



EXCHANGE

New England Faculty Development Consortium

Message from the President

Matt Ouellet, Center for Teaching, UMass-Amherst

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The energy being generated by NEFDC folks is certainly contributing to our regional New England spring thaw. Allow me a moment of your attention, and I'll point out some of the "signs of life" emerging everywhere.

At our annual meeting of the membership (held after the fall conference) we received a good amount of feedback from participants regarding their perceptions of important organization priorities. There was resounding support for continuing the activities NEFDC currently sponsors such as the fall conference and the Spring Round Up. In addition, participants expressed support for the following ideas:

- Provide a membership directory.
- Help members identify and gain perspective at regional and national levels on the key concerns and future priorities in teaching development.

- Offer centralized access to resources related to faculty and teaching development; increase opportunities to network with colleagues across the region.
- Sponsor localized events so that more participants can attend.

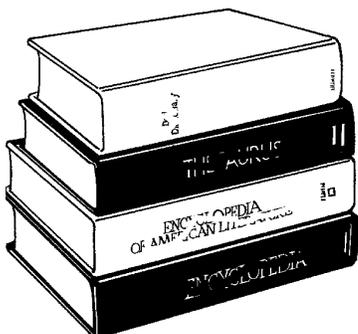
In January, the board reviewed these suggestions and set about immediately to explore avenues for addressing each of them. Below, let me offer a brief update on board-led initiatives. (The board member taking the lead is noted after each issue. For more information or to contribute ideas, please call. I know we all welcome your involvement).

Currently, we are exploring external funding with the hopes of supporting a web-based membership directory (Ellen Nufer). Ideally, we will be able to expand our current website to be a highly interactive "virtual" home base. We have identified topics for the spring (Bill Searle) and

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Adult Learning Theory Informs Authentic Assessment

Ellen L. Nuffer, Ed.D., Keene State College



I teach in both the undergraduate and graduate Education programs at Keene State College; nearly all of our graduate students, and approximately one-third of our undergraduate Education students could be characterized as "non-traditional aged" students. These quarter-of-a-century-plus students (hereafter referred to as

"adult learners") have some characteristics in common that set them apart from the more traditional age student (under 21). My challenge as a teacher has been to incorporate what we know about adult learning theory into my pedagogy in order to provide a better learning experience for

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Message from the President

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fall conferences (Bill Rando) that we know relate directly to key regional and national priorities such as assessment and evaluation. And, the board is strongly supportive of pursuing joint sponsorship of localized programs. We are actively seeking institutions interested in co-sponsoring events (Matt Ouellett). Our hope is to make events easily accessible to more teachers and faculty developers from across the region. And, we are currently seeking nominations for election to the NEFDC Board (Susan Pasquale). We hope that you, too, will consider serving in this capacity.

As you can read, we have a terrific board. Our goal is that each of these initiatives lead more people who otherwise might not be able to join “good conversations about teaching” to be included. As we tackle some of the most challenging growth-related organization issues in the next several years we rely on members to offer their talent and experience and we welcome your input. Now, get outside and enjoy the spring!!

Matt Ouellett as well as serving as President of the NEFDC is the Associate Directory of the Center for Teaching at Umass-Amherst.

The NEFDC EXCHANGE

Jeff Halprin, Nichols College, 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 the members, it depends on your submissions. Please keep us up-to-date with listings of events you are putting on, as well as book reviews, descriptions of successful programs, and discussions of issues which have engaged your interest.

Reach me at: Nichols College, Box 5000, Dudley, MA, 01571-5000, 508-213-2122, jeffrey.halprin@nichols.edu

Adult Learning Theory

Continued from page 1

this population. I do this by utilizing a particular form of authentic assessment – the Authentic Learning Portfolio.

The Needs of Adult Learners

Adult learning theory posits that the typical (and we know there are many who are atypical – but that’s another paper!) adult learner craves clarity about the relevance of the topic. Adult learners want to know how this reading, discussion, lab or classroom activity will connect to something else. They want to know the potential practical applications of the learning. They want to know how it alters, extends, or pushes the limits of what they already know. Faculty can easily sympathize with this need; don't we engage in the same kind of internal dialogue with every article, newsletter, and meeting we encounter? We are, after all, adult learners as well!

Adult learning theory also states that adult learners need a sense of participation in the learning process. This often translates into participating in decisions about the content and form, even the timing, of the learning experience. Adult learners who may have considerable experience with a particular application of technology appreciate having the choice to submit a term paper utilizing that technology, rather than the required traditional assignment. Adult learners who are primary caregivers for multiple family members appreciate the choice to complete certain assignments using different time or place requirements. What challenges many adult learners is an educational experience that tries to make “one size fit all”, or that feels impersonal.

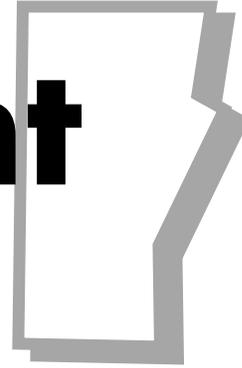
However, adult learners also have the characteristic of desiring rigor in the educational experiences in which they engage. Needing participation or desiring relevance doesn't mean, to the vast majority of adult learners, that they want easy courses, or to “get away with something”. Instead, they want to accomplish that which they set out to do to get their “money's worth”.

The Nature of Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment describes those assessment activities in which the content and the form reflect “real world” activities. These activities help students connect their learning to a real problem, thus making their learning authentic. One way in which I design my courses to capitalize on the adult learner's need for relevance, participation, and rigor is to use “Authentic Learning Portfolios” as an assessment tool. There are several types of portfolios that are utilized in education, and several of them could be described as representing authentic assessments. (It may be helpful to use one's own investment portfolio, or an artist's portfolio, as an analogy; in both cases the owners have carefully selected certain items to include in the portfolio, based on a sense of what is “best”. The selection of those items reflects the owner's interests, capabilities, etc.) One type of educational portfolio is the developmental portfolio, designed to collect artifacts that show growth in a particular skill or ability, such as persuasive essay writing. Another is the presentation portfolio, designed to showcase the best that the student has. Teaching portfolios and tenure/promotion portfolios may also be familiar to those in higher education. The common feature of any portfolio, investment, artist,

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New Faculty Orientation

*Thomas S. Edwards
Castleton College*

In the short time allotted to the typical new faculty orientation, how can you give new faculty the information they need to make a seamless transition to their new position? The short answer is – you can't. New faculty need to process a great deal of information, much of it incredibly time sensitive, but too often, a new faculty orientation program translates into information overload.

A good new faculty orientation works both ways: orienting new faculty to our campus, and making us familiar with the new resources in our midst. Paying close attention to the pace and the timing of the information you provide prior to the beginning of the semester relieves some of the pressure to "cover it all." At the same time, it allows us to take advantage of the experience and expertise which new faculty bring to us: innovative ideas regarding advising or teaching, or new approaches to common campus problems.

A good place to start is to poll your new faculty from the last three years on the key issues that they wish had been covered in their orientation. Even better, get them involved in the design and delivery of your program. New faculty enjoy hearing from their colleagues on how to maneuver through the bureaucracy, and they can benefit tremendously from learning first-hand about what the campus climate can tell them.

Include adjunct faculty in your orientation. From the student's perspective, these individuals are equally responsible for key information that affects their lives: what are the deadlines at the registrar? What is your add/drop policy? How do I refer students to the counsel-

ing or academic support services? Invite representatives from all these offices to participate in your orientation. Personal contacts often make it easy to seek follow-up information when the need arises.

Prioritize, and make your information timely. With some advance planning, you can provide a schedule of future events to give new faculty expanded information at the point where it might be more immediately relevant. Allow for the opportunity to personalize your orientation, as not everyone will need the same information about the same resources. Be sensitive to the role of spouses, partners, and family: they, too, are making a new transition. Include them as much as possible in the process, and make them feel welcome to the campus community.

Most importantly, avoid the tendency to make the conversation one-sided. Make sure there are ample opportunities for your new colleagues to share their experience and expertise. Seek ways to highlight their potential contributions to your school. New faculty orientation should send the message that their contributions are valued by the institution.

Rather than a stand-alone event, new faculty orientation should be part of a faculty development process that extends beyond the first few days on campus. Consider it as the first invitation to join the conversation at your institution about the best practices focused on teaching and learning.

For more information on designing new faculty orientation, please contact Thomas S. Edwards, Associate Academic Dean, at tom.edwards@castleton.edu

**Visit the Teaching for a Change Conference website at
<http://www.teachingforachange.com>.**

**The Conference will be June 12-14, 2000
in Colorado Springs, Colorado.**

Using Technology to Promote Active Learning

Bill Heineman, Northern Essex Community College

“Technology is the wave of the future and will solve our problems in the classroom.” “Technology is a panacea pushed by college administrators and publishers without any evidence that it will help students learn and is likely to distract faculty from things that do work.” Which of these arguments, heard so often in the academic world today, is correct? After spending two years involved in two grants aimed partially at integrating technology into community college teaching, I offer the unsurprising opinion that the truth lies somewhere in between. At Northern Essex Community College I have been part of a team--supported by a FIPSE grant--that transformed a chalk-and-talk introductory geography course into an interactive, technology-based class aimed at helping students with limited academic English language proficiency. I am now engaged in the Digital Course Project, supported by a state vocational education grant, aimed at greatly increasing the interactivity of an introductory American government class through Web-based research projects.

These experiences suggest that technology all by itself will not improve learning, but can be a powerful tool when combined with active learning methods in a multifaceted teaching strategy. My goal in both projects was to do less lecturing in class and to increase student involvement, not to use technology. In each case, however, technology makes the goal easier to achieve. In the geography class we converted all lectures to PowerPoint presentations. This not only allows the smooth insertion of graphics--the photographs, maps, and charts that will help visual learners--but also saves precious class time for active exercises meant to build skills such as essay writing. I was surprised how much time could be saved simply by avoiding the physical act of writing notes on the chalkboard. In the American government course, I am introducing seminar-like class discussion periods based on research that can be rapidly completed on the World Wide Web.

For instance, my students will soon compare the strategies of presidential candidates in the current primary races as part of a larger effort to understand the role of campaigns in American politics. Using the Web allows fast access to a great deal of information on current political events that are of most interest and relevance to my students. In both classes, I have noted improved student interest and participation. In the geography course, essay writing skills and retention have improved a great deal.

These improvements do not come cheaply or easily. Through the support of the government grants and the college, I have been able to create materials using quality hardware and software and teach in “smart” rooms with multimedia presentation tools and access to the Internet. The college has also developed an innovative coaching method for faculty that involves instructional methods as well as technology. Instead of the standard group workshop on some software or instructional technique, followed by isolation, faculty involved in these projects have a knowledgeable coach available at all times to provide one-on-one assistance. The idea is to learn just enough to reach your teaching and learning goals and nothing more. The grants have also provided stipends or release time, but faculty hoping to do major technology integration should be prepared to supply a lot of their own time. I spent over 400 hours working on the geography class alone, and that does not include my coach's time. I have also experienced frustrations with software bugs, hardware glitches, and competition for limited technology resources. Yet those frustrations are not large enough to outweigh the benefits I see.

In summary, technology--if offered as part of a larger teaching strategy--does offer a useful new tool for instructors, but it cannot be integrated without significant investments of money, time, and effort by colleges and their faculty.



Searching for Great Assignments

Jeffrey Halprin, Nichols College
Editor, NEFDC Exchange

Okay, okay, I do it too. But I'm trying to quit.

Sitting around at lunch with some colleagues, I'll say "You won't believe the paper I got from a student today." Then complain that it came verbatim off of some website, or that it was two pages long, printed in 20 font, with margins so wide they passed each other in the middle. Or whatever.

Whining like that never feels as satisfying as I hope it will. (Probably because then I have to listen to someone else's story about *their* students. Hey, this is about me). But it is a little fun, nevertheless.

Yet I know something more important that I don't feel like sharing with the table at that moment, since I am focused on absolving myself for responsibility for anything the students in my class don't learn. Often, the quality of the work depends on the quality of the assignment. I can have two assignments designed to get students to accomplish the same thing. One will lead students to produce work of a vastly higher quality than the other, because that assignment spoke to them in a way the other didn't.

When I think about students making the most of an assignment, I think about something I have recently been asking students in my Contemporary World Literature class to write about. In that class, I frequently assign a very short story by Jamaica Kincaid, titled *Girl*, which is made up of the list of instructions a young teen-aged girl has heard from her mother and sisters and aunts, it would seem, all the time she has been growing up; instructions designed to teach her how she is expected to behave and to keep her from embarrassing the family.

A couple of years ago, a student named Theresa Stach asked if, for her paper, she could rewrite the story to describe her own experience. What she passed in was extraordinary. It painted a painful, powerful picture of the ambiguous, contradictory messages *she* felt she had been raised with and had to try to resolve. And at the same time, the essay showed a clear understanding of the creative synthesis Kincaid had produced in order to build the story, as well as an examination of both the similarities and the differences involved in growing up female in New England and in Trinidad.

It was a great essay. It made me feel great about the student, great about the class, and delighted to be the teacher. So I stole her idea. The next time I taught the story I

asked all the students to write their own version of *Girl*. I just stuck it into the class one day, an extra assignment that actually wasn't worth anything toward their final grade. And *all* the essays were extraordinary. I copied all of them and passed them all out, because they were just too true, too strong, too touching, for me to be the only one who ever saw them. It was an assignment which meant something to the students and it gave them an opportunity to do work at the highest level.

Now, obviously, there are many other factors involved in whether students do great work. But the assignments themselves make a huge difference: how we lead up to them, how we explain them, how we construct the specific tasks we ask students to accomplish; it all has a huge impact on what gets passed back to us.

In this space in future *EXCHANGES*, I would like to print some examples of assignments that really worked, assignments that gave you brilliant students, assignments which worked out better than you hoped to imagine. Seeing what worked for you will help all of us in thinking about the best ways to construct our assignments.

So do this for me: as soon as you read this, take a few moments to think, then commit yourself to sending in your best example. (Don't wait a month, because you know and I know we can be at least as lazy and forgetful as our students). Let the rest of the Consortium see how you put together the assignments which students truly grabbed and ran with, which gave them the opportunity to see their way to their best work.

You can still complain about your students, but just once a month.

Jeffrey Halprin, Editor, NEFDC EXCHANGE
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Call for Papers

Community College Journal of Research and Practice is soliciting papers about community colleges and community college education. For details, contact the editor, Dr. Barry Lumsden, at Lumsden@unt.edu

News From Maine



Discussion as a Way of Teaching

James Berg, Director

Center for Teaching Excellence, University of Maine

Discussion as a way of teaching is as old as Socrates. A good discussion can go a long way to clarify ideas for students and to develop instructor-student rapport and student to student interaction.

In his classic *Teaching Tips*, Wilbert McKeachie identifies several areas in which discussion is particularly effective. They include:

Helping students learn to think by giving them practice thinking.

Helping students learn to evaluate logic and evidence for positions.

Helping students apply principles.

Motivating students to learn.

Getting feedback on what students are learning.

A University of Maine professor with a natural sciences class of over 60 students structures one of his lecture days as a discussion. The class is in a large hall, so it can feel more like a class of 100, but students work in groups to explain and apply scientific concepts. Then the entire

class asks questions for further clarification. This procedure seems to personalize not only the material but the classroom and the instructor.

Using discussion does not imply that other teaching techniques, such as lecturing, are inferior. As Kenneth Eble puts it in *The Craft of Teaching*, "Discussion is not very good for dispensing information, but it is useful for fixing and relating and promoting thought about information that has already been acquired."

A recent book by Stephen Brookfield and Stephen Preskill, called *Discussion as a Way of Teaching*, tries to debunk some of the commonly held myths about discussion in the college classroom.

Discussion takes time away from covering content. Discussion is essential to helping students process and understand content: "There is no point in covering content for content's sake. The point is to cover content in a way that ensures that students engage with it." This is especially true in areas where the content is expanding, like the universe, daily.

Discussion is unrealistic in large undergraduate lectures. Short discussions can serve as "bookends" to lectures, at the beginning to establish known material and during the lecture to allow for reflection and processing. "Doing these things stops students from falling into a deep reverie while you're talking and forces them to engage with the ideas you think are important."

One other myth is the idea that discussions will happen simply if a well-meaning instructor asks questions and waits for a response. As with other teaching strategies, a fruitful discussion needs clear goals, planning and preparation to be successful.

(This piece originally appeared in *Maine Perspective*, Vol. 11, No. 4. A publication of the Public Affairs office of the University of Maine.)

Summer Institute

The Virginia Tidewater Consortium for Higher Education is pleased to announce the 22nd Annual Summer Institute on College Teaching: June 11-16, 2000 to be held at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia

Our Institute is in its twenty-second year of helping faculty at every level and discipline to become more effective teachers. It is the only one of its kind and has been in existence longer than any similar institute in North America. Over the years hundreds of faculty have participated in the Institute and have found it very worthwhile and rewarding. The Institute is unique in that it allows faculty members the opportunity to discuss college teaching and learn-

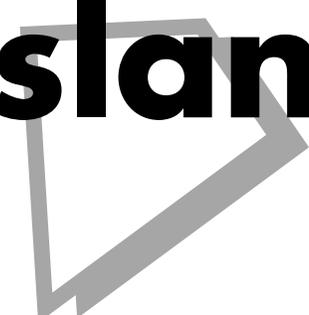
ing in-depth with their colleagues in a non-threatening, pleasant environment. Since enrollment in the Institute is limited, there is ample time for one-on-one discussion with the other faculty.

Cost: \$675.00 Topics: Instructional innovation, testing and grading, small group strategies, lecturing, cooperative learning, technology in the classroom, course and teacher evaluation, questioning skills, teaching and learning styles, student assessment, syllabus construction, and how to make classes more interactive.

For additional information please contact the Consortium at 757/683-3183, <lgdotolo@aol.com> web: www.vtc.odu.edu. You can register on-line. Deadline: May 26, 2000. Early registration is recommended.

News From

Rhode Island



Diversity Resources for Faculty Development

Pamela D. Sherer, PH.D., Founding Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence and Professor of Management
Providence College

Faculty throughout the country are asking for more information on issues related to diversity on campus and in the classroom. Fortunately, there are several excellent books, videos, and websites that faculty developers can recommend to faculty to enhance their understanding of major issues and approaches to creating more inclusive environments for all students. The following books can be used for faculty discussion groups, as resources for individual course development, and for assignments in diversity courses. The videos are excellent for both faculty and students and the websites provide access to a wealth of information about diversity.*

Books:

Friedman, E., Kolmar, W., Flint, C., & Rothenberg, P. (Eds.), (1996). *Creating an Inclusive College Curriculum*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gallos, J. & Ramsey, V. (1997). *Teaching Diversity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Morey, A. & Kitano, M. (1997). *Multicultural Course Transformation in Higher Education: A Broader Truth*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Videos:

Blue Eyed – offers college students, faculty and administrators a chance to sit-in on a full-length workshop with America's dynamic diversity trainer Jane Elliott. Available from California Newsreel. www.newsreel.org

Skin Deep – Chronicles the eye-opening encounter of a diverse and divided group of college students as they explore their prejudices, bare their wounds and try to understand each other. Available from California Newsreel. www.newsreel.org

Tale of O – "O" is an entertaining and captivating parable about what happens to any new or different kind of person in a group and how the situation can be managed. Available from HR Press. www.hrpress-diversity.com.

Websites:

<http://www.asu.edu/provost/intergroup/faceresources.html> Arizona State University site that offers practical tips for classroom diversity discussions.

<http://www.inform.umd.edu/diversityweb> Diversity Web resources for higher education features articles, discussion forums, model syllabi, etc. that are useful to both faculty and administrators.

<http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/21cp/race.htm> University of Texas links to 24 sites related to difference and technology.

<http://www.aacu-edu.org/KnowNet/civic.htm> AAC&U website on Democratic Engagement and Civic responsibility. AAC&U places all its diversity work in the context of its larger mission of extending the advantages of a contemporary liberal education to all students and transforming liberal education to serve the needs of a diverse democracy.

*This is a selected list of resources from a presentation to be given with Dr. Carol Harvey, Assumption College, at the AAHE Diversity & Learning National Conference in April, 2000.

The Thirtieth Annual Conference of the International Society for Exploring Teaching Alternatives October 12-14, 2000, Los Angeles, California

The ISETA conference offers a friendly, informal, and highly interactive gathering of professionals dedicated to the profession and scholarship of teaching and learning. The rich representation of disciplines from traditional liberal arts and sciences, engineering and the applied sciences, and a diverse set of professional schools gives us all new insights to achieving common goals of improving teaching and learning. ISETA conferences provide a professional forum for those who have something to share and the interactive nature of the presentations makes learners and teachers of us all.

The ISETA WEBSITE MAY BE FOUND AT:
<http://www.west.asu.edu/ISETA>

For conference registration and information contact Gloria Balderrama, at Colorado State University, (970) 491-6452
email: gloria@math.colostate.edu



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A Handbook for College Faculty and Administrators on Designing and Operating a Comprehensive Faculty Evaluation System

Raoul A. Arreola

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Sixty Professors from Eight Universities Tell Their Stories

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Devorah Lieberman, Associate Editor

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Frederic Stout, Editors

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Peter Seldin

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THE TEACHING PORTFOLIO, 2/E

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Peter Seldin

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Barbara Leigh Smith and John McCann, Editors

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Ruth Federman Stein and Sandra Hurd

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New Models of Excellence in Higher Education

Edward Zlotkowski, Editor

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3rd Annual Faculty Development Roundup "Key Issues for Faculty Developers" Boston College, June 9, 2000

Academic Development Center, O'Neill Library, 2nd floor

What's going to happen?

This is a participant-focused and participant-driven workshop. We will use each other as resource people and have a full day of discussions on faculty development issues. The three strands for Roundup 2000 are:

- Learning and Technology
- Building and Using Administrative Support
- Issues Facing Newer Faculty Developers

Morning sessions will feature small group discussions on each of the three strands. Each group will include people with experience to help guide the discussion, field questions, discuss alternative approaches, and provide information.

A working lunch will provide time to sit and talk with people who have interests similar to yours, as "interest group" tables will be available.

Immediately after lunch, Matt Ouellett (UMASS-Amherst Center for Teaching and President of NEFDC) will lead a workshop and discussion designed to weave the three morning strands together.

Who Is This For?

- People responsible for faculty development
- People on faculty development committees
- People interested in faculty development
- People with administrative responsibilities for faculty development

Feeling Isolated? Wish you knew others doing what you do?

Looking for ideas for speakers, workshops, programs?

Want to talk about challenges with others facing similar ones? Need ideas for programming?

Need advice on implementing a classroom assessment project,
or "conversations on learning," or "the learning college," or

Meet. Discuss. Question. Make contacts. Get ideas. Share ideas.

Fill out the Registration Form on the next page!

For more information, contact Bill Searle, as_bills@commnet.edu

Registration Form
3rd Annual Faculty Development Roundup
Boston College, June 9, 2000

Note: We will duplicate this sheet and share it with all who attend, so please print clearly!

Name: _____

College: _____

College address: _____

College phone: _____ Email address: _____

Easiest to reach me is by phone or email?

To help us determine lunch table topics, we need your input.

Topics I'd like to discuss during lunch are (please put in priority order and list as many as you wish – we will organize tables in order of topic popularity):

Registration form and check must be received by May 25, 2000.

Registration fee - NEFDC member: \$25.00 Non-Member: \$75.00

Make checks out to NEFDC - Spring Conference

Return this form by May 25 to Sue Barrett, Director, Academic Development Center,
O'Neill Library, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA 02167

For more information, contact Bill Searle at as_bills@commnet.edu, or 860-253-3149

Learning Technology Conference – 11-13th September 2000
at UMIST, Manchester, UK

ALT-C 2000, The seventh international conference of the Association for Learning Technology will examine the key roles of learning technology practice, policy and partnership as colleges and universities respond to the changing and challenging educational environment of the 21st century.

Proposals welcome. The conference will feature the three themes of practice, policy and partnership.

Conference Web Site <http://www.umist.ac.uk/alt-c2000>

Submissions may be made on line from the site.



Adult Learning Theory

Continued from page 2

or educational portfolio, is that it is a collection of artifacts that defines, in some way, by virtue of the choices made to include or exclude, the owner of the portfolio.

Example of an Authentic Learning Portfolio

The Authentic Learning Portfolios (which I use in my graduate and undergraduate courses in Education) are organized around several themes. These themes are based on what I consider to be the essential questions of the course. Students are required to submit multiple drafts of their responses to each of these essential themes that demonstrate their understanding of each of these themes. For example, two of the essential themes in my graduate Educational Research course are 1) ethical research, and 2) instrument reliability and validity.

The Ethical Research Portfolio description is:

Demonstrate that you understand the potential ethical pitfalls in conducting either experimental research with children or research with young adults on drug effects.

The Instrument Reliability and Validity Portfolio description is:

Demonstrate that you understand how to determine the reliability and validity of an instrument as well as its appropriateness for a particular piece of research.

Students may then choose whatever method best suits them to demonstrate their understanding. Some students have written a traditional term paper on the required topic. Some have found an item in the newspaper describing some educational research and critiqued that research and the media account of it according to principles of ethical research. Others have written hypotheti-

cal "bad" instruments or research proposals, and then contrasted them with "good" instruments or proposals. In all cases, acceptable portfolio pieces must demonstrate, in their choice of presentation format and content, that the student really "gets" the concepts that underlie the essential theme. Students have the opportunity to submit multiple drafts for feedback before final grading which is based on accuracy and completeness of the demonstration.

Conclusion

The adult learners in my classes have wholeheartedly embraced this methodology. It allows them significant participation in their learning in the choices of how they complete these assignments. (Some students have even videotaped themselves teaching the content to family members - there's nothing like teaching a concept to someone else to really show your understanding or lack thereof!) It addresses the need for relevance by requiring students to choose the method of demonstration, assuming that choice will reflect the interests of the student. It also meets the adult students' needs for rigor, because these portfolios require a great deal of thought and clarity about what is known and what is not yet completely understood.

In summary, I have taken some of what is known about adult learning theory and applied it to my courses. By utilizing authentic learning portfolios, I create an educational environment for my adult students that allows them to satisfy the needs for relevance, participation and rigor that are so essential to a satisfying learning experience.

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