Reaching Through Teaching   Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Spring 5-1-2005

Volume 16, Number 02

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Reaching Through Teaching

A Journal of the Practice, Philosophy, and Scholarship of College Teaching

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Contributions are solicited from faculty at all colleges and universities. Please submit articles in Microsoft Word to the editor on a disk or as an email attachment (bhill@kennesaw.edu). Graphics must be submitted in jpeg format as a separate file with the manuscript. Starting with the Fall 2003 issue, all submissions must conform to the American Psychological Association publication style. We reserve the right to edit articles in keeping with our editorial practices. We do not accept previously published articles. For additional information on submissions, contact Bill Hill, Director, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Kennesaw State University, 1000 Chastain Road, Mailbox #5400, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591. Phone 770-423-6410.

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Academic Affairs

An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Study of Spanish Literature with Theater

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I hear and I forget
I see and I remember
I do and I understand.
(Old Chinese Proverb)

The current trend in foreign language programs in Georgia, and in fact, most of the country, is for students to study Spanish rather than French or German. American students are quite practical in selecting this language, as it is the most needed in the fields of business, education, and the health professions. The traditional approach to offering a liberal arts degree in Spanish is to begin with 2 years of language courses focusing on the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. However, a definite shift occurs when students declare a major in Spanish and begin upper-level courses. The communicative approach for the language courses becomes a lecture course for literature classes, much like the correspondent classes in first language (L1) literature courses. Students spend the bulk of their time reading and writing outside of class and listening in class. The methodology of second language (L2) teachers calls for a re-orientation of our approach to integrate the teaching of literary texts into the general approach of teaching the target language with attention to all four skills.

Studying the golden-age literature of Spain presents unusual challenges for the typical Spanish major. To begin with, the language of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain is akin to Shakespearean English; that is to say, comprehension is difficult at best because it is laden with archaic terminology and verb conjugations. To add to the mix, Spanish dramaturgy of the period was rhymed and incorporated several types of poetic meter. Cultural/historical context, character analysis, thematic development and authorial intent are other aspects included in examination of the three genres of that period's literature. Current research on learning and reading comprehension indicates that students will not necessarily be able to transfer reading or even study skills from their native language to a foreign language course (Chamot & Kupper, 1989, p. 13) which makes the prospect of teaching literature in L2 classes even more challenging. Abilities to communicate in both speaking and writing are necessary to successfully participate in the learning process without mere rote memorization of facts. Research has long demonstrated that language competence is, in fact, the best predicator of reading success in L2 classes (Alderson, Bastein, & Madrazo, 1977), clearly suggesting that the L2 student must consistently and continually follow the learning curve begun in the introductory and intermediate language classes. If language competence correlates to reading success, the same must hold true for competency in oral proficiency for class discussions and oral presentations. It must continually be developed and practiced then, even in literature courses.

In my experience, Spanish majors often note that it is embarrassing for them to announce to their family and friends that they are specializing in Spanish since the

immediate response is to request that they say something in Spanish. More often than not, they are stymied by a lack of experience in extemporaneous speech and suffer from a severe lack of confidence. Granted, the most difficult of the four skills in a foreign language is that of speaking because it requires the most practice; however, the reality of most foreign language programs is that most classes have 25 to 30 students per class which does not allow for much speaking by the individual student in a 50- or 75-min time period. Given this quandary, it is not surprising that students lament their lack of oral proficiency; what *is* surprising is that despite these constraints, the great majority continue to plod through upper-level literature classes in hopes of learning to speak Spanish well.

The teacher of L2 literature also faces challenges, but of a different sort: we must contextualize the history, culture, and literature of Spain so that students gain an appreciation and understanding of it. However, teachers are reluctant to spend an inordinate amount of time on syntax, phonetics, and vocabulary because literature is necessarily the primary focus of literature courses. The dichotomy between L1 and L2 literature classes begins here because the professor must necessarily pose comprehension questions in depth and address vocabulary enrichment before being able to ask a few—if any—analytical questions. Also, most students are trained to depend entirely upon a professor to explain the meaning and importance of literary canon. Generally the majority of student papers are "reseñas," little more than plot summaries with some of the professor's points regurgitated. Especially for the L2 student whose individual abilities and background may lack the linguistic competence and personal confidence to negotiate meaning on his/her own terms—especially in class discussions, the teacher is expected to interpret and present pre-digested canonical analysis of Spanish literature. As Mueller and Rehorick (1984) ask, "Is it any wonder that colleagues in charge of such courses often express their frustrations at finding their students alienated, resentful, and bored?" (p. 475). The challenge then appears to be how to teach a literature course and, at the same time, advance the speaking skills of L2 students.

Using drama and theater arts to enhance an L2 classroom is not new, but rather common practice in communicative classrooms (e.g., Haggstrom, 1992). The mere role-play of question-and-answer exercises between classmates wherein students practice meeting, greeting, and introducing themselves is standard practice in most beginning-level courses. Games, interviews and oral reports also give the fledgling L2 learner opportunity to speak without textual support. Although these are excellent exercises, it is quite rare for students to hold conversations of any length that are contextualized beyond the classroom. Once in a literature course, developing oral proficiency is virtually abandoned. Of course, the primordial goal of the Golden-Age course is for students to learn to analyze and appreciate literature; but it is not impossible to do so while also improving their ability for spoken discourse.

Using theater, especially comedy, is ultimately the most effective methodology in engaging students in analysis of literary texts. Encouraging them to address a text as a performance medium requires them to become much more critical in approaching the text. According to Frye (1984), "Every effort of criticism is a re-creation" (p. 992). Ideally, as educators we want to develop the creative as well as the cognitive abilities of our L2 students using inductive questions. As both

reader and actor, they must negotiate meaning in written discourse as independent thinkers. They must understand the motivation of their characters as well as the contribution that those characters make to the plot. They learn to appreciate the development of character types, to recognize the appropriate style of expression for different character types. They examine the necessity of scene changes, costume effects, and the symbolism in stage properties of the period. Theatrical roles require the student to participate actively with the literary text, re-creating the text on stage, becoming part of it, just as it becomes part of them.

More importantly from the student's perspective, participating in an L2 theatrical production produces immediate and extremely powerful motivation to study and practice amelioration of pronunciation. Students faced with acting in a play spend an enormous amount of time studying and analyzing the language of the characters in order to render the appropriate reaction on stage and to understand the syntax and vocabulary well enough to deliver the line with the right inflection and intonation. Basic pronunciation and the attendant liaisons or native contractions of words come clearly into focus as students invariably wish to pronounce the words as well as possible. Native speakers can be sought to aid in addressing pronunciation difficulties by tutoring students individually or simply by recording the text for students to study and to practice in the language laboratory.

Krashin (1992) proposed the "Affective Filter Hypothesis" as a means of facilitating student learning. Creating a safe environment means, simply put, an environment where it is not only natural to make mistakes, but normal and even expected as part of the learning process. Most foreign language students hate to be "put on the spot" when the teacher asks a question. They would rather remain passive in class, preferring to be silent rather than be wrong. Within the active context of a play rehearsal, students learn that making mistakes in speaking is not only natural but also an expected part of the learning process.

Another important point to note is that of the role of memory within the theatrical construct. According to McDonough (1981), there are two types of memory abilities: short-term and long-term. He explains that lists of indiscriminate vocabulary words and other concepts are more difficult to retain in long-term memory, especially if there is no context (hence contextualized vocabulary in L2 textbooks), but also if the context is different from that of the original learning. In the classroom L2 students need to be introduced and reminded of new concepts many times before they fully understand and retain them. For the L2 teacher, it is almost impossible to create and to sustain a context for different types of vocabulary while maintaining the same classroom venue and seating arrangements. The freedom that a theatrical stage offers, along with the attendant costumes and props, very quickly allows for contexts to be adapted, rehearsed many times, and committed to memory *physically* as well as mentally. As McDonough explains:

> Any foreign language learner dealing with a new word (which is at first little more than a nonsense syllable to him, after all) needs to encounter that word frequently, perhaps in different contexts as long as the sense is identical, either by voluntary search or by involuntary discovery in texts and exercises. At each encounter the saving of time in recognition or

relearning (which can be equated here) will increase… (p. 65).

The L2 learner is able to revive and to reconstruct language verbally using new syntax and facilitate their vocabulary by the experiential learning completed in scene after scene and rehearsal after rehearsal, thus enabling retention by exposure to language in a variety of situations.

The other important point emphasized by psychologists when examining the challenges of L2 learning is that of motivation. Not to be confused with enthusiasm, student interest arouses energy, enjoyment, and perseverance, but the quality of success depends on the student's own scale of *values* (McDonough, 1981). Within the context of a theatrical presentation, peer pressure of the troupe also contributes as incentive and motivation.

Case Study: Application to a Literature Course

As an experienced actor and director involved in many prior foreign language theatrical productions outside of the classroom setting, I have witnessed the dramatic increase in confidence, self-esteem, interest in, and passion for language learning by L2 students as well as their subsequent facility in oral proficiency. In order to facilitate my students' learning using some of these techniques, I recently prepared a golden-age literature course for a group of 25 Spanish majors who had never acted before and decided to add another discipline as a tactic to re-orienting my approach to literature. I incorporated theatrical presentations in an effort to address three different issues: (a) the lack of development in my students' oral

proficiency skills, (b) their confidence in speaking, and (c) their collective dread of studying literature.

With a series of carefully planned theatrical projects, students would be empowered eventually to appropriate a literary text, to negotiate meaning, and to regenerate the message and flavor of the culture encoded within, on their own linguistic terms. Students would read and then assume interpretive authority by rewriting the text in their own words, thus demonstrating cognitive understanding and exercising syntactical development. After memorizing and rehearsing, they would perform the text as a theatrical presentation, thus ameliorating their facility for speech and gaining confidence.

I had experimented with this approach before with short one-act scenes, but never with literary canon such as the *Trickster of Seville* and *Don Quixote*. This strategy was inspired by Les Essif's (1998) article "Teaching Literary-Dramatic Texts as Culture-in-Process in the Foreign Language Theater Practicum: The Strategy of Combining Texts." As Essif states, "[m]uch of the problem stems not from our recognizing the text as a canonical vehicle of authorial intention, but simply from its status as a text, a finished cultural product" (pp. 24-25). I incorporated other components as well, including class discussions, many guided and open-ended written assignments, debates, and lectures to thoroughly analyze the texts and to address the development of all four linguistic skills.

The first genre, typically the most difficult and agonizing for L2 students is that of poetry. In order to inspire student confidence and to begin training them to speak Spanish in public, I began with the passive exercise of memorizing a sonnet to declaim in class. As the class progressed, we discussed the meter, the rhetoric, the vocabulary, and the musicality of the language. Native speakers in

the language laboratory tended to prefer helping with pronunciation. Students were left to interpret meaning and to relate to the sonnet on their own terms. They rehearsed over and over, feeling out the inflection and the intonation. They studied the meanings of the words, argued the interpretation amongst themselves and spent much more time one on one with the text than if I had assigned it as a reading. Professors from other departments commented that they heard Spanish everywhere on campus: "What is going on?!" Learning that poetry was written, not to be read, but to be declaimed out loud to an audience, the students began to appreciate the beauty of the language and to ameliorate their pronunciation. Grades were based on pronunciation, elocution, inflection, and precise memory; all verbal and mental skills only. I allowed students whose minds went blank to sit down and try again. The particularly sensitive renditions surprised and impressed spectators and they applauded spontaneously for those with creative interpretations. In this atmosphere, students began to encourage each other and applaud as one by one they successfully recited their sonnets.

The next class was a creative attempt to utilize the resources on our campus to build student confidence. The class was held at the Pine Valley Leadership Course. This class period had been carefully scheduled to build verbal confidence and to advance the sense of collaborative learning. Pine Valley was established as part of North Georgia College & State University's leadership training, modeled after the US Army Ranger training ropes course. It offers courses in low ropes and high ropes, as well as several teambuilding exercises to enhance group cohesion, team

communication, and leadership skills. Similar to the Outward Bound experience, this training course removes students from the academic setting and places them in a situation where each person is equally vital to success of the group, much as a theater troupe is dependent upon peer collaboration. It is also particularly designed to push people outside of their comfort zone to develop confidence and their potential to meet new challenges. Special Forces LTC William Shaw, Professor of Military Science at Auburn University, frequently states in speeches and presentations that he tells students in his leadership courses that asking people to achieve something very difficult re-orients their perception of reality and expands their scope as to what is possible to achieve. Setting the environment in a completely different arena wherein they confront the unknown gives them a sense of growth that stimulates individual self-understanding and develops their personal capabilities. Facilitated by two Airborne Rangers, the class spent an hour working together on a few team-building exercises that exploited oral communication skills, particularly that of listening—a skill that is of utmost importance in theater as well as the classroom. They were debriefed after the exercise and discussion focused on problem-solving. This class was conducted entirely in Spanish. Next, students were offered personal challenges: one of which was to climb a 40-foot telephone pole, stand on top, and jump for a trapeze swing about 10 feet away. Of course, safety was primary with expert Rangers facilitating the exercise; but the crucial element was that the exercise is carefully designed to optimize human fear of death. Despite misgivings, students bonded in groups to encourage each other through the challenge. Jumping the "pamper pole"—as it is affectionately called on campus—spoke volumes about their untapped personal resources. To face a very real fear of heights,

in front of spectators, to risk embarrassment and failure, and to be successful, replicated on some level the very real fear of speaking Spanish in public.

The next genre was that of the golden-age novel, *Don Quixote de la Mancha* and some examples of picaresque literature, both wonderfully contrasting texts that incorporate distinct characteristics. As with the group work on poetry, I offered a list of questions about the novels that students discussed in small groups in class and summed up as oral reports at the end of class. My role was to proffer inductive questions to explore, guiding their discoveries, facilitating the discussion—but never controlling the outcome. It was gratifying to see them self-correct, both with grammar and understanding of the texts. After analysis of the texts, I implemented Vygotsky's theory (Prawat, 1993) for peer-teaching/learning in small groups and had students self-select groups of 4 to 5 for the novel project. I assigned students to write a 5 min monologue for one of the characters in the novels. They were to consider the language and the spirit of the character as well as the author's intent. This project required--but inspired--all to read the text with great care. This exercise was not designed to challenge the objective authority of the text; rather, it was to advocate expressing creative communication between L2 student learners and literary canon as both a cultural and communal process (Essif, 1998). Each group monitored all grammar, practiced pronunciation, and even came up with costumes for the class presentation. The students' language learning process continued within the context of mutually supportive peer groups, distinctly different from the teacher-centered lecture class.

I was very pleased with their individual presentations but, frankly, shocked at how well they encapsulated the crux of each character. For Quixote, his age, his insanity, and his powerful sense of honor all came across unmistakably; but the humor, the wit, and the "feel" of the text they wrote was surprisingly spot on. Their knowledge and understanding of the characters profoundly affected their appreciation of the literature; they had critically analyzed the text for character development using all four skills in small groups to produce their own creative text, but they had each individually stepped into the role of verbalizing this subjunctive interpretation as an actor. Studies have demonstrated that simulation and language learning may be seen as mutually supporting since simulation encourages language learning (Crookall & Oxford, 1990). Although a simulation of extemporaneous speech, this activity culminated in developing oral communication skills and bolstering student confidence.

After the success of the second project, the enthusiasm for the class and confidence in their abilities had mushroomed such that the final project was accepted with cheers. We began the final phase of study: the theater of Tirso de Molina, Lope de Vega, and Calderon de la Barca. The first two projects had been carefully structured to build up their pronunciation, memory skills and confidence, to empower them to analyze a text and to communicate it creatively with their own level of verbal expression. The final project was for the class to choose a three-act play among those we read, to rewrite it in modern Spanish and to perform it for a *public* audience. Instead of groans or panic attacks, students met the project with cheers!

I divided the class into three small groups and each chose an act to write. I limited each act to 10, double-spaced pages, telling them to reduce and to regenerate the

text into the critical information, important character development, and any creative flavor they perceived as necessary for maintaining the spirit of the text. The textual reduction was not as dramatically minimalist as that of Essif's (1998) production of *Le Roi Ubu*, but it allowed students to negotiate meaning of the script as an author as well as a performer. I made all students responsible for equal amounts of text, and each exchanged scripts to monitor grammar and plot snafus, and to critique ideas of the others. In rehearsals, I taught them the basics of theatrical presentation for blocking, projecting their voices, stance and sightlines, gestures, and suggestions about how to deliver lines. We had discussed character delivery in the context of group discussions wherein a king spoke and acted like a king, a servant like a servant, etc., and the students reflected that in the scripts they wrote and in the choices they made as to whom roles were assigned.

There were two presentations of the play and it was successful for many reasons. The students churned out a 30-page authentic text in Spanish as a collaborative class project, with everyone having input on each aspect of it. Although none had theatrical experience, they embraced the challenge of walking out on stage to perform in Spanish with less hesitation than they had shown when asked to climb a 40-foot telephone pole. They received standing ovations at both performances. As with all good theater, it was magical to see an electric performance of students, transformed into playwrights, actors, and classic characters on stage—speaking clearly in beautiful Spanish.

Conclusions

Specific benefits to using this approach to literature include the following:

- Students of literature discovered a passion for theater.
- This approach offered unparalleled motivation to study Spanish, increased a willingness to learn, and encouraged the enjoyment of literature.
- It focused student attention on linguistic expression, syntax, pronunciation, and inflection of both written and spoken Spanish.
- It engaged students in an intensely collaborative process of reading, writing, listening, and speaking and offered them the opportunity to learn to work together as a team.
- It taught students to negotiate meaning of a literary text on their own terms and to communicate that comprehension in authentic (if simplified) texts, thus experiencing the perspective of the authorial process.
- This approach led students to a much more profound understanding and appreciation of classical Spanish literature within the context of the Golden-Age period.
- It was very successful in bolstering individual self-confidence both in oral expression and public speaking that carried over into subsequent Spanish courses.
- Students developed the capacity for applying interpretive analysis of Spanish texts and practiced the skills for recognizing plot development, character analysis and the roles of scene/act divisions.
- Students participated actively in controlling their own educational experience in an entirely new context.

- Students further developed their capacity for coping with unfamiliar challenges and broadened their formal education in literature with the experience of having performed on stage in Spanish.

This interdisciplinary approach to the study of Spanish literature using theatrical presentations exploits and supports experiential education and contextual learning. Students are engaged in highly expressive active communication related directly to their comprehension of the literary texts studied. This approach enriched the course experience, but it also created multiple contexts for understanding both the written and the spoken word. The processes during preparation for the performance as well as the performance itself resulted in many benefits related to language learning, increased oral proficiency, as well as critical thinking.

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Reaching Outside the Classroom:
Service-Learning and Community Awareness Projects

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In an effort to expand learning beyond the classroom, a Victimology course used service learning and a Victims' Awareness Fair to engage students in volunteering with victim-related agencies and reaching out to the community. This paper discusses the details of the service learning requirement and the Victims' Awareness Fair, and offers a number of suggestions for improving these types of activities in the future.

Service-learning has increased dramatically over the past several years. Campus Compact conducted a survey in 2000 and found that 712,000 students were participating in service-learning, which was 24,000 more than the previous year (Steffes, 2004). Service-learning has been defined as a "course-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 222). Service-learning has been shown to be effective and to have many benefits. These include (a) enhancing "student engagement with and commitment to school," (b) preparing "students to be contributing citizens in their community," (c) impacting "students' social and emotional development," and (d) enhancing "achievement of the curricular goals of the courses in which it is embedded" (Strage, 2004, p. 257).

In the spring semester of 2004, my Victimology course utilized a service learning project. Victimology can be defined as "the scientific study of the physical, emotional, and financial harm people suffer because of criminal activities…[including] the impact of the injuries and losses inflicted by offenders [and] the handling of victims by the criminal justice system" (Karmen, 2004, p. 9). The experience was specific to the course, in that students in the course were required to volunteer 12 hours with an agency that helps victims of crime or works to decrease victimization. The goal of this project was to help students learn what is useful in helping victims of crime and ways to decrease victimization in our society, which pertains to the objectives of the course. The course objectives included (a) demonstrating an understanding of the role of victims in the criminal justice system, (b) discussing social implications of victimization, and (c) offering policy ideas to improve treatment of victims and reduce victimization in our society. This project provided students with hands-on experience in order to gain a further understanding of victims in our society.

Students completed a write-up of their experiences and submitted a form verifying their hours. The information in the write-up included an overview of the agency, program description, administrative structure, and their individual experience. Questions relating to program description included purpose/mission of agency, who were the clients, what outreach did they have, and how did they measure success.

Administrative structure included discussing the organizational structure, funding source(s), and whether the agency was public, private, non-profit, or for-profit. Students discussed their experience in terms of what they did, their opinion of the experience, what they learned about victims, and why the particular agency was important for victims.

The Victimology course that used these projects was an upper-level course of 36 students who were mostly Criminal Justice majors (75%). The other majors included Psychology (3%), Undeclared (3%), Chemistry (6%), Sociology (8%), and Management (6%). For the scope of this paper, I will focus on the students' experiences. The method used was content analysis as the write-ups included narratives from students. The research questions analyzed were (a) what was the extent of involvement of students, (b) what was the student's opinion of the experience, and (c) what did the student learn about victims?

Service Learning Project

Method and Analysis

In order to conduct content analysis, I grouped answers to certain questions from the student write-ups. This involved cutting the answers out from the printed write-up and pasting the answers to sheets of paper, keeping the answers to one particular question together. This process ensured that answers would not be associated with any particular student, thus maintaining anonymity for students. First, I used open coding to underline words and phrases that were associated with my research questions. Second, I created categories for the main themes which emerged during the open coding. Next, I color-coded the text using a highlighter to indicate the category to which it belonged. Finally, I looked at the

relationships between the categories and concepts in terms of the range to put together a summary of students' responses.
Results

To answer the first question, I looked at responses to the question "what did you do?" Through the process of open coding, I found four main categories of activities. Students were involved in actual participation and helping, observation, administrative work, and training. Thus, the extent of involvement varied from direct contact and assisting victims to performing administrative duties. A few students had more of a "hands-on" experience with their agency. These hands-on experience cited by students included the following: (a) speak with a client, (b) fill out a TPO, (c) taking on the role of a child and family advocate, (d) evaluate the child's situation, (d) playing with children while parents were in therapy session, (e) phone intakes, (f) pick up donations, (g) conducted interviews, (h) collected information pertaining to the case through interviews and examining files, and (j) helped kids with their homework

Many students were limited in their involvement with an agency because of training requirements. As one stated, "due to the training, I was limited to what I could do." These students were involved more with observation and administrative activities. Observations included watching videos, reviewing materials, observing staff interaction with clients, sitting in on groups, talking to employees, and shadowing a staff member. Administrative activities included taking inventory, organizing supplies, photocopying, filing, faxing, preparing materials to be sent out, inputting information into the computer, and answering the phones. As one student described, she played "a supporting role." Another stated that her administrative work

for the agency allowed "other employees to conduct more vital tasks."

Although some students did not experience much interaction with victims, their experience met the goal of service learning in many respects. Students sought out volunteer opportunities themselves, thus discovering the needs of the community. Additionally, their sense of civic responsibility was enhanced as they were allowed to complete tasks and were appreciated by the agency. By not directly working with victims, some students were at a disadvantage because their work was not completely related to the course content and they did not have the opportunity to apply their knowledge at the volunteer site. However, I believe that they gained an understanding of how non-profit agencies work and what goes on behind the scenes for agencies serving victims. This is something that does not much coverage in the course, but is important for students and citizens to understand. There are a number of support personnel helping those that help victims and sometimes we forget to acknowledge the importance of their work in the victim movement.

In all capacities, students reported many benefits from their experience. They reported they learned a lot, enjoyed their experiences, and found the staff at these agencies to be very supportive and helpful. Many students reported some type of change during their service experience. One stated, "it did open my eyes to some very serious social concerns. I never really thought about the extent of the work that social work entails, but this experience gave me a new perspective." Another said, "my interest in criminal justice was a little undecided prior to getting the opportunity to experience [service site]….I think this area may be what I have been looking for not only a need I have but to make a difference for others." A

number of students said they plan to continue their work either as volunteers or as interns.

As far as what students learned about victims, common responses were "anyone can become a victim," "there are far more victims…than one would ever imagine," "a lot more should be done to help victims get justice," "victims are affected in so many different ways," "victims are just as human as everyone else," and "domestic violence not only effects the guardians, but also the children." As these were things that we discussed in class and students read in their texts, having first-hand experience really made them see the reality.

Discussion

This service-learning activity allowed students to gain a further understanding of victimology. Our class discussed domestic violence and the effects it has on victims, but as students worked in these agencies, the reality they experienced in their service learning project heightened their learning experience. As one student stated, "I took away from this a better understanding of what really goes on behind the scenes at a shelter." As some students reported they planned to continue volunteering or serve as an intern for their agency, I believe this experience did enhance their sense of civic responsibility. These students were able to contribute to the community, realize the importance of volunteers in these agencies, and achieve the goals I set out for the experience. The first objective of the course requires students to understand the role of victims in the criminal justice system. We discussed the experiences of victims with the criminal justice system and other victim service agencies in class; however, this experience allowed many students to see victims going through the criminal justice process. By working with these agencies, students

enhanced their knowledge of social implications of victimization. Finally, this experience allowed students to engage in class discussions to offer policy ideas to improve treatment of victims and reduce victimization in our society.

Victim Awareness Fair

In addition to the individual service-learning project, I had the students in the class work as a group to organize an informational fair on victim issues for students at the university. Because the course was taught in the spring when the April National Crime Victims' Rights Week occurs during the month of April, the class sponsored and organized a Victims' Awareness Fair during one day of that week between the hours of 12:00 and 5:00 p.m. The purpose of this fair was to participate in the national initiative by sponsoring an educational fair on campus on the topics of victims' rights and services.

Students participated in a variety of ways. I set up seven groups of students to handle different aspects of the event: advertising, coordinating with on-campus organizations, agency recruitment, setup, cleanup, administrative services, and attending booths. The advertising group put up flyers around campus and made a banner for the student center to advertise the event. The group who coordinated with on-campus organizations teamed up with the Criminal Justice Student Organization to help plan and attend the event. They also contacted a number of other on-campus organizations to help advertise the event. The agency recruitment group contacted victim organizations to find participants for the fair and compiled a list of attendees and times. Those for Setup and Cleanup were responsible for making the booth arrangements, setting up and cleaning up

after the event. The group for administrative services prepared name badges for students, signs for booths, handouts from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), and wrote thank-you letters to participants. Members of the attending booths group were responsible to offer help as needed, answer questions, and direct students and organizational volunteers.

Organizations participating in the event included: Prevention & Motivation Programs, Inc. - Good-Touch/Bad-Touch, Marietta Probation Office, CASA for Children, Inc. – Cherokee County, Georgia Department of Corrections – Victim Services, Cobb County Domestic Violence Project, Crime Victim Advocacy, and Appalachian Children's Center. We had a booth for each organization, booths for the materials from OVC, refreshments, and a raffle. A few students came up with the idea of a raffle and obtained donations to use in the raffle. The proceeds from this event benefited Good-Touch/Bad-Touch. We chose this organization because a number of students completed their service learning project with them, they participated in the Victims' Awareness Fair, and they are a small organization who could really use the money. The agency was able to use the money to buy teddy bears they use in the program to teach children about good touches.

Overall, the event was mildly successful. It would have been better with more agencies attending and if it had attracted more students. The event was attended by roughly 60 to 70 students outside of the class. As a first time, however, the class and I were pleased with the outcome. For the next year, advertising and recruiting agencies are the main concerns. Students discussed what they thought would improve the event and provided suggestions relating to advertising,

agency involvement, on-campus organizations, and overall changes needed. For advertising, students suggested e-mailing all students and faculty, posting more flyers around campus, having bigger signs all over the campus, offering incentives to come, having students in the class give out flyers to people around the student center, posting an announcement on the school public web site, and having instructors make announcements in their classes. In response to these suggestions, the number of people on the advertising committee will increase from 3 to 6. Additionally, all students will be responsible for helping with advertising. For agency involvement, students suggested that agencies come in at different time periods or make sure they stay the whole time, having more agencies, recruiting agencies earlier, focusing on potential victims of crime and how to prevent becoming a victim, and making each person responsible for one agency to either attend or send information. In the future, all students in the course will be responsible for recruiting off-campus agencies and on-campus organizations and obtaining confirmations of attendance at least 2 weeks before the event. The students in the on-campus recruitment group did not do a very good job on this. I will need to follow-up with all groups more regularly to ensure that things are getting done.

Some other suggestions included (a) having the fair outside to be more visible to students, (b) shorter length of time (change from 5 hours to 2 hours), (c) changing the day of the fair (from Monday to Tuesday during the time that no classes are held), and (d) having students dress professionally.

These items will be taken into account for the Second Annual Victims' Awareness Fair to achieve greater success.

Conclusions

These two out-of-class service-learning opportunities provided students with additional learning experiences that they enjoyed, found rewarding, and learned a lot from. In the area of victimology, I felt these projects were essential to students' learning because students learned more about victims and the services that are out there for victims. Students were able to observe this first-hand in their volunteer work and, in some cases, provide services to victims themselves. They were also able to share this knowledge with the campus community through the fair. These two service-learning projects are ideal for anyone in the helping professions, and can be used individually for courses in a number of areas.

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Differentiated Instruction and Assessment in the College Classroom

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Although I have been teaching future educators for over five years in a department that embraces a constructivist teaching philosophy, I never fully taught a course in a constructivist way. Sure, I have modeled these methods and always have my students role play by acting as if they are school children learning in a constructivist classroom. But, these methods were merely contrivances of how an orthodox constructivist classroom would operate.

As an assistant professor in the midst of mid-tenure review, I was afraid that if I did not teach the way I wanted my students to teach, the department chair, the dean, and even the president might find out about it! My cathartic moment came after a discussion I had with a class comprised of early childhood education seniors where they complained that, although the education faculty expected them to teach young children through a constructivist philosophy, few in the department were "teachin' as they were preachin'." After much thought about this discussion, I decided to go for it. Not only did I believe that it was critically important to design a class based entirely on constructivist principles, I also chose to showcase the course to my peer-review team and superiors during my mid-tenure review.

Theoretical Framework for the Course

Maybe the most frustrating teacher educator lament is: Why don't our graduates teach the way they were taught to teach? Infused in most accredited teacher programs is a constructivist philosophy grounded in developmental theory of the child. Yet when we visit our local schools, we are hard pressed to find much, if any, evidence of child-centered pedagogy. It is quite apparent that there is a great disconnect between the teacher education curriculum and teacher practice in the field. Julie Ranier (1999) makes an important point when she asks how we can expect teachers to teach constructively if they were not taught constructively in their teacher education program. Ranier and Guyton (2001) suggest that teacher educators implement the primary principles of constructivism in teacher preparation to transform their students. When teachers build upon prior knowledge, students begin to build personal understandings. What this means is that teachers need to be learning facilitators rather than dispensers of knowledge (Phillips, 1995).

Learning is mostly an affective, dramatic, and emotional event that requires instruction that consumes the learner's whole being in the process. As opposed to strategies grounded in behaviorism, this process values creativity by constructing new connections. Fundamental to constructivism, learning that can be transferred to situations outside the classroom is first taught at the conceptual level (Fishman & McCarthy, 1998). This means that for true learning to occur the learner must actively participate in the process. While constructivism is not a prescriptive theory for curriculum, certain of its strategies promote a creation of an active learning environment. What seems to work best are those methods that are cooperative in nature, manifested in the many forms of differentiated instruction throughout the curriculum. One of the primary objectives of

differentiated instruction is that it acknowledges that not all students learn the same way. By being offered instructional choices, students can use the learning style or styles that work best for them. The differentiated instructional process begins with an assessment of the students' prior knowledge and experiences. Following this assessment, differentiated instruction uses strategies such as the project method approach, presentations, reciprocal teaching, discussion, aesthetic experiences, peer-to-peer teaching, cooperative learning and discovery learning. Writing reflections are most certainly key components of instruction as they are occasions for the students to examine their feelings about concepts. Learning in such an environment positions the teacher as a facilitator, rather than as a lecturer, meaning that although the teacher organizes, manages and creates the learning environment, it is the students who are actively involved in the teaching and learning process (Thomlinson, 1999).

There are formidable barriers to teaching constructively in the higher education setting. As Ranier (1999) concedes, constructivist teaching is a complicated affair because the power relationships extant in the academy do not support the above principles. Probably the biggest hurdle to overcome is in the area of content knowledge and assessment. Because there are specific content and assessment requirements associated with every higher education course, the chosen teaching philosophy and strategies must satisfy these specific content and assessment objectives. Seemingly at odds with these desired outcomes, constructivist teaching values the learner's own personal meaning gained from the experience. This was my challenge, to teach through constructivist principles while meeting the objectives set forth by the department and the college.

Rather than begin the process with questions such as "How do we best cover the topic?" or "What learning experiences should we use?", Wiggins and McTighe (2001) suggest a backwards design where the process begins by determining what the learner must perform to demonstrate understanding. That is, one begins at the end.

Drawing from the work of Wiggins and McTighe (2001), the first step in the process is to determine what goals and standards are desired. Next, determine what evidence would clearly show that the goal and standard has been satisfied. Third, plan learning experiences and instruction that are the most effective. In Wiggins and McTighe's backward curricular design, one must think like an assessor when specific performances are required by the curriculum.

After the desired goals are determined, Wiggins and McTighe (2001) recommend that these goals and standards be prioritized into three categories: (a) worth being familiar with, (b) important to know and do, and (c) enduring understandings. The category *worth being familiar with* pertains to those things we want our students to hear, read, view and encounter. The *important to know and do* group describes the knowledge and skills that we believe are essential to the course. *Enduring understandings* are big ideas that transcend beyond the classroom, lie at the heart of the course, and are deemed important and interesting by the student.

Among the desired goals, those placed in the *enduring understandings* category are clearly the most important, because when the learning experience is truly transformational, it is personally meaningful, thus rarely forgotten. Yet there are times when it is most effective to transmit *worth being familiar with* knowledge, and there are other times when knowledge and skills that are *important to*

know and do become a process of discovery through a transaction with the teacher.

John Miller (1996) framed these three orientations to teaching as transmission, transaction, and transformational positions. Miller described the transmission position as an orientation where learners acquire information by reading text or listening to a lecture. The transactional position is one where the learner is engaged in an active dialogue with the teacher to discover the answer to the problem posed by the teacher. Through a transformation position, the learner is encouraged to make novel connections that are personally and socially meaningful. It is essential that future teachers are prepared to teach for both individual and social meaning – to teach for transformation (Fishman & McCarthy, 1998).

Linda Nilson (2004) ranked various types of instruction based on the educational objectives desired. Lecture, recitation, and discussion should be used to transmit knowledge and assess comprehension of content. Writing and speaking exercises, ungraded in-class activities, cooperative learning, peer-to-peer feedback, case method and problem-based learning methods are used to encourage discovery and transactions with others. When a personal or social transformation is desired, Nilson suggests that the teacher choose dialogue, inquiry-based learning, role plays, simulations and games and service learning with reflection to achieve this goal. When Nilson's taxonomy is blended with Miller's (1996) teaching positions and Wiggins and McTighe's (2001) curricular design, a planning template can be formed (see Table 1).

Doll's (1993) scholarship is particularly instrumental for planning because it helps us negotiate a break from a traditional view of teaching and learning while, at the same time, providing a

Table 1.
Planning Template

Teaching Position	Curricular Priority	Type of Assessment	Type of Instruction
Transmission	Worth being familiar with	Traditional Quizzes and Tests	Lecture, Recitation, Discussion
Transaction	Important to know and do	Traditional Quizzes and Tests or Performance Tasks and Projects	Writing and Speaking Exercises, Ungraded In-class Activities, Cooperative Learning, Peer-to-Peer Feedback, Case Method, Problem–Based Learning
Transformation	Enduring understandings	Performance Tasks and Projects	Dialogue, Inquiry-Based Learning, Role Plays, Simulations and Games, Service Learning with Reflection

traditional view of teaching and learning while, at the same time, providing a framework from which a curriculum that meets our goals and standards can be developed. In Doll's words, "The concept of transformation is central to curriculum— thereby transforming curriculum materials, thoughts, and participants" (Doll, pp. 162-163). As Doll illuminates the messy, indeterminate aspects of learning, he also gives this indeterminable learning process a frame from which we can plan and assess our students' performance. Doll situates the transformational learning process into four general constructs: *richness, recursion, relations, and rigor*.

Doll (1993) defines *richness* in the curriculum as a text that strives for deep, multiple meanings and possibilities. For the learner to be transformed, it is important that the curriculum not be highly structured or rigid with regard to desired outcomes. Of course, we want desired outcomes, but we want the ownership of these outcomes to be the learner's. This is why the curriculum should be somewhat flexible to allow room for the instructor and the learner to negotiate the content, form, and style of the evidence required as proof to demonstrate that the goal has been satisfied.

What Doll (1993) means by *recursion* is an iteration of experiences that interlock with one another. Rather than isolated activities, a recursive curriculum has a holistic quality which allows for reflection. Recursion is closely linked to the concept of *relations* because the interlock developed provides opportunities to connect everything together. When recursion and relations are concomitant processes operating within the curriculum, the learner can begin to see the big picture that the structure is trying to paint.

Probably the most important aspect of the curriculum is *rigor*. Rigor is essential for transformation because it prevents the curriculum from "falling into either rampant relativism or sentimental solipsism" (Doll, 1993, p. 181). To be sure, there are many definitions of rigor. Aristotelean logic states, "quod est demonstratum" (thus, it is demonstrated), while in Descartes's rational mind, rigor is defined as that which "no reasonable person could doubt" (Doll, p. 182). These two ways of thinking are based on observations that can be measured and manipulated with precision. Doll challenges us to think in a different way when he warns that quantitative measurement is often incorrect. Rather than a closed-system approach toward a definition of rigor, Doll suggests that we evaluate our students based on their novel interpretations, connections, combinations, and playfulness with ideas. We want to see to what degree the student has uncovered hidden assumptions and offered new possibilities about the topic.

At first, Doll's (1993) ideas may appear to be too open-ended for freshmen and sophomore students to handle. Then again, perhaps this is the transformational method that can break the "give the teachers what they want" pattern learned so well by most students in most high schools.

Planning the Course

Using Wiggins and McTighe's (2001) backward design, I began the planning process by mapping out the sequence as follows:

Step 1. Determine what my goals as well as the department's desired goals are for the course.

Step 2. Prioritize these desired goals into Wiggins and McTighe's three categories.

Step 3. Create performance assessments and evaluation rubrics.

Step 4. Select instructional methods

Step 1. Determine the Department's and My Desired Goals for the Course

The content and concepts that I had to satisfy through this introductory course were issues germane to the teaching profession. Although I was compelled to cover the essentials mandated by the state, such as professional ethics and standards, there were departmental objectives that were stated in the course catalog in such a way that allowed for much flexibility and experimentation. Exceptionality, diversity, curriculum, accountability, contemporary issues, educational history, and law were among the topics that had to be addressed. While teaching this content was essential, my primary goal was to transform my students to think about teaching in a totally different way.

Step 2. Prioritize These Desired Goals into Wiggins and McTighe's (2001) Three Categories

The enduring understanding that I wanted my students to ink indelibly into their psyche was the theory of constructivist teaching and how to put it into practice. What I thought were important things to know were the professional standards, exceptionality, curriculum, accountability, and the law. I also thought that it was essential to know the importance of celebrating diversity, the effects of the back-to-basics revolution on schools, and their ethical responsibilities as an educator. While I thought that it was worth being familiar with educational history, I was more concerned about the concepts that transcend educational history rather than yearning for my students to recall the date when Horace Mann became education secretary of Massachusetts. The same for the monikers given to specific constructivist strategies and techniques, worth being familiar with, but not the big idea that I wanted them to come away with from the course (see Table 2).

Step 3. Create Performance Assessments and Evaluation Rubrics

Evolving from an analysis of the prioritized desired goals, I decided that the evidence should be presented in three ways: (a) individually, (b) through permanent cooperative groups, and (c) through flexible cooperative groups. Next, I created a calendar that showed when each assignment was due and how it was to be presented. Although individual accountability was essential, it was also critically important that students learn socially through peer-to-peer and group opportunities. Thus, I assigned learners to permanent cooperative groups, which I named intra-group teams. For specific presentations, they were also required to join with members from other intra-groups to form temporary groups, which I called inter-groups.

I described specific details about how to satisfy the requirements for each assignment in a section of the syllabus

Table 2.
Prioritizing the Course Curriculum

Priority	Desired Goals
Worth being familiar with	Educational history, facts about constructivist teaching
Important to know and do	Professional standards, exceptionality, diversity, contemporary issues, ethics, curriculum, accountability, and law
Enduring understandings	Know the theory of constructivist teaching and how to put it into practice

called Requirements for Assignments. One requirement for every presentation was that it was to be an aesthetic experience where the content was delivered through an art form such as drama, dance, song, visual representations, and/or video. Given its propensity to become a hi-tech lecturing surrogate, PowerPoint was not an option. Another requirement was that the presentations be interactive with many opportunities for other students to actively participate.

While I was the sole evaluator for the individual assignments, the other students in the class and I jointly evaluated the intra-group and inter-group assignments using a pre-prepared rubric. Also, I required students to evaluate their own performance, as well as the others in their teams, using a questionnaire that asked among other things, "How well did your group work together?"

I used the portfolio assessment method as a comprehensive assessment tool to demonstrate the students' accomplishments holistically in a coherent, organized way. Through a narrative included in the portfolio, the students had the opportunity to weight their individual assignments and group assignments from lowest to highest. As required by my college, a summative final examination, worth 30%, evaluated my students' competencies with regard to the required concepts and content.

Step 4. Select Instructional Methods

The instruction strategies and assessment methods that the students would use were: aesthetic experience, discussion, hands-on learning, peer-to-peer teaching, reciprocal teaching, project method, reflective writing, and discovery learning through research, peer critique, self assessment, and assessment by the professor.

The first individual assignment in the

course was a reflective essay called "The End of Your Life." In this essay, I directed students to write about what accomplishments, both professional and personal, they had achieved at the end of their lives. The idea behind the assignment was to challenge the students to envision themselves as a teacher. There was a field experience component to the course where the students assisted a teacher of elementary or middle-grades children in a local school for 2 hours per week. I also assigned an individual reflection about this field experience to help them decide if a teaching career was in their future.

Because I wanted my students to get a feel for voices that were challenging the dominant discourse in this era of educational reform and accountability, my required texts were: Christensen and Karp's (2003) *Rethinking School Reform*, Swope and Miner's (2000) *Failing Our Kids: Why the Testing Craze Won't Fix Our Schools* and A.S. Neil's (1992) classic free-school book, *Summerhill: A New View of Childhood*. Using *Rethinking School Reform* and *Failing Our Kids: Why the Testing Craze Won't Fix Our Schools,* the students in their intra-groups decided who among them would teach them the texts. Through this peer-to peer teaching strategy, the student responsible for a particular part of the readings wrote a summary and taught the content to the other group members. In addition to peer-to-peer teaching, there were three individual reflective writing assignments, where the students related the concepts expressed by A. S. Neill in *Summerhill* with their personal feelings about how they view childhood and teaching.

Given that my college draws students who attended mostly traditional public schools, I thought that it was important to get them thinking about

different approaches to schooling. To bring about an awareness that there are other ways to educate children, 10 inter-groups were formed to give presentations about Waldorf, Friends, Montessori, Foxfire, elite, home, Afro-centric, same-sex, gay schools, and free schools.

Because understanding the fundamentals of different curricular orientations is an important aspect of this introductory course in education, I designed assignments, named "Biographical Sound Bites," that required students to present the main idea of each theory as told by key scholars in the field. The five Biographical Sound Bites were titled: The Essentialists, The Progressives, The Perrennialists, The Social Reconstructionists, and Contemporary Curriculum Theorists.

Scheduled along with the 10 alternative schools and the 5 curricular orientation presentations, 6 more inter-groups were formed to address specific topics in education. The Children's Books group exposed class, race, and gender bias in children's literature while the Textbook Detective group checked widely used textbooks for historical accuracy. The Pop Culture group showed the influence of popular culture on student learning, whereas the Professional Organizations group and the Ethics, Professionalism, and the Law group presented the pedagogical, ethical, and legal issues that affect education today.

Given these teaching and learning strategies, the students decided what concepts were worth knowing and what performance method would best deliver the content to the rest of the class. This was the scary part for me because I was required to cover certain concepts and content, yet at the same time, I had to respect the students' judgment about what meant the most to them. Another fear I had was that at the end of the negotiations there would be an unequal work distribution among individuals in the respective groups. Although I must admit that I was unsure about all of this at the time, my gut kept telling me to trust the students.

Getting the Class Prepared for this Style of Teaching

On the first day of class I made inquiries about how they had been taught in the past. I found out that none of the students participated in a course where peer assessments, differentiated instruction, and evaluation were practiced. Only 3 of my 33 students had ever experienced cooperative group work at the college level. Some expressed concerns that cooperative work has serious drawbacks, particularly when it comes to slackers. After reflecting on the first day, I was dubious that these students could handle what was about to happen in this class. Although I had these misgivings, turning back at this point was surely not an option. The cat was already out of the bag.

On the second day, I assigned each student to one of eight intra-group teams. Because there was much out-of-classroom work required, I formed these groups based on where the student resided, thinking that those who lived in the same dormitory could meet more easily. Although there were some questions about what would be required for each assignment, it appeared that all eight groups' negotiation went very well. As an assignment to be turned in on the third day, I asked each group to give me their contracts for the rest of the semester.

On the third day, groups submitted their contracts with the assurance by everyone that they had all of the assignments covered. When I looked at them over the following weekend, I found the work distribution to be quite fair. Based on their learning styles and personality types, some chose to do more of the readings and teach that content while others jumped at the opportunity to work with others to give

performances to the whole class.

On the fourth day of class, I asked the first inter-group that was scheduled to present a performance to the whole class, called "Biographical Sound Bites, the Essentialists," to meet with me after class. It was during these after-class meetings that I gave the groups some direction and suggested specific readings for the topic. At these meetings, students decided who among them would research a particular aspect of the topic's content. Perhaps the most difficult part of these after class meetings was reaching a consensual time when they all could meet to decide how they were going to teach the content through an aesthetic experience. I warned them that the after-class meetings would not adjourn until a commitment was made to meet again and that missing the out-of-class group meeting was equivalent to an absence from a regularly scheduled class meeting time. These after-class meetings became a regular event with groups that were scheduled next to perform on the course calendar.

At the end of each class, I required those in the inter-group who led the performance, or the student who led an intra-group session, to submit a possible test question for the final examination. I shared these questions with everyone in the class with the assurance that I would only choose questions for the final from the ones submitted. The only provision was that the questions had to be conceptual in nature. Finally, if there was a performance given during the class period, the students who gave the performance completed a self-evaluation while non-participants completed peer evaluations.

Student Feedback

I wrestled with how to gather quality data about my students' perceptions of how the class was taught and how much they thought they learned. What I decided to do was to solicit their comments using a list of the constructivist strategies used during the class. The students were asked to comment on each of the statements listed in Table 3.

Table 3.
Statements to Which Students Were to Write Evaluation Comments

Aesthetic Experience is delivering content through visual arts, drama, electronic media, etc. One requirement for your presentations is for them to be an *Aesthetic Experience.*

Assessing Others, sometimes referred to as *Peer Critique,* is where the students evaluate one another. The intent of this assessment method is to illuminate the perceptions of others.

The guiding philosophy of the Education Department is *Constructivism,* a theory where students are active in the learning process, learning is enjoyable yet rigorous, and the students make their own meaning. By being taught in a constructivist college classroom, are you learning how to teach in this way?

With regards to *Content and Concepts Learned,* how does the teaching and evaluation methods compare to traditional ways of teaching and assessing?

Table 3 (continued).

In *Cooperative Learning,* the student does not compete against any individual student. Because the strategy draws from the strengths of each person in the group, advocates of cooperative learning say that the sum is greater than its parts, meaning that collective effort results in deeper understandings.

Discussion is used after the student has been introduced to a new concept. I choose to use discussion after a reading assignment.

Interactivity, sometimes called *hands-on learning*, has the student active in the learning process. One requirement for your presentations is for them to be interactive.

One of the primary objectives of differentiated instruction is that it acknowledges that not all students learn the same way. By offering instructional choices, students can use the *Learning Style* (s) that works best for them.

The theory behind *Peer-to-Peer Teaching* is that students learn much from each other. Our reading journal assignments are examples of *Peer-to-Peer Teaching.*

Presentation is a technique used in *reciprocal teaching*, where the student becomes the teacher.

The *Project Method* is a teaching strategy that can be either cooperative or individual. Your intra-group and inter-group presentations are group projects while your portfolio is an individual project.

Writing *Reflections* is an occasion for the students to examining their feelings about concepts. Reflections were used in response to the book, *Summerhill*.

Using *Research* as a teaching strategy is a type of *discovery learning,* where the student independently finds and interprets knowledge. When I direct your group to research through specific sources or ask your group to include certain concepts or content, that is *discovery learning.*

An example of reflection as a learning strategy, *Self Assessment* is where you evaluate your own performance.

Teacher Assessment is where the professor evaluates your work based on the assignment and in comparison with the work of others.

Teacher as Facilitator, *rather than as a lecturer, means that although the professor organizes, manages and creates the learning environment, it is the students who are actively involved in the teaching and learning process.*

Overall
Please make any comments about how *satisfied* you are with the class.

The ultimate basis for this decision was that I wanted to use student evaluations as a heuristic to teach the labels given to the overarching concepts that I thought were worth knowing.

Data Analysis

I broke the data gathered from the students' feedback into recurrent themes to illuminate similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To paint a picture of how my students felt about the course, I selected representative responses to make connections among the recurrent themes.

Overwhelmingly, the responses about the aesthetic experiences described them as fun and creative. The aesthetic experiences made learning more entertaining, interesting, and interactive, holding the attention of the students. Comments such as: "I will remember things better"; "Good form of showing what you know"; "Delivered the material in real life, not boring books"; "Addressed our learning styles"; "Gave us a better understanding of the topic and it really got the class involved" were representative selections, which suggest that the students perceived aesthetic performances as useful strategies. There were, however, two comments that gave me pause to think: "I'm not sure if the class is sure about which is more important – the creativity of the project or the detailed information" and "Students paid too much attention to the art and not enough on the content." Although only 2 students out of 33 expressed this feeling, I believe that it is important to listen to this particular critique because the first priority for the performances is that they must meet their conceptual and content objectives.

Those who found the peer-to-peer assessments useful made comments such as "you learn about others and can see different work styles," "showed us what everyone else thinks of us," and "helps the other students to understand their own progress and where they need to improve." Others said that the peer critique made them work harder, knowing that their classmates would be part of the evaluation. This sentiment was summed up best through this frank comment: "I like this because your friends won't lie to you. If you sucked, they would tell you." Along with 25 positive comments such as these, 8 responses expressed feelings that the peer critiques were personal attacks, too harsh and emotionally difficult to do; and one student felt unqualified to evaluate others.

Aside from 2 students who were unsure if such a chaotic style would work, the remaining 31 students found that constructivism changed their view about teaching and affected how they would teach in the future. There were also comments about how much behind-the-scenes work is necessary to teach constructively. Most said that the methods were enjoyable, rigorous strategies that promoted higher-order thinking.

With regards to the content and concepts learned, there was just one negative comment that came from a student who was still smarting from a less-than-glowing peer critique. This student would prefer traditional evaluations done by the professor. The other 32 students praised the hands-on activities because they encouraged student opinions, increased learning, and kept them awake, and gave students a sense of collective pride through their group activities.

Thirty students enjoyed the cooperative group work evidenced by responses such as: "Gave me a great base of support and an open environment for learning"; "Learned from other people's input"; "Each person brought something unique to the project"; "There was no competition among us"; "Was not embarrassed to ask questions; and "The weakness in the group is worked on by

everybody to improve." Of the three who disagreed, one student stated that cooperative learning doesn't always result in a deeper understanding. The other two apparently felt that they were doing most of the work in their groups. From the outset, I feared that slackers would cause the hard working students to feel as if they had to do most of the work, yet I am pleased that only two students found this to be a problem.

Unanimously, the students thought that our discussions were very important for expanding thinking and affirming personal opinions. Representative responses include: "Discussions give me the choice to pick which point of view I like"; "Helps me understand what going on"; "Allows each student to express his/her opinions"; and "It opens up new thoughts about the subject."

The comment "another great way to learn, but difficult to plan" was the only critique of hands-on learning. All thought that hands-on learning was an effective learning strategy. Many students expressed that they learn better and more thoroughly through hands-on learning. One student remarked that "I'm learning stuff sometimes not realizing it." Another wrote, "Just sitting and reading does not teach me, but interaction and hands-on is how I learn."

Here, too, all of the students agreed unanimously that offering instructional choices based on different learning styles was very important. One student remarked that, "everyone learns in different ways. It is important to vary the teaching style so that each student can learn effectively." Another noted that offering instructional choices "helps the student not to get discouraged and gives them the capability to learn in their own way." Many added that this class gave them to chance to excel by giving them the opportunity to, as explained in one student's words: "choose the style that works best and will help us actually learn the material."

Peer-to-peer teaching drew the most

negative comments from the students. Nine of the 33 said that some students who were teaching did not know the material very well, many times important parts were omitted from the teaching, not learning much, did not trust the peer teacher, and some were nervous that the professor did not tell the class what was important and what was not. On the positive side, the rest of the students are on record saying that "Everyone can learn a lot from the people around them"; "Helps keep the work load down"; "It helps us become better teachers"; "You get someone else's thoughts on an issue." There was one thread that expressed how effective peer-to-peer teaching was because "when the students teach each other, they can put it on their level" and the strategy works given that "we have a lot of things in common."

Most of the accolades directed toward reciprocal teaching were about how important it is for teachers to be effective public speakers. Another main thread was the recognition that you learn the best when you must teach something to someone else. On the negative side, there were five comments that fell into three categories: (a) not enough time to prepare, (b) unsure if what they chose to teach is what the professor wanted, and (c) fear of speaking in front of the class.

A unique critique elicited about the project method was that this sort of assignment was very stressful to complete. Others said that there was an unequal work distribution in their group, it was too chaotic, and a few students would simply prefer to work on their own. Aside from seven negative reactions to the project method, the rest of the class thought that a mixture of group and individual project work was important, and many expressed how creative they became during the process. One student wrote that the project method was an "excellent strategy because

you learn how to work as a team. On the other hand, a portfolio is good because you can see the specific work and effort that an individual has put in. Also, in a portfolio, you see the progress that the individual has made throughout the semester."

The students found the reflective writing process to be personally worthwhile. Most expressed that they enjoyed writing about how they felt about a particular reading assignment. It was also mentioned that reflective writing required a substantiation of opinion by backing it up with references to the assigned readings. Also, the strategy worked because it compelled the students to read the selections. One student expressed, "what concerns me about the strategy is that reflective writing is an easy grade." True, if the professor wants to encourage a personal voice, a thoughtful, well-written reflection is difficult to excoriate. The only other criticisms were two comments that were not germane to the reflective process, as one objected to the number of assignments, and another wrote that I should have held a discussion after each assignment was submitted.

Using research as a teaching strategy for discovery learning elicited many responses such as, "I don't like it, but I know that it is necessary to learn new things" and "this is a great way to learn, but as almost every student, I don't like it." One student remarked that some students seemed to be simply reading directly from photocopied text rather than learning the material before they presented it. All students, including the aforementioned students, said that doing research was essential to their learning. "When you find it and see it for yourself, it always sticks better" was one comment which represented the majority of students' feelings about using research as a type of discovery learning.

Except for three comments pointing out that self-assessment was difficult because one tends to be harder on oneself; the remaining 30 students noted that it was a great way to express how they wanted to be evaluated, to point out strengths that may have been overlooked, and a good way to see what improvements were needed. The power to have some influence on their grades was also a dominant theme. One student wrote, "If you put a lot of hard work and effort into an assignment, then your grade should reflect that, and you are the only person who knows if you deserve the grade," while another said, "I like this because it feels as if I am in control of my grades."

The comments about my role as a facilitator, rather than a lecturer, were unanimously favorable. Students seemed to feel that this strategy empowered them to take control of learning in a more autonomous environment. There were so many varied accolades for this teaching position that it was hard to capture the essence expressed throughout the selected responses. Hopefully, these comments adequately illuminate their feelings toward it: "We can work on our own ideas instead of having a teacher tell us what to do"; "I like the idea that the teacher does not teach and the students do"; "This should be activated in every classroom"; "The class is more relaxed and you don't feel pressured to do so much when you are really doing a lot"; and "This helps prepare us for teaching—we are getting to see how to teach a class, and it certainly makes the student do the work to learn the material."

When responding to the statement, "Teacher assessment is where the professor evaluates your work based on the assignment and in comparison with the work of others," there were six responses that strongly took issue to the latter part of the phrase, "and in comparison with the work of

others." One student curtly summed up the others' objections, "I do not think that any student's work should be compared based on others' work. Each person is an individual who has their own learning style." Interestingly, the remaining 27 responses expressed a yearning to have an evaluation by the professor because "You just can't trust grading to other students' opinions, I trust my teacher's opinion"; "This is a must because you are the teacher and the ultimate grade giver"; "Should be used more in this class"; and "I like this because it offers an educated, experienced opinion on performance."

Overall, the students were extremely pleased with how the class was taught and the amount of content that was being learned. Words and phrases such as "enjoyable," "learning a lot," "very satisfied," "it has challenged me to think more on my own than any other class I have taken thus far," "I love the class!" "I would gladly go into a classroom with methods such as these," "the class is a pleasure and joy to come to," and "I look forward to attending every Monday, Wednesday and Friday" were found throughout. While much exuberance was found in the data, there were four comments that suggested that a few students, although satisfied overall, were less than satisfied with particular aspects of the course. Specifically, these students were critical of the time requirement to perform numerous in-class presentations, the extensive out-of-class time requirements, testy group dynamics, and a lack of confidence in the method as sufficient preparation for the final examination.

Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!

There are some great books in the literature about mustering the courage to teach as a constructivist, but the Dr. Seuss book, *Hooray for Diffendoofer Day*

(Prelustsky & Smith, 1998), is my recommendation for anyone who is unsure if this pleasurable and creative way of teaching and learning will prepare students to pass a high-stakes test. The student in my class who was concerned that s/he would not be prepared for the final examination reminded me of the same angst that Mr. Lowe, the principal of Diffendoofer Elementary School, had about constructivist teaching. You see, the teachers at Diffendoofer Elementary School were teaching creatively in a fun and pleasurable way, whereas the students at dreary Flobbertown Elementary School, the school where the Diffendoofer children would go if they didn't pass the big test, did everything the same way.

Principal Lowe was sweating bullets about how his students would perform on the big test throughout the book.

We also have a principal,
His name is Mr. Lowe.
He is the very saddest man
That any of us know.
He mumbles, "Are they learning
This and that and such and such?"
His face is wrinkled as a prune
From worrying so much
(Prelustsky & Smith, p. 9).

Although incessantly worried, he steadfastly held the trust that his faculty understood how children learn and allowed them to teach accordingly. Assuredly, a favorite teacher, Miss Bonkers, rose to say:

Don't fret! She said. You've learned the things you need
To pass that test and many more-
I'm certain you'll succeed.
We've taught you that the earth is round,
That red and white make pink,
And something else that matters more-
We've taught you how to think
(Prelustsky & Smith, p. 25).

If you haven't read the book, I am truly sorry that I must tell you the ending, consequently ruining your delightful surprise, for the Diffendoofer School got the very highest score!

Reading this book to my students as we approached the final examination period hardly assuaged any fears of failure. Yet, the end result was the same as the Diffendoofer School's success. The comprehensive examination was based on the test questions that the students submitted throughout the semester. While a sufficient amount of factual information was necessary to support their answers, the questions required the students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the concepts presented during the semester.

Most of the students' final examination grades positively correlated with their portfolio grades. That is, the higher the test score, the better the portfolio was in terms of rigor and presentation. There were not any students who did poorly on their portfolio but well on the final examination. Aside from two young men who failed the course because they were too busy pursuing non-academic interests, the final semester grades consisted of a few A's, mostly B's, and some C's, a distribution conforming with my department's grading pattern. I was particularly pleased that except for leading a short, whole group discussion after each reading assignment, the amount of time that I dominated the conversation and the students were passively listening was minimal.

So, do I exclaim hooray? Not as of yet. This course was an introductory course in education, one in which I could take some risks. I also teach Early Childhood Curriculum, a senior-level course where the stakes are at their highest. In the state where I teach, a future teacher must pass the Praxis II examination, an Educational Testing Service examination that is the gatekeeper to a career in teaching. The Praxis II is an assessment of how well the future teacher understands the concepts, supported by content knowledge, necessary to teach young children. From my experiences teaching this Foundation of Education class, I have become convinced that constructivist teaching strategies will satisfy both conceptual and content objectives required by most college courses. So what am I afraid of, Principal Lowe?

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Re-Envisioning Bloom's Taxonomy:
Developing Critical Thinking in the Writing Center

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Rather than restricting assistance only to mechanical errors, tutorial sessions in the Kennesaw State University (KSU) Writing Center also involve questions and discussion intended to help students improve the thinking behind their texts. Through research and practice, tutors have discovered that re-envisioning Bloom's Taxonomy can help them lead writers to new levels of critical thinking.

In the 1950s, Benjamin Bloom worked with a team of educational psychologists to classify educational objectives, which are intended to apply generally to multiple age groups and academic disciplines. The taxonomy identifies categories of intellectual maneuvers and arranges them in a hierarchy, where the knowledge level is deemed the simplest and the evaluation level the most complex (Krathwhol, 2002). Table 1 summarizes the taxomony.

Many educators use Bloom's taxonomy to design assignments and test questions, and at first, the taxonomy seemed to apply to tutorial work as an aid to understanding the cognitive demands of assignments placed on students. For example, if a student brings in an assignment that asks for a summary of an article, the tutor knows that the instructor is asking the student to identify main ideas and to express them in his or her own words; the instructor is looking for work at the comprehension level of Bloom's taxonomy.

Table 1.
Categories of Bloom's Taxonomy as Cognitive Objectives, and Their Definitions

Cognitive Objective	Definition
Knowledge	Remembering learned information
Comprehension	Understanding what was learned
Application	Using what was learned in a new situation
Analysis	"Breaking down" learned information and understanding the relationships of the parts to each other and to the whole
Synthesis	Creating a new whole from existing parts
Evaluation	Using definite criteria to make value judgments for specific purposes

Note: Table 1 displays Cognitive Objectives in order from the simplest level to the most complex.

Even though Writing Center tutors generally do not create original writing assignments for students, Bloom's taxonomy is useful in providing another way to think and talk about student texts, and a vocabulary to diagnose them. In addition, although most tutors (both student and faculty) intuitively apply the essentials of Bloom's taxonomy, even without prior knowledge of the work, we have found that familiarity with Bloom's taxonomy increases our own awareness of what is asked of our student writers.

Considering that critical thinking "entails awareness of one's own thinking and reflection on the thinking of self and others as an object of cognition" (Kuhn & Dean, 2004, p. 270), tutors' increased awareness by way of Bloom can enhance their own critical thinking. As a result, tutors can be more effective in helping students with their texts. By understanding how categories of thinking are expressed in students' texts, tutors can direct their questions and discussion toward helping students work at the higher levels of the taxonomy that their assignments demand.

Bloom's Taxonomy as Reflected in Students' Texts

Granello (2001) describes the use of Bloom's taxonomy in responding to student writing of literature reviews in a graduate-level counselor education program. She outlines the different cognitive levels that can be seen in students' texts and provides prompts – questions for teachers to ask – for shifting these writers to more appropriate (i.e., higher) cognitive levels. While Granello's explanation is specific to a particular pairing of students and assignments, her plan provides a framework for looking at a broader set of students and texts. We compared Granello's examples and questions to what we see in the KSU Writing Center and to what we find ourselves asking students repeatedly in our own efforts to help them improve their writing, regardless of their academic discipline. Table 2 contains what we think are useful descriptions of how cognitive levels can be reflected in students' texts and also the kinds of questions that can instigate a move to the next level of thinking.

Table 2.
Expression of the Categories of Bloom's Taxonomy in Student Texts, and Associated Questions to Prompt a Shift in Student Thinking

Category	Expressed as…	To shift the thinking, ask…
Knowledge	Lists; reliance on long quotations; trouble paraphrasing; no distinction in relative importance of ideas.	Tell in your own words; how would you explain this to someone else?
Comprehension	More use of own words; still trouble understanding relative importance of ideas and sources; interesting but not directly useful information is included.	How does this information apply to the topic; can you give an example; how does this idea/statement/evidence support the thesis?

Table 2 (continued).

Category	Expressed as…	To shift the thinking, ask…
Application	Connects ideas and evidence clearly to the topic; still relies on analysis of others; magazine information is considered equal to original research.	What ideas do these sources (or paragraphs) have in common; can we outline the information by idea instead of by source?
Analysis	Doesn't rely only on other authors' conclusions; themes and ideas of other writers are identified but not linked across sources.	What else might be important about the topic; what else would you like to know; is the evidence given about (and by) the source convincing?
Synthesis	Text is organized by ideas instead of by source; still problems reconciling conflicting information.	Which evidence is most convincing; why; how can we decide/support/choose one side of the argument over the other; who said this; can you use this information to say something new?
Evaluation	Shows understanding of the relative value of different sources and ideas (and shades of gray).	

Because the questions are intended to help students cross a bridge in their thinking, the questions in the third column are shifted to span the categories in the taxonomy.

Of course, many assignments are complex and reflect demands at multiple levels of the taxonomy. Also, Bloom's taxonomy itself represents an ordered progression that might not exist in every situation, and the hierarchical structure suggests that some levels are more valuable than others, when really it may be that some levels are precursors to others. Also, the shift to other categories of thinking might not be as linear as Table 2 implies. However imperfect Bloom's taxonomy may be, the ability to identify and readily apply useful strategies or tools to help students with their texts becomes even more important when individual Writing Center tutors work, each day, with students whose writing skills vary considerably and who bring a daunting range of assignments to the Writing Center.

Diversity of Students at KSU and the Writing Center

During a typical day, a Writing Center tutor will work with students from the first year composition program, including students who are either traditional (right out of high school) or non-traditional (returning after a period of years). Tutors may also work with upper-level students and graduate students from a range of disciplines and students whose first language is not English.

One challenge that faces the Writing Center tutor at the beginning of a session is to get an immediate sense of whether the

student actually knows where the problems with his or her text lie. While students may have the perception that they need help with one specific writing skill, students' writing issues can range far and wide. Writing Center tutors will address many facets of writing, including the basics such as grammar and mechanics, organization, paraphrasing and documentation, focus, and choosing relevant sources.

In addition, some students' texts can be more difficult than others to place precisely in any one category of Bloom's taxonomy. For a student whose first language is not English, the tutor must consider that the student's comprehension and cognitive abilities may be at higher levels than are expressed through the student's written English. Graduate students visiting the KSU Writing Center bring cognitively demanding assignments that include exacting requirements concerning format and documentation. And, while the first-year composition student often brings concerns about "flow" and punctuation, the demands of their assignments often require that the tutor address higher cognitive levels as well. Using Bloom's taxonomy to work with this diversity of students and texts can become a decidedly less sure-handed practice than a tutor might prefer, yet the multi-level expression in many texts, especially those of some international and non-traditional students, can be addressed successfully through the taxonomy.

A Case Study

To illustrate how Bloom's taxonomy might actually apply in a tutorial situation – as well as in the classroom – consider an informal case study of a non-traditional student at KSU. The case was followed by co-author Leslie Wolfe-Cundiff who teaches freshman composition and works in the Writing Center as a faculty tutor.

The case study student is Evelyn (not her real name), a 63-year-old woman who had not previously attended college. Evelyn was a student in English 1101 (first semester composition) and visited the Writing Center a half-dozen times during the semester for advice on everything from word processing to the mysteries of MLA documentation. Widowed a few years ago, her primary reason for attending college was simple and compelling: to help get some structure back in her life. She had been a businesswoman, housewife, and mother. She and her husband had owned their own business for many years, but she had never gotten around to college. So, later in life than usual, she entered college full of enthusiasm, eager to learn, and full of worldly wisdom.

Her first essay that semester – an analysis of an editorial – was, in Bloom's taxonomy terms, a first-level effort: Knowledge. The instructor assigned students to choose an editorial from a reputable publication and analyze it for audience, argument, and evidence. Not only was Evelyn's essay about an analytical feature piece instead of an editorial, illustrating Evelyn's lack of discernment (believing that publication automatically gave it credence), but her essay also exhibited most of the limitations outlined in Bloom's taxonomy, repetition of information and little attempt at paraphrasing.

Evelyn took advantage of the convenience of on campus tutoring and, seeing the value in one-to-one consultation over her own writing. Her classroom instructor tutored her twice and noted her progress through the Writing Center reports on visits when other tutors saw her. Through the course of the semester, she made what the instructor considered good progress – from basic knowledge level to developing in areas of application, two levels up.

As a knowledge-level student, Evelyn was new to research. At first she

didn't venture outside her textbooks. However, after a library orientation session she began to explore the library, opting for the tactile sense of "real books" as opposed to the experience of cyberspace. However, recognizing that Internet research would prove invaluable in her college career, she and the instructor spent part of one tutoring session evaluating a single website. Learning to evaluate sources is an important step out of the knowledge level and into comprehension.

On her way through comprehension, Evelyn began using more of her own words instead of relying on long quotations, but she was still not selective enough with information. For Evelyn, that meant leaving out important facts and including irrelevant ones – typical traits of a student at the comprehension level. On the other hand, she learned when she needed to question her own judgment on pertinent sources.

After one class discussion, Evelyn was concerned about paraphrasing and brought all of her research into the Writing Center where during an hour-long session she and the instructor discussed ways she could integrate it into her paper. She was having a particularly hard time with the conclusion of this paper, an editorial essay, because as she and the tutor discovered together, she had not thoroughly articulated her own opinion. Once she spelled it out, the conclusion came naturally and even included a snappy quotation from a newspaper article.

At that point, she had stepped up to the application level. Good connections between her topic and the ideas and evidence in her research came more easily, and her ability to evaluate the relevance of a particular piece of information improved. However, typical of writers at this level, she was still not able to make consistent distinctions about the quality of information she read.

Observing Evelyn's development as a writer through the lens of Bloom's taxonomy provided testimony that the process is not necessarily a linear progression. Evelyn's example shows that abilities can be gained in an organic, connected way, more as an interlinked web of maneuvers than a stepwise series (see Air War College, 2004). While still developing application-level skills, Evelyn began looking beyond the material to her own understanding – an ability that surfaces in the next level, analysis.

In Evelyn's case, Bloom's taxonomy turned out to be a highly useful assessment tool and a means to help map the writing issues that could be anticipated. With its application and with the support of the Writing Center, the instructor could evaluate the student's situation, assess her writing, and move swiftly to ask questions that would ultimately help advance the student's abilities to the next level. As a result, through the taxonomy's clear benchmarks, student, instructor, and tutors were able to celebrate the student's writing successes.

Conclusion

As an educational tool for designing assignments and test questions, Bloom's taxonomy has proved valuable to educators for nearly a half century. However, in using Bloom's taxonomy outside assignment-writing and applying it in a tutorial setting, tutors at the KSU Writing Center find that it helps tutors focus questions in a way that may help students raise the level of their cognitive thinking. In the informal writing center environment, Bloom's Taxonomy may also help tutors encourage students to approach their texts with a deeper awareness of the complexities – and joys – involved in the writing process.

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