculty observed each other's classes.

The co-op participants brought data about their teaching to each session and discussions were full of helpful critiques and supportive suggestions. Different questions about their teaching emerged from each faculty and new questions emerged from their ongoing data collection. This process truly transformed their teaching from a private and individual practice to "community property," a public practice "open to critique and in a form that others can build on" (Hutchings & Shulman, 2004). In their articles in this issue, those faculty participants describe the "thought and action" of the scholarship of teaching, sharing the diversity of their inquiries in their individual experiences and the insights of their reflections.

References:

Barr R. B., & Tagg, J. (1995). From teaching to learning: A new paradigm for undergraduate education. *Change*, 12 (6), 2-12.

Hutchings, P. & Shulman, L.S. (2004). The scholarship of teaching: New elaborations, new developments. In Shulman & Hutchings, eds. *Teaching as community property*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shulman, L. S. & Hutchings, P. (2004). *Teaching as community property*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. «»

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Hidden Benefits of the Teaching Co-op

By Carla Bundrick Benejam

“Your syllabus is finally ready to go, and you’re looking forward to beginning a new semester of teaching. On the outside, you’re the picture of confidence, but on the inside there are the faint echoes of familiar questions: ‘What kind of a teacher am I? Do peers respect my work? Am I an imposter in teachers’ clothes?’ Would it help to know you’re not alone, and many teachers have doubts about their teaching effectiveness. Just being able to share such feelings and fears with your colleagues can be a wonderful affirmation, and yes, a relief.”

These words were shared by faculty participants of the recent teaching co-op facilitated by Amy Driscoll. We met to explore the nature of our teaching, and to find ways of getting feedback on our teaching styles. Often the bi-weekly discussions dealt with the meta-cognitive issues: How did the assignment go? How did we feel about trying the assessment technique? How did our students feel about the work?

We were all struggling with teaching issues such as having enough time, finding alternatives to lectures, and teaching large classes of students with diverse interests and learning abilities. It was extremely valuable to learn during our discussions that, yes, we were actually doing a good job.

An unexpected benefit to come from our sharing of ideas was to discover that we all had similar difficulties and that our students seemed to have similar answers when asked about our teaching. At one point we were directed to let our students know that we

were participating in the Co-op, allowing them to participate in the process with us. Students from one of my classes made the following list, one that was representative of most of the students surveyed.

Items that facilitate student learning:

- Group activities
- Worksheets and class assignments
- Lecture notes (on Black board if available)
- Well organized assignments
- Small classes
- Getting tests back on time
- Teacher feedback

Items that hinder student learning:

- Long lectures, too much teacher-talking
- Noisy classrooms
- Boring power points
- Unclear assignments
- Early morning classes (this was an 8 am class!)
- Out-of-date movies

I don’t think these “pluses and minuses” represent continued poor teaching habits as much as they clarify the most difficult points of teaching, difficulties that most of us share on a daily basis. Gathering together with peers in teaching co-ops and workshops helps us recognize that our craft is not always easy or intuitive. Allowing a dialogue to begin among faculty—and between faculty and students—can transform our individual thinking into collective thought for the improvement of both teaching and learning skills of faculty and students. <>

Learning Through Collaboration: The Power of Peer Observation

By Carolina Serna

My participation in the Teaching Co-Op allowed me, a first-year assistant professor, to meet with fellow colleagues to discuss our pedagogical practices and explore ways to self-evaluate our teaching. Among the topics and practices we discussed, I found the peer observation exercise particularly helpful, because I had the opportunity to collaborate with a more experienced colleague in a very purposeful activity. Moreover, we came from different disciplines and, therefore, we could provide feedback from the perspective of our distinct academic and pedagogical experiences.

The goal of the exercise was for us to work with a colleague and observe one another’s teaching with an observation focus. In follow-up discussion, we reflected on the experience and considered tangible applications to improve our teaching.

My colleague Maggie Rathouz visited a literacy course I was teaching for pre-service teachers. I asked Maggie to observe the way I checked for understanding following the Initiation, Response and Evaluation (IRE) structure. As Maggie discussed her observations of my teaching, I became aware of aspects that would otherwise have remained obscured, such as some abrupt transitions I made. She pointed out details I had overlooked and offered suggestions for me to consider. Maggie’s feedback helped me to see that during a review of key concepts, I was not checking for understanding regularly. As a result of our discussion, I became more aware of the questions I asked students, their responses and my evaluation of their responses. In addition, Maggie talked about her teaching experiences and successful strategies she had implemented in her classes.

When I visited Maggie’s class, I observed an environment of collaboration and group presentations leading to an overt display of student knowledge and understanding. Although the content was different from my area of expertise, it was very interesting to observe a class designed to prepare future teachers how to teach mathematical concepts to elementary school children. It was helpful for me to observe how Maggie prepared students to work collaboratively by discussing the written directions on the board before the students began the activity.

This experience helped me think about my teaching and consider ways to improve it in collaboration with colleagues. I look forward to future opportunities to reflect on my teaching with other colleagues here at CSUMB.<>

**Read Faculty Focus
Online at <http://tla.csumb.edu/>**

Bringing Clarity to Class Instructions

By Shannon McCann

When I am initiating activities in my class sessions, I try to be as clear as possible in my instructions to my students. So, I was happy for the opportunity to pay attention to this aspect of my teaching when one of our assignments for the Fall 2004 TLA Teaching Co-Op was to audiotape one of our classes and then review the tape, taking note of those instructions which were clear and revising those instructions which could have been worded more clearly. As a part of an ongoing research project, I had already been periodically videotaping my Math 308 (Elementary Mathematics from an Advanced Perspective) class sessions. For the co-op, I chose to analyze a tape of one of my class sessions where the purpose of that day's lesson was to bring meaning to the multiplication of decimal numbers, a subject which is fraught with confusion for many students because they do not know why they must put the decimal point where it should go.

As I reviewed the tape of my class, I found several instances in which I could have been more clear in my instructions. For example, I had demonstrated several ways to model a decimal multiplication problem and then had given each group a problem of their own to model. I asked the groups to show and discuss different ways to model the problem, but I neglected to ask them explicitly to discuss how their models showed the solution to their problem until ten minutes into the activity. Since this was one of the main goals of modeling the problem, I should have made this request right at the start of the activity.

It was helpful for me to replay this portion of my class in my mind and make notes on how I would better present the activity next time. However, I was relieved to find that my instructions were often clearly worded and well understood by my students. For example, as one student was presenting one of her solutions to the class, she had to show each part of her diagram

and discuss how it was connected with the multiplication problem she was explaining. After she finished her work, I went through a quick series of questions, asking people to raise their hands if they could see each different part of the problem and her solution to the problem. This process gave me a quick and non-intimidating way of assessing how many people in the class had understood this type of model. It also gave me a quick way of summarizing for the class what I felt were the important features of a good problem explanation.

Analyzing the tape of my class and listening for instructions which were both clear and unclear helped me to validate those things that I was doing well and helped me get a fresh look at those things I needed to improve. «»



Linking Course Outcomes to Daily Classes

By Pat Watson

Am I Clear Here?

Throughout my years of teaching, I've learned that a quick way to send the students to imaginary elsewheres is by fuzzy rambling. Though I tend to enjoy my fuzzy rambles, and some of my students seem to enjoy them as well, at the end of the day, what they take with them seems rather thin, learning-wise. I can bring them back with jokes, anecdotes, shark stories and all sorts of tricks, but though that will gain their attention, does it facilitate learning?

How do I get them *here*, not as an entertainer, but as a teacher? Do I even know where *here* is? Can I explain it to them? Let's say that I can get them *here*. Then what? Can I subsequently get them to *there*? Can I help them get

to the outcome, the goal, the end, the culmination of the process? Where is *here*? Where is *there*? Are both of these abstract concepts clear to them and clear to me as well?

With all these questions, I entered the Teaching Co-op with a specific goal of learning better how to specify objectives and to better specify origins of these objectives as well. After all, I can't know how to get there if I don't know where I am. When the students and I find ourselves on the same map, using the same terms, with the same landmarks in sight, I find my experience as a teacher much more gratifying and the students seem more attentive, aware and successful.

What I learned?

I've learned that I know what to do, but I just don't do it often enough. I do a number of things that work. For example, I try to open each lesson by asking the students where we are in the course. I ask them to state succinctly, in a sentence or two, what we did in the previous class and how it links to the course outcomes. I check in my mind's ear to listen and compare what they're saying to see if it is congruent with what I'd say. It sometimes takes them a while, but they always seem to know what we did the previous session, and, more importantly, they know how the last session fits into the semester scheme. I like to take notes on what they say and put the notes up on the screen, using the projectors in the smart classrooms, clarifying and paraphrasing where possible and checking with them for accuracy.

From that specified place on our map, we move on to the next marker, keeping the previous one in sight, but behind us, eventually reaching the destination, the final outcomes, in stages that make progressive sense. Each session, step by step, we move on with the goal in sight and the days' work a clearly visible landmark that moves in succession to the semester's end.

Does It Work?

It certainly seems to, but I don't do it often enough, because I still like to ramble fuzzily, on occasion. «»

Recent Faculty

Qun Wang (HCom) has recently published a collection of short stories, *A Voice in Every Wind* (University Press of the South). The stories have formerly appeared in magazines and journals such as *Timber Creek Review*, *The New Observer*, *In the Grove*, and *Writers' Corner*, and in anthologies such as *Writers of Wisconsin, 1995* and *New to North America*.

Jeff Groah (Math & Stats) delivered the mathematics colloquium talk at UCSC on November 30th. The presentation was titled, "Shock Wave Solutions of the Einstein Equations," and covered recent research.

In November, **Jennifer Dyer-Seymour** (SBS) published a paper with her colleagues at the University of Michigan entitled, "Mental State Expressions in U.S. and Japanese Children's Books." Their paper appeared in the *International Journal of Behavioral Development*. The publication considers the way children in different cultures develop an understanding of their social world and examines whether children's books contained information that might help preschoolers develop an understanding of others' thoughts, emotions, and desires, comparing texts of children's books in the U.S. and Japan. They examined the text of children's books in the U.S. and Japan for words such as, "think," "know," "happy," "sad," "want," and "need."

Jennifer and her colleagues concluded that there may be a core set of mental states that are relevant for understanding others in different cultures as well as culture-specific mental states that are learned throughout development within a certain cultural context.

Ruben Mendoza (SBS) has recently published a number of articles. Four of these appeared in *Great Events from History: The Ancient World* (edited by Brian Pavlac,

Pasadena: Salem Press) including "Construction of the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon at Teotihuacán - c. 100-200 B.C.E.," "Founding of the Classic Period Maya Royal Dynasty at Tikal," and "Izapan Civilization Dominates Meso-america - c. 300 B.C.E.," all in 2004. The 2005 volume includes his article "El Tajin is Built, c. 600-950." "Maize: The Natural History of Maize" and "Maize as a Food" (with Irene Casas, student co-author) appeared in Volume 2 of the *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture: Food Production to Nuts* (2003) edited by Solomon H. Katz New York: Charles Scribner & Sons). His article "Swidden" appeared in vol. 3 (*Obesity to Zoroastrianism*), also in 2003.

Ruben's article "Lords of the Medicine Bag: Medical Science and Traditional Practice in Ancient Peru and South America" was included in *Medicine Across Cultures: History and Practice of Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, edited by Helaine Selin (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003). His article "Ethnicity" appeared in 2004 in *The Southwest: The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Regional Cultures* (edited by Mark Busby, New York: Greenwood Publishing Group). He also contributed a book review "Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of the Mexican American by Martha Menchaca" to the *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* (Vol 4, No 1, Spring, 2003. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press).

Julie Shackford Bradley (GS) and **Caitlin Manning** (TAT) presented a paper in January on "The Global Ecologies of Film," focusing on developments in transnational film, at the 30th Annual Conference on Literature and Film at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida.

Race Issues Resource Network (RIRN)

Your RIRN colleagues offer support and feedback on teaching about race issues in the classroom and about issues around race that emerge in classroom dynamics including curriculum, classroom strategies, facilitation and class dynamics. Contact any RIRN member for confidential support and feedback: Rafael Gomez, Stephanie Johnson, Annette March, Pam Motoike, Tomas Sandoval, Gerald Shenk, George Station, and Swarup Wood (Kia Caldwell is on leave this year.)

Carla Bundrick Benejam (ESSP) recently presented a talk and slide show to members of the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History. The talk, titled "An Historic Overview of the Great Apes," was one of three lectures given in conjunction with the exhibit of paintings by Robert Cooper called Portraits of the Great Apes. Carla's presentation focused on how our views of great apes have changed over the past 150 years and included the status of present-day conservation efforts for these endangered primates. The talk was also videotaped by AmpMedia and broadcast in two segments on Channel 26 in Monterey County.

Terry Arambula-Greenfield (Teacher Ed) has co-authored "The Best Education For the Best is the Best Education for All" with J. Gohn. Their article appeared in 2004 in *Middle School Journal*, Vol. 35 No. 5, pp. 12-21.

Judy Cortes (Teacher Ed) offered a presentation last September at the National Foreign Language Resource Center Cultural Diversity and Language Education Conference at the University of Hawaii. Her presentation was "Heritage Learners' Writing Skills Assessments: Preparing Bilingual Elementary School Teachers."

Scholarship

Ruth Paget (HPWE) published her third book of food and travel memoirs entitled *Edible Alchemy: Making Life Magic*, which recounts her experience of CSUMB's Dia de los Muertos celebration among its stories (June 2004). Her recent feature article, "Set in Stone: Agnes and Gedion Nyanhongo's Sculptures Celebrate the Joys of Everyday," appeared in the December 2004 issue of *Art & Antiques* magazine. She has also written restaurant reviews for the *Monterey County Weekly* for the past one and a half years. Ruth is working as the administrative support assistant for HPW while she pursues her M.A. in Library and Information Science at San Jose State University.

Steve Watkins (Library) recently completed his term as President of the International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers (IAMSLIC), presiding over the 30th Annual IAMSLIC Conference, *Voyages of Discovery: Parting the Seas of Information Technology*, held September 5-9, 2004, in Hobart, Tasmania. He delivered a presentation entitled "IAMSLIC's Emerging Digital Infrastructure" as part of a panel session on *Open Archives Initiatives -- What Are IAMSLIC Libraries Doing?* During his presidency, Steve successfully negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding between IAMSLIC and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO

Assessing and Using Students' Diverse Assets for Learning in Your Discipline

Assessment strategies for the diverse assets students bring to the classroom.

Tuesday, February 22, 4-6pm
Facilitators: Betty McEady and Ernie Stromberg

Tuesday, March 29, 4-6pm
Facilitators: Frauke Loewensen and Josina Makau

and another between IAMSLIC and the Fisheries Department of the Food & Agricultural Organization of the U.N., formalizing a series of cooperative initiatives that have been underway over the past several years.

John Berteaux (HCom) has begun writing a monthly column, "Connections," for the *Monterey Bay Herald*. John's column appears the first Monday of each month and focuses on concerns of the African American communities on the Peninsula and in the Valley.

Rob Weisskirch (LS) and **Janie Silveria** (Library) have recently co-authored "The Effectiveness of Project-Specific Information Competence Instruction." Their article will appear in *Research Strategies* in volume 20, issue 2, in early 2005. Their article describes a collaborative project carried out in Rob's LS365 course, designed to measure and enhance students' self-reported information competency skills.

Mardi Chalmers (Library) is now coordinating the Library's lower-division information competence course, CST 101, "Tech Tools." Mardi was formerly at CSU Fullerton and is an active member of California Academic and Research Libraries (CARL), the state chapter of the Association of College and Research Libraries. She currently serves as chair of CARL's Northern Diversity in Academic Libraries Interest Group, which is committed to recruiting and mentoring librarians of color. Mardi is also co-chairing, with **Kathlene Hanson**, the Association's biennial conference, to be held in April 2006 at Asilomar Conference Center.

Babita Gupta's (Business) article, "Performance, Scalability and Reliability Issues in Web Applications" is soon forthcoming the *Journal of Industrial Management*

and *Data Systems*, 2005. Babita was guest editor for the Oct 04-March 05 issue of the *Fortune Journal of International Management*, October 2004 - March 2005, featuring peer-reviewed articles from world-wide researchers highlighting the role of IT in aspects of international management such as outsourcing, knowledge management, e-government and e-business.

Jennifer Colby (LS, SLI, FYS) is the president-elect for the National Women's Caucus for Art, a non-profit NGO founded in 1972 to increase opportunities for women in the arts. She is attending the WCA National Conference, and the College Art Association Conference in Atlanta this month, where she will participate in honoring Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter for her role in the creation of the WCA National Lifetime Achievement Awards, first presented in the Carter White House in 1979. Jennifer also writes a weekly column on local art for the *San Juan Bautista Free Press* newspaper.

Four of the solo guitar compositions heard on *Cedar & Silver* (Spring Street Records, SSR-2004) by MPA's **James Ferguson** are being published by Mel Bay. James is also currently working on his sixth instruction book, as well as his second solo recording. «»

Gender Issues in the Classroom Brown Bag Series

Supporting Women's Voices in the Classroom

Friday, February 25, 12-2pm
Facilitators: bobbi bonace and Steven Levinson

Teaching to Real or Imagined Intersections between Gender and Race

Tuesday, March 15, 12-2 pm
Facilitators: Stephanie Johnson and Rafael Gomez

Supporting Student Learning

By Ken Wanderman

This Fall, a group of faculty led by Amy Driscoll met periodically, for the purpose of improving our teaching. The teaching cooperative was aptly named, since there was a commitment among us to sharing our knowledge and expertise about teaching.

Although I have taught nearly ten years at CSUMB with generally positive student evaluations, I have never been completely satisfied with my own teaching. Finding ways to improve my teaching was one of two reasons I joined the co-op. The other was to talk with other faculty about teaching and pedagogy. Talking with other faculty about teaching is pretty rare. If you want to see a colleague run, start talking about pedagogy. Therefore it was exciting being around faculty who did want to talk about principles and practices of teaching.

Our sessions were a series of experiments. Each time, Amy talked with

us about a general concept, such as how to support student learning. We talked through the concept, each sharing our past experiences. We then went off and applied the concepts to a class that we were currently teaching. At the next session we shared the results of how our class had reacted in response to the experiment. We then moved on to another experiment.

As a course to focus on in the co-op, I chose CST221, a multimedia programming class which I have taught 3 times previously. Part of our first experiment on the co-op was to solicit from the students what things we as instructors do to support student learning and what things we do that make it difficult to learn. What was amazing was not students' particular responses, most of which the co-op had predicted in advance, but the enthusiasm with which they responded. It was as if they had been waiting a long time to answer these questions. It was a magical 15 minutes or so that day at the beginning of class. The students were so enlivened that all through the remaining hour and a

half they were much more engaged in the subject matter than they had ever been.

It seemed that asking students to give input on how their instruction might be conducted had a very positive effect on their attitude towards learning.

Several other experiments we did centered on clarity of instruction: clarity of materials, clarity of the questions we ask and clarity of the answers we give. Clarity has always been a problem area in my teaching. So, for the experiment, I paid close attention to the questions I asked and listened closely to the answers, as I revised assignments and directions. Another member of the co-op visited one of my class sessions and reported some instances where I still was not clear. I continued working on clarity for the rest of the semester. By semester's end, students were reporting an improvement.

The teaching coop was a wonderful experience, both in terms of the process and the tools it provided to keep my teaching continuously renewed. Not only did I identify new techniques and pedagogies to keep my students engaged, but I now have a new awareness of the value of self-reflection as it applies to teaching and learning. «»

No Tian Ya

By Michael S. Brown

Last semester, I had the opportunity to attend two programs run by the TLA; the "Blooming Pedagogies" organized by Betty McEady, and the "Teaching Co-op" facilitated by Amy Driscoll.

As a new faculty, "outcomes-based" learning is quite new to me and my understanding of it is still evolving. My graduate education was in Engineering (Computer Science) and I can safely say that throughout my graduate career I had no training, formal or informal, regarding teaching. Everything I've learned about teaching and classroom interaction has been self-taught, mostly from emulating the professors I admired when I was a student.

Before coming to CSUMB, I spent the last three years as an assistant professor at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), in Hong Kong, China. If any of you have been to China, especially the northern part, you probably have eaten Beijing Kao Ya (Peking Roast Duck). What you might not be familiar with is how the duck is prepared. Before being roasted, the duck is force-fed a sweet liquid for several days. This force-feeding is called "tian ya," which can be translated to mean "to stuff the duck."

Interestingly, Chinese students refer to their education as "tian ya," where they are forced-fed information (and then roasted, I assume, in their exams).

I have to confess that I took an active part in stuffing (and roasting) my students. My education wasn't too much different. But as I began to teach, I found that I needed to re-teach myself material that had been stuffed into me. Why? Because stuffing ≠ learning.

Which brings me to the TLA programs. Outcomes based education is a new approach to education for me, and I appreciate the opportunity to be exposed to these different teaching pedagogies, especially from disciplines outside engineering. For my part, just attending meetings with other faculty that were genuinely interested in bettering their teaching was refreshing. I have always taken my teaching seriously, and the Blooming Pedagogies and Teaching Co-op meetings helped expose me to ways I could improve my teaching. Where before I considered effective teaching as a matter of covering "topics," I now I try to determine what the goal or outcome I want the students to achieve and learn, and how my lectures, assignments, and activities work towards those outcomes. It is a slow process, and revamping one's teaching and assessment style takes time. The TLA programs have given me the necessary background to jump-start this process. «»

The Lab-Practical Format Review Session

By Maggie Rathouz

At the end of each semester, I often experience a lull in my self-worth as a teacher. I see that my students have grown in some respects: their explanations are deeper and their mathematical models more precise. So, why the lull? It comes from students' poor performance on the cumulative final exam. While I can understand that many students do not "test well" or are overwhelmed by the end of the term, I find that many of these juniors are unable to study effectively because they do not know what to work on.

In past semesters, I have held an in-class review session during which some students voluntarily presented answers to questions similar to those found on the exam. With this format, I found that all were not actively engaged and many students merely watched as their peers presented. Through discussions with participants in this fall's TLA Teaching Co-op, I discovered that other instructors had similar results with individual student presentations; i.e., this may not be the most effective method for conveying information to the entire class.

I believe that the review is an opportunity for synthesis of the course material and a chance for real learning to occur. So, in order to encourage a more active review this past semester, I designed activities based on the lab-practical format. Pairs or trios of students moved through different "stations," each with a question or task that would be assessed

on the exam. Students chose the stations to work on that addressed ideas, concepts, and skills that were weakest, by the students' own self-assessment. I was available to facilitate, but most of the discussion occurred between students.

I witnessed a tremendous amount of focused work during the review session. I believe that one or more of the following strategies contributed to the success of the activities. The students:

Actively worked on problems.

They set up problems (with manipulatives provided), solved them, and justified their thinking to their peers.

Moved around the room. There was physical movement and interaction between classmates whose paths did not normally cross.

Talked to their peers. They discussed aloud an approach to solving the problem. This benefited the listeners and the speakers, since they were asked to explain or justify their strategies.

Chose tasks to work on. The meta-cognitive aspect is re-enforced here as students came to a more complete understanding of what they each knew or needed to work on during their further study.

Upon reading responses on the final exams, I found a greater variety of correct approaches to solving problems, neater diagrams, and more thorough

explanations of their own thinking. Some aspects of this lab-station format could be used periodically to help solidify information throughout the semester.

Why wait for the final? «»

By respecting the unique life experiences that each student brings into the classroom—by asserting that the broadest possible set of experiences is crucial to help each of us understand the topic at hand as completely as possible—we empower all students as knowledge makers. We allow each student to assert individualized knowledge that contributes to a collective understanding. Rather than "tolerating" difference, we move to respect difference, as difference helps us understand our own world-view—and thus the world itself—better. From respect, we move to celebration, as we come to cherish how diverse perspectives enable us to experience the world more richly and come to know ourselves more deeply.

David Takacs, *Thought & Action*, the NEA Higher Education Journal, Summer 2003.

Call for Reviewers

The CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) invites CSU faculty to serve as reviewers for *Exchanges* [<http://www.exchangesjournal.org>]. *Exchanges* is an online, peer-reviewed journal that focuses on teaching and learning and is written by and for CSU colleagues. Articles to be reviewed are a maximum of 3,500 words, and three colleagues review each submitted manuscript. Reviewers are asked to commit to completing the review within 8 weeks of receiving the manuscript.

If you are interested in serving as a reviewer, please contact: Chris Mallon, CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning, *Exchanges* Managing Editor, (562) 951-4752 exchanges@calstate.edu

Teaching the Taboos: Racism, Sex, Passion and Spirituality in the Classroom

Friday, March 4, 12-2 pm
Friday, March 18, 12-2pm

Facilitators: Patty Whang and Betty McEady

Join Patty Whang and Betty McEady for dialogue on these high-risk, sometimes enraging issues inspired by bell hooks' latest book,

Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope

Your Recent Scholarship

Faculty Focus invites you to send news of your recent publications, creative activities, pedagogical innovations and other scholarly work.
stacey_malone@csumb.edu

I Say: They Hear? Investigations into Clarity of Presentation in a Calculus Class

By Heath Proskin

During the course of our co-op on the scholarship of teaching, eight faculty members from departments as diverse as Mathematics and Statistics to Education met semiweekly to share results and discuss the outcomes of the assignment from the previous session. These discussions were very lively and informative, bringing to light ideas and strategies to enhance the learning environment of our classrooms.

These ideas varied in scope from ways to deal with the deafening silence which inevitably follows the query, "Any questions?" to tactics designed to help maintain focus and stay on track. Several alternatives to "Any questions?" include "Does anyone need this explained more?" "Are any of these terms still confusing?" and "Is it okay for me to erase the board now?" One valid point that this discussion brought to light is that we simply need to be more mindful of the types of questions we ask. During our peer observations in the final week, we noticed that a seemingly clear question posed by the professor was misinterpreted by nearly the entire class. The concept of clarity is truly central to effective teaching and unfortunately is one that is too often overlooked.

To this end, several of our "homework assignments" dealt specifically with assessing clarity of our instructions, questions, and our teaching in general. As teachers, we often presume to know which ideas we present are the most clear and which are the least. One strategy we experimented with sought to challenge this notion. Prior to a class, we were to predict which item in our

lecture the students would find the most difficult to grasp and which the clearest. Then, at the end of the class, we asked the students to jot down the concept they found the "muddiest" and the one they found clearest. Interestingly, only half of my students agreed with me on what I considered the most difficult idea, while my notion of what was clearest coincided with that of my students two thirds of the time. An area for further exploration: Do we present most clearly the concepts which come most easily to us?

I would like to thank all the participants in the co-op and especially Amy Driscoll for making this a great learning experience and providing me with a comfortable environment to discuss teaching and grow as a professor. The co-op helped to make my first semester at CSUMB progress more smoothly and gave me ample material to enhance the learning of my students. «»

Why Participate in a Teaching Co-op?

By Frauke Loewensen

Usually college teachers work on their own and consider themselves discipline specialists who alone are responsible for designing, developing, administering and evaluating their courses. What happens behind closed classroom doors can typically be glimpsed only from semester-end student evaluations and the occasional departmental visit, both restricted to very few persons, often administrators. The ultimate aim—continuous improvement of teaching and learning—is not very well served by this custom.

Joining a teaching co-op is one way of

breaking out of this isolation, by making teaching and learning visible. Teachers gather regularly to not only exchange successful as well as troublesome experiences but also analyze and integrate recent research. The co-op provides a forum to present for discussion your own best practices and to try out and adopt and/or adapt those of others, including from other disciplines. It is a supportive environment where like-minded practitioners share their reflections on teaching and learning and also offer constructive criticism to one another. It extends beyond abstract talk to include classroom observations between peers.

For me, one of the most beneficial aspects of the teaching co-op is the cross-fertilization that can happen when teachers from different disciplines share their practices and reflect jointly on them. Considering an issue from a variety of perspectives often opens up new perspectives into one's own way of doing or rationalizing things. This interdisciplinary approach is also very beneficial when applied to classroom observations. When colleagues from separate (often unrelated) disciplines visit each other's classes, both the pre- and the post-observation meetings can be rich with ideas and suggestions for new avenues to pursue. This cross-disciplinary collaboration can result in the kind of new insights that intradisciplinary visits would not as easily generate.

For college teachers who are actively engaged in their professions and consider teaching one of their scholarship areas, co-ops of this nature are indispensable. As classroom action research becomes more widely accepted as evidence of scholarly teaching, participation in teaching co-ops is beneficial at several stages. It can serve as a preparatory step towards such research, accompany the actual research process and/or serve as a feedback mechanism. Whichever function it fulfills, it leads to positive educational change and encourages the creation of a community of teacher-learner-scholars. «»



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