

# Early College Folio

The House of Education Needs Overhaul

Issue 1 | Spring 2021

## Scaffolding Independence

Inside the Classroom, Outside the Classroom,  
and in the Spaces in Between

John B. Weinstein, PhD  
Bard Academy and Bard College at Simon's Rock

When I am in the classroom with a group of young people, I want them to tell me something I have never heard before. I often teach texts with very long histories of study, such as the Confucian classic *Mencius*, the poems of Sappho, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, or Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. My desire may seem a big ask, given that these kinds of materials have been studied for multiple centuries or even multiple millennia. At this point, what is there new to say? How do the students know what I have or haven't already heard? How do they innovate on a topic when just beginning to explore it? And yet, I really do hear things I have never heard before, in nearly every Early College class session. In my nearly twenty years as an Early College educator, teaching courses leading up to and culminating in college coursework for students generally two years younger than traditional-aged college students, I have stayed firm in the belief that this is possible. I have also stayed firm in my pursuit of the teaching I need to do maximize that possibility. And I have been fortunate to work with colleagues as firm in their beliefs and pursuit as I am, collaborations which have led to the approach and plans I present here. The critical thinker must forge ideas that are original, and not just repeat back what has been read or heard, but original ideas don't always just appear. Students can follow their passions, but they have to find them first. For students to think critically or follow their passions, they need to be provided with the steps toward doing that.

These steps are what I have come to call Scaffolding Independence. I articulated the first iteration of the concept in 2013 while Principal of Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) Newark, a partnership between Bard College and the Newark Public Schools (now Newark Board of Education) launched in 2011. BHSEC Newark is now completing its tenth year in operation. For many, if not most, of the students at this new school, which offered all students the opportunity to earn an A.A. degree concurrently with their high school diploma, the jump in academic expectations was high. Equally significant was the decrease in structure. Many students had come from public charter schools in Newark, where a focus on highly structured environments predominated at the schools considered most successful, and then permeated to schools perhaps

not considered so successful. That approach gave students little say in what to do when, or for how long. We countered, albeit not entirely intentionally, with an open-endedness that was not, I would argue, too much, but certainly too much at once. We initially focused too heavily on asking students “What do you think?” about the material, without teaching the many steps involved to truly answer such a seemingly simple question. I am, by no means, saying that my students in Newark were not capable of answering such open-ended questions. As it turned out, the originality of their answers eventually became as great as I had experienced anywhere. That would take some time, though.

Figure 1a: 2012-2013 strategic plan for BHSEC Newark, goal #4

Principal: John B. Weinstein

Strategic Plan for SY 2012-2013


School: Bard High School Early College



Principal Practice Goal #4:				
<b>Competency:</b>	High Quality Instruction			
<b>Indicator:</b>	Academic Interventions			
<b>SMART Goal:</b>	50% of students will seek and receive individual tutoring from faculty, fellow, and/or peer tutors by the end of the third quarter.			
<b>Explain how achievement of this goal will likely lead to progress toward your literacy target (theory of action):</b> Students will gain one-on-one help from tutoring, which will support their progress toward the next higher performance tier.				
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter Strategies	Action Steps	Performance Measures/Evidence	Person(s) Accountable	Timeline
What strategies will you ensure are implemented throughout the school? Why are these the strategies that will help your school reach this goal?  1. Establishment of writing center/learning center staffed by fellows.  2. Setting faculty office hours, including lunchtime/after school.  3. Begin peer tutor training.	What are the action steps that will ensure successful implementation of your strategies? (each strategy should have multiple connected action steps)  1.1 Select and orient fellows.  1.2 Create writing center/learning center space in the library.  1.3 Post fellow hours and sign-up sheets.  1.4 Log fellow tutoring appointments.  1.5 Provide specific referrals to fellows (e.g. college essays)	What will be the indicators of success?  Tutoring logs, with breakdowns by year and appointment type.  Attendance at faculty office hours.  Lunchtime sign-out to faculty.	Who is going to be charged with ensuring the strategies are implemented? What will your role be in strategy implementation?  Participants: Fellows, all faculty.  My Role: Ensuring that faculty comply with office hour requirement; supervising fellows in developing center policies.	How long will it take for the strategy to be put into action?  Fellows to begin at start of school year, establish centers by second week of school.  Faculty office hours to begin by second week of school.  Peer tutoring training to begin in November.
	2.1 Introduce faculty to office hour requirement.  2.2 Faculty submit lunchtime/after school hours to fellows, for posting by cafeteria.  2.3 Faculty post departmental office hour schedules.  3.1 Teachers identify peer tutoring candidates.  3.2 First peer tutoring training session.			
Benchmark indicators that you are moving toward goal: 20% of students seeking assistance from tutors, including 90% of Year 2 students.				
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter Strategies	Action Steps	Performance Measures/Evidence	Person(s) Accountable	Timeline
1. Referrals to tutoring, based on midterm grades.  2. Confirmation of faculty office hours, with statistical logs.  3. Expansion of peer tutoring program.	1.1 Tutoring referrals at parent-teacher conferences.  1.2 Intervention meetings for struggling students with tutoring mandates.  1.3 Follow-up on tutoring mandates.	Academic intervention contracts.  Tutoring logs, with breakdowns by year and appointment type.	Participants: School Counselors, Deans, Fellows, Faculty, Peer Tutors.  My Role: Supervising Counselors in setting up intervention meetings; reviewing tutoring logs;	Academic interventions in early to mid December.  Peer tutoring expansion during December.

Figure 1b: 2012-2013 strategic plan for BHSEC Newark, goal #4, continued

Principal: John B. Weinstein      Strategic Plan for SY 2012-2013      School: Bard High School Early College



4. Continuation of centers.	2.1 Faculty office hour grids updated.  2.2 Three-week period (in December) logging student visits to office hours.  3.1 Peer tutoring referral meetings within department meetings.  3.2 Peer tutoring trainings.  3.3 Peer tutoring meetings with logs.	Faculty office hour logs.  Peer tutoring logs.  Lunchtime sign-out to faculty.	training peer tutors in my own subject area.	Faculty logs during December.
Benchmark indicators that you are moving toward goal: 40% of students seeking assistance from tutors; 10 active peer tutors in varied subjects.				

It would also take Scaffolding Independence. This was the case both inside and outside the classroom, and, crucially, in the spaces in between. The earliest steps in developing the concept looked most at creating moments in time and space that were not classroom instruction but still under the guidance of an instructor. In my first year as Principal of BHSEC Newark, the roots of Scaffolding Independence appear in two of my strategic goals for the year [See Figures 1 and 2]. To meet one goal, which stated that “50% of students will seek and receive individual tutoring from faculty, fellow, and/or peer tutors by the end of the third quarter,” I included multiple strategies to meet that goal, including establishing a writing center/learning center to be staffed by fellows (recent graduates of Bard College at Simon’s Rock or BHSEC campuses who worked as individual and group tutors, as well as intellectual role models), setting faculty office hours during lunch and after school, and beginning to train peer tutors. To meet a second goal, “By the end of the first quarter, effective study space culture...will be established, understood, and consistently followed by students and staff; the culture will be maintained throughout the year,” I included teacher-supervised enrichment periods for all 9th and 10th grade students during non-class time (our 9th and 10th grade at that time had several periods per week without scheduled classes), the writing/learning centers, faculty office hours, and specific sign-out sheets during lunch periods, which were to enable students to leave the cafetorium—a combined cafeteria and auditorium—to go to activities, tutoring, or other supports.

Figure 2a: 2012-2013 strategic plan for BHSEC Newark, goal #5

Principal: John B. Weinstein

Strategic Plan for SY 2012-2013

School: Bard High School Early College



Principal Practice Goal #5:				
<b>Competency:</b>	School Culture of Excellence			
<b>Indicator:</b>	Clear Expectations			
<b>SMART Goal:</b>	By the end of the first quarter, effective study space culture of will be established, understood, and consistently followed by students and staff; the culture will be maintained throughout the year.			
<b>Explain how achievement of this goal will likely lead to progress toward your literacy target (theory of action):</b> Effective use of homework and tutoring time is essential for students to raise their level of success in their classes.				
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter Strategies	Action Steps	Performance Measures/Evidence	Person(s) Accountable	Timeline
What strategies will you ensure are implemented throughout the school? Why are these the strategies that will help your school reach this goal?  1. Teacher-supervised Enrichment periods for all 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> grade students during non-class time.  2. Writing/Learning Centers.  3. Faculty office hours.  4. Specific sign-out sheets during lunch period.	What are the action steps that will ensure successful implementation of your strategies? (each strategy should have multiple connected action steps)  1.1 Schedule all 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> grade students into Enrichment periods.  1.2 Assign two Enrichment periods to each teacher (additional periods depending on teaching/service load).  1.3 Establish protocols for Enrichment period during faculty meetings.	What will be the indicators of success?  Student attendance records for Enrichment periods.  Log of Writing/Learning Center visits.  Office Hours listing.  Daily lunch sign-out sheets (also indicate students going to see teachers).	Who is going to be charged with ensuring the strategies are implemented? What will your role be in strategy implementation?  Participants: all faculty (Enrichment, office hours), Writing Center and Learning Center Associates, Librarian, administrators (lunch sign out)  My role: monitoring Enrichment period size and atmosphere, adjusting group size, setting faculty expectations for enrichment, enforcing office hour requirement, participating in lunch sign out	How long will it take for the strategy to be put into action?  Enrichment periods set for first day of regular classes; centers and office hours established during first four weeks; sign out sheets set for first day of regular classes (no sign-out during Writing & Thinking Workshop)
	2.1 Establish staffing (Fellows) and location for Writing/Learning Centers.  2.2 Refer students to Centers.  2.3 Record appointments in logs.  3.1 All faculty are to designate and post four office hours per week, including one after school.  3.2 Post consolidated office hour list.  4.1 Lunch sign-out with specific sheets (library, courtyard, club/teacher visit)			
Benchmark indicators that you are moving toward goal: 99% attendance in Enrichment periods by students present in school that day; all Year 2 students working with fellows at least once; multiple fellow appointments each day; student attendance at office hours daily (lunch time and office hour periods)				
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter Strategies	Action Steps	Performance Measures/Evidence	Person(s) Accountable	Timeline
1. Observations of Enrichment periods.	1.1 Create walk-through observation form for Enrichment periods.	Observation forms, showing student engagement during Enrichment periods.	Participants: all faculty (Enrichment, office hours), Writing Center and Learning Center Associates, Librarian, EWPS business teacher and	Observations of Enrichment periods during last week of November and first week of December;

Figure 2b: 2012-2013 strategic plan for BHSEC Newark, goal #5, continued

<p>2. Lunchtime and peak period staffing of College Experience Room.</p> <p>3. Establishing start of Peer Tutoring program.</p> <p>4. Continuation of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter strategies, including clarification of lunch sign-out to see teachers.</p>	<p>1.2 Create schedule for walk-through observations.</p> <p>1.3 Administrative team meeting to assess teacher effectiveness in Enrichment periods.</p> <p>1.4 Follow up with less effective Enrichment teachers.</p> <p>2.1 Meet with EWPS business teacher and counselor to create monitoring schedule and protocols.</p> <p>2.2 Implement monitoring schedule.</p> <p>2.3 Walk-throughs to verify studying.</p> <p>3.1 Teachers identify prospective Peer Tutors to Fellows.</p> <p>3.2. Fellows train Peer Tutors.</p> <p>3.3 Peer Tutoring matches made and initial tutoring begins and is logged.</p>	<p>Student homework completion.</p> <p>Log of Writing/Learning Center visits.</p> <p>Daily lunch sign-out sheets (also indicate students going to see teachers).</p> <p>Logs of Peer Tutoring sessions.</p>	<p>counselor, administrators (lunch sign out)</p> <p>My role: assessing and following up on teacher effectiveness in Enrichment periods, enforcing office hour requirement, participating in lunch sign out and lunch time building walk-throughs</p>	<p>College Experience staffing and monitoring in place by mid-November; teacher availability bulletin board by Nov. 7; lunchtime walk-throughs begin week of Nov. 5-9</p>
---	---	---	---	---

Looking back, those goals instantly seem naïve, and my more experienced self can understand why they were not ultimately met. “Effective study space culture” is not learned in a matter of weeks. The metacognition involved in self-assessing one’s learning in such study spaces is a multi-year learning process, not a one-and-done lesson for a 9th grader.<sup>1</sup> In 2013-14, my second year in the Principal’s chair, I gave it another try. This time, my goal stated, “‘Scaffolding Independence’: Periods outside direct instruction will be effectively and measurably used by students, with supervision decreasing for each ascending grade” [See Figure 3]. One key element of this new iteration of this still evolving early college pedagogy was the reference to “direct instruction,” as opposed to inside or outside the classroom. The liminal space that might be still inside a classroom, but outside the direct instruction that constituted much of the time within that classroom, was now demarcated as a pivotal site for learning. Important to note is that the teaching styles we were already using in our Bard pedagogy included significant time in small group work and other activities beyond teacher-centered classroom instruction. However, even if our direct instruction was often not so direct, we still needed another layer beyond it that was even less direct. We embedded the enrichment periods within 9th and 10th grade English, history, and mathematics courses, and 10th grade world language courses, this time as part of the scheduled classes. The idea was that, on enrichment days, students would work more independently, perhaps on a skill area like vocabulary, or on doing portions of multi-step homework assignments. This was not in lieu of homework done at home, which remained a key element of our program, but as part of the longer types of homework assignments students would encounter in college courses.

Figure 3: 2013-2014 strategic plan for BHSEC Newark, goal #3

Principal Name: John B. Weinstein

School Name: Bard High School Early College

Strategic Plan for SY 2013-2014

Principal Practice Goal #3:		
<b>Competency:</b>	School Culture of Excellence	
<b>SMART Goal:</b>	"Scaffolding Independence": Periods outside direct instruction will be effectively and measurably used by students, with supervision decreasing for each ascending grade.	
<b>Drivers (what must be true to achieve this goal – you need to launch it, build it, monitor it or know how to evaluate it):</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tools that are needed</li> <li>- Tasks/events that need to occur</li> <li>- Processes/rituals that need to be established/monitored/improved</li> <li>- Management conversations that need to occur</li> <li>- High-quality meetings that need to occur</li> <li>- Stakeholders who need to be coached/empowered/inspired</li> </ul>		
Drivers (FOCUS AREAS)	Tasks to be completed (TO DO)	Metric/Outcome (WHAT'S DONE)
Embedded enrichment periods (English, history, mathematics, 10 <sup>th</sup> grade world languages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guide teachers in developing plans for embedded enrichment that decrease scaffolding over time</li> <li>• By 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, enrichments are not direct instruction</li> </ul>	Teacher plans for enrichment periods
Science help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop lunchtime and/or after-school science help sessions</li> </ul>	Schedule for sessions Tutoring logs
Language lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College students will complete weekly lab activities, one period per week</li> </ul>	Lab schedule Lab assignments Outcomes on lab assignments
College program open periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, with student input, procedures and policies for open periods on college schedules</li> </ul>	Policies Teacher schedules for office hours
		Sign-in sheets and/or other accountability measures as developed
Lunchtime study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop schedule of open study locations for lunch time</li> <li>• Develop, with student input, procedures and policies for lunch time</li> </ul>	Policies Teacher schedules for available rooms Sign-in sheets and/or other accountability measures as developed

A second key element of the “Scaffolding Independence” goal was that supervision levels would decrease with each ascending grade. When the students reached their college-level courses in the 11th grade—a grade called “Year 1” at all BHSECs, to signify the first college year—they would no longer have enrichment periods. Instead, they would have actual drop days when the class would not be meeting, to better reflect the frequency of class meetings at traditional-aged colleges. The concept was that, having learned various strategies for extended homework, self- or group-guided study, or asking help from faculty, our early college students would now exercise these strategies to attain the levels of support they needed. Going to a faculty office hour, which would now involve moving from one physical space to another, would be seen as an extension of walking up to the teacher’s desk within the 9th or 10th grade enrichment period classroom; facilitating this was the scheduling reality that often the best time for a faculty member’s office hour for a course was during the same class period on a day the class did not meet. Also essential was the role of student voice. Tasks to do, on the strategic document, included, “Develop, with student input, procedures and policies for open periods on college schedules.” Whereas the previous year’s plan focused on implementing sign-out sheets during lunch, I now wrote, “Develop schedule of open study locations for lunch time” and “Develop, with student input, procedures and policies for lunch time.” Students were not the only ones needing their agency named and sought; for

the enrichment periods I also included “Guide teachers in developing plans for embedded enrichment that decrease scaffolding over time.” That point would come into play significantly in developing the “Scaffolding Independence in the Classroom” series, to which we will return soon. But first, we go to the other side of the world.

These needs for Scaffolding Independence are not unique to Newark, to early college students, or even to the United States. Several years prior, in 2007, while on sabbatical in my role as Associate Professor of Chinese and Asian Studies at Bard College at Simon’s Rock, I had the opportunity to teach a college-level theater class in Taiwan, at the National University of Tainan. This was my first time in a number of years teaching traditional-aged college students, in this case college sophomores. The course focused on the creation and performance of devised theater. We were creating a new piece of theater based on interviews, observations, and personal reflections, and the students had developed some short scenes. Using what was, to me, a very familiar approach in theater instruction, I had students present their work-in-progress in front of their classmates, and I then asked the classmates to say what they liked and did not like about the work they had just seen. Silence ensued. I tried again, emphasizing that we could just start with things that we liked, wondering if the idea of critique was taking on an unwelcome connotation of negative criticism. Silent stares continued, with no hope of ending. I cut my losses, giving a few comments of my own, and called it a day. I was not, however, ready to give up yet.

I returned to the next class with a scaffold in hand. For many years, I had taught in the Writing and Thinking Workshop at Simon’s Rock, and I had, just prior to travelling to Taiwan to teach the theater course, become the Workshop’s Director.<sup>2</sup> In the Workshop, when peer reviewing student writing, we had, for years, used what has become called Small Group Critique. The student author reads their work aloud a series of times, and each time there is a core feedback task which all in the peer review group must do, going in the order of the circle in which they are seated, and using specified language to begin each comment. For example, in the second step, “Main Idea,” they express what they heard as the main idea of the piece, starting their feedback with “I hear you saying...”<sup>3</sup> I had not used this technique in a language other than English, but I decided to give it a try. Anything would be better than the blank stares I was getting from my students. And so, for the next class, I translated the core steps and formulaic language into Chinese equivalents and introduced the concept, emphasizing the required nature of each step. I then divided the students into groups and watched and waited, circulating from group to group as a silent listener, as I did in the version at Simon’s Rock. What ensued exceeded expectations. Not only did the students do the tasks, they wanted to keep doing them, asking for more time when time was called. I had initially hypothesized that students were unwilling to criticize, or even to praise, one another, but my hypothesis proved wrong. They were not unwilling; they did not know how to praise or criticize, beyond perhaps “I liked it.” These scaffolds for peer review gave them words to



help frame their ideas, a vehicle for an independent critical impulse they clearly possessed, and that, I believe, all students possess.

Though I was still years away from coining the term “Scaffolding Independence,” key elements were in play in that theater classroom in Taiwan. The students were learning to self-assess, individually and in groups, and experiencing the excitement of discovering answers for themselves. I was creating space for them to discover, and sometimes stumble, on their way to creating new ideas. And I was there to support them, as “catalyst,” “guide,” “critic,” or whatever role under the umbrella of metaphors for teaching that was needed in the moment. I remember a student coming up to me early in the class, after I gave an exercise with intentionally open-ended instructions, and asking exactly how I wanted their scenes to be done. I replied that I didn’t know. They should do it as they saw fit. A few minutes later, the same student came up again, now clearly representing her group, to ask exactly how I wanted the scenes *to begin*. Still no satisfactory answer from me. Finally, she came to me and asked, “Teacher, when are you going to tell us why we are doing it this way? When will you give us notes?” I replied that I would eventually do that, but right now none of us knew which parts were good or not, or which parts could become even better. When they themselves—bolstered by peer review—had come to their own decisions, based on their own opinions, only then was it worthwhile for me to add my own views into the mix. Her response in the moment, after a pause, was a simple, “I like that.” Her response in the many moments that followed demonstrated full embrace of independence. She began to regularly bring me questions she was facing and insist that I just listen to the problem and then to her own proposed solution. She did *not* want me to solve her challenges for her.

While there are many roles a teacher plays, “giver of answers” should not be among them. With my students in Taiwan, or later in Newark, I strove not to give out answers. I also *couldn't*. If I want students to tell me something I have never heard before, I have no way to give out that answer, because I actually don’t know what it is. Peer review and self-assessment became core practices in my teaching and in those of my colleagues in Newark. Building upon a peer review form I had developed while teaching First-Year Seminar at Bard College at Simon’s Rock, I used peer review, guided by specific questions, as a regular and required practice within the paper writing process. [See Figure 4] Students initially encountered the form within class time, and they would exchange and assess papers drafts while I was in the room circulating. For later papers, I would at times have them do the peer review outside of class, taking a step toward more independence, with the idea that they might, on their own, use a similar process, or at least ask similar questions of their own drafts. I would also tell my students that they should heed their peers’ comments; the areas I flagged for improvement when I was assessing the final papers were so often issues the peer reviewer had found, but that the writer had not addressed. Their peers were seeing what I was seeing.

Figure 4: Peer Review Questionnaire

<p>Year 1 Seminar II</p>	<p>John B. Weinstein / Zoocy Salazar</p>	
<b>PEER REVIEW OF PAPER DRAFT</b>		
Author of Paper _____	Reviewer _____	
Title of Paper _____		
<b>INTEREST</b>		
What is interesting about this paper?		
What would you like to hear more about?		
What would you prefer to hear less about?		
<b>CLAIM</b>		
What is the author's main point, in your own words?		
Is the claim the author underlined, in your view, the actual claim of the paper? Is another sentence in the paper a better choice?		
<b>PROOF</b>		
What does the paper prove?		
Does it prove the claim, wholly or in part? What parts, if any, are not yet proven? Does the paper prove something other than the thesis?		
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>		
Number the paragraphs in the paper. How many are there? (Circle the number below.)		
What is the main point of each paragraph? (Use as many as needed.)		
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	
	6.	
	7.	
	8.	
	9.	
	10.	
<b>EVIDENCE</b>		
What is your overall impression of the evidence in the paper? Is it sufficient?		
Review each direct quote. Is each appropriate in length? If you feel that any are longer than necessary, indicate your suggested editing on the paper itself.		
Should any of the quotes be replaced with paraphrases? Should any paraphrases be replaced with direct quotes?		
<b>TITLE</b>		
Having completed your peer review, how suitable is the paper's current title?		
If you had to give it a different title, what would it be?		

As were the students themselves. Collaborating with my colleagues in world languages—much of my teaching in Newark was as a Chinese language teacher—I developed a process for using self-assessment as a guiding and motivating force for defining and improving class participation. This process included participation rubrics tailored for each grade level. [See Figures 5 and 6] As essential was how they were used, a process also delineated in a document that I developed. [See Figure 7] Students would, between two and four times per semester, evaluate their own participation using the rubric by circling the rubric language that best matched their self-perception of their practice. I would usually activate other metacognitive skills by asking them to reflect, in writing on the back of the page, on their strengths and on areas where they most sought to improve. I might also build community by asking them to write about a classmate whose participation was especially strong. I would then collect the rubrics and, in a different color pen, give my own assessments in each category. In my years of using this, I have found students to be highly accurate, and highly honest, in their self-assessments. I have also seen students take the agency to change their evolving habits after seeing, in detail, how those habits affect their grade, even when they themselves are involved in the grading. Peer- and self-assessments, in various forms, appear repeatedly in the Scaffolding Independence practices.

Figure 5: 9th grade Chinese class participation rubric

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Weinstein

**Chinese 9: Class Participation Grade**

	<b>15 Points</b>	<b>12 Points</b>	<b>8 Points</b>	<b>5 Points</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	Student has minimal absences.	Student is absent less than once per week on average.	Student is absent on average once or more per week.	Student is frequently absent.
<b>Promptness/Preparation</b>	Student is always prompt and ready to begin class.	Student is late to class no more than once per week on average and/or not always ready to begin class.	Student is late to class more than once per week and/or is often not ready to begin class.	Student is late to class more than once per week and is usually not ready to begin class.
<b>Cell Phone</b>	Student never has cell phone visible.	Student sometimes has cell phone visible, but student never uses it during class time.	Student often has cell phone visible, and/or sometimes uses cell phone during class time.	Student often uses cell phone during class time.
<b>Disruption/Redirection (includes off-task talking, also includes use of cell phone)</b>	Student almost never displays disruptive behavior during class or needs redirection from the teacher.	Student occasionally displays disruptive behavior during class and needs redirection from the teacher.	Student often displays disruptive behavior during class and/or needs repeated redirection from the teacher.	Student regularly displays disruptive behavior during class and does not respond to redirection.
	<b>20 Points</b>	<b>15 Points</b>	<b>10 Points</b>	<b>5 Points</b>
<b>Level of Engagement in Class</b>	Student proactively contributes to class by doing class work and frequently volunteering to answer questions.	Student contributes to class by doing class work and sometimes volunteering to answer questions.	Student contributes to class by generally doing class work and answering questions when asked.	Student inconsistently does class work and/or does not answer questions when asked.
<b>Group Work and Listening Skills</b>	Student listens when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student takes a leading, active role during group work.	Student listens when others talk both in groups and in class. Student lets others in the group do much of the work.	Student does not always listen when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student is passive during group tasks.	Student does not listen when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student is unwilling to be part of group tasks.

Total Points \_\_\_\_\_/100

Our students, steeped in these kinds of peer- and self-driven practices within the classroom, really could do them independently. For me, a favorite moment came serendipitously, when I forgot to provide class coverage for the Dean of Studies when she was out of the building for a school district meeting. About ten minutes into the class period, the teacher who used the same classroom in the period before radioed me, and when I reached the classroom, she stepped into the doorway to let me know that the Dean was not there. I instantly realized my fumble and said I would go get coverage for this group of Year 2 students (12th grade age). She told me not to. “It’s going great,” she said, “the students are teaching the class themselves.” She said that she would stay in the classroom, so that we would have a teacher present, but that they should just keep doing what they were doing. She later recounted to me that when

the students’ teacher did not arrive, one student stood up and announced she would do what their teacher would do, going up to the blackboard to write an opening prompt for individual writing and then group discussion. The students then proceeded to lead the discussion themselves, using phrases like “I hear you saying,” and other prompts and techniques they had experienced at BHSEC Newark. After years of scaffolds, they were fully ready for independence. They wanted to learn, and then knew how to do it – themselves.

Figure 6: Year 1 Seminar class participation rubric

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Weinstein/Ms. Zooley

**Year 1 Seminar: Class Participation Grade**

	20 Points	15 Points	10 Points	5 Points
<b>Attendance/ Promptness/ Preparation</b>	Student is always prompt and is almost always prepared for class with assignments and required class materials. Student has minimal absences.	Student is usually prepared for class with required class materials. Student may be late to class, no more than once per week on average and/or may have several absences.	Student is late to class more than once per week or has frequent absences. Student is often unprepared for class, without required materials.	Student is late to class more than once per week and has frequent absences. Student is rarely or never prepared with required class materials.
<b>Behavior</b>	Student almost never displays disruptive behavior during class.	Student rarely displays disruptive behavior during class.	Student occasionally displays disruptive behavior during class.	Student often displays disruptive behavior during class.
	30 Points	25 Points	20 Points	10 Points
<b>Level of Engagement in Class</b>	Student proactively contributes to class by volunteering to make substantive comments and asking probing questions multiple times per class.	Student proactively contributes to class by volunteering to make a comment or ask a question once per class.	Student contributes to class by answering questions when directly asked or when everyone is responding in a read-around.	Student almost never contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions, including during read-arounds.
<b>Group Work and Listening Skills</b>	Student listens when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student takes a leading, active role during group work.	Student listens when others talk both in groups and in class. Student lets others in the group do much of the work.	Student does not always listen when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student is passive during group tasks.	Student does not listen when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student is unwilling to be part of group tasks.

Total Points \_\_\_\_\_/100

Figure 7: Bard Early Colleges semester plan for class participation rubric

## BARD EARLY COLLEGES

### Semester Plan for Class Participation Rubric

1. Distribute Participation Rubric toward the end of the first week of the semester, or by the beginning of the second week at the latest. Choose a day when you can dedicate 15-20 minutes to reviewing the rubric in class. The first day of the first week of the semester is not recommended, because an engaging opening day plan likely does not have this time available.
2. After you distribute the rubric, go through each rubric category, including reading aloud of the descriptor language for each level of performance within each category. Have a different student read aloud each "box," to incorporate as many voices. Within each category, ask students to note the key differences from level to level.
3. A good classroom visual to post, at this time, is the language for the highest performance level within each category. In terms of size, if printing on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, print one category per page. This visual is highly recommended for 9th and 10th grade classes in particular. It is useful for college classes as well, but it is understandable if one wishes to distinguish between high school and college visuals.
4. For yourself, decide what records you will need to keep to assess the categories you have chosen to grade. For attendance and tardiness, you will definitely want daily records. For other categories, some find giving students a daily score (either numerical, or check/check-plus/check-minus) useful, while others prefer to use more holistic impressions. Because you will be assessing students every four to five weeks, if you choose a more holistic way to assess these categories, that should be fine.
5. During subsequent weeks, making reference to the rubric in class, particularly when lower performance levels are occurring, is beneficial. If you have posted visuals, you can often just point to the performance language as a reminder and not need to interrupt your teaching.
6. Midway through the first half of the semester, distribute a fresh copy of the rubric to each student. Have each student grade themselves by circling the language for each category that best describes their individual performance. Then have them total up their score (they might do this erroneously, so you will need to check the totals). Optional: Have students, on the back of the page, also do a 5 minute Focused Free Write on ways they can improve their performance in whichever categories are weaker.
7. Collect the sheets, and review them yourself after class. Using a color marker or pen, circle the performance level that you consider accurate. If the student chose what you consider correct, still circle the level yourself as well. Add up the total, and record that grade, as well as the scores you gave each category (you will want to have that information for the next time you do this). Optional: Record both the student-given grades and your own, to track trends.
8. When you return the sheets to the students, ask them to review the scores you gave. At this point, a class discussion reviewing the rubric is useful. You might also ask students to reflect, in writing, on your assessment of their performance.
9. Repeat steps 6-8 again at the halfway point in the semester (which usually corresponds to a quarter grade).
10. Midway through the second half of the semester, repeat steps 6-8 again. At this point, discussing the rubric may no longer be necessary, but that depends on the performance levels you are seeing.
11. At the end of the semester, repeat steps 6-8 for the final time. Again, you may not need to have a discussion at this point.
12. Calculate the students' class participation grades for the semester, either by weighing each of these four scorings equally, or by giving more weight to the later scores. Through this process, students' class participation grades are based on four separate scorings, which are, in turn, each based on elements within your records. This approach clarifies your expectations for students, and then grades them based on their meeting of those expectations.

Over time, the faculty from the founding years of BHSEC Newark have developed an array of practices that help students from a range of academic backgrounds and experiences move toward, and achieve, student-driven critical thinking. Though the elements first associated with the Scaffolding Indepen-

dence concept were outside the classroom, and then in the space in between, the classroom itself also evolved into an essential site for Scaffolding Independence practices. As Principal, I often had the pleasure of observing teachers and students engage in these practices, and I was motivated to incorporate them into my own teaching (Bard Early College building leaders continue to teach, usually one class each semester). Two catalyzing moments inspired bringing these practices together into a more coherent, and named, framework. The first was the founding of additional BHSEC campuses in Cleveland and Baltimore, and, later, Washington, DC. Bard Early College had the opportunity to train the new faculty for those campuses, through state-approved alternative certificate programs that we offer to our teachers, as well as to those from other schools. The second was a grant opportunity from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, to codify early college teaching practices for dissemination beyond the Bard Early College campuses. For these opportunities, I assembled a team of BHSEC Newark founders to join me in this work: Faculty in History Dr. Seth David Halvorson, Faculty in Literature Dr. Ena (Harris) Onami, and Dean of Studies and Faculty in Literature Dr. Lori Ween. We were later joined by two faculty who had come to BHSEC Newark three to four years into the founding, Faculty in Mathematics and Physics Dr. Tiffany Morris and Faculty in History Dr. Matthew Park.



Figure 8: Scaffolding Independence visualization

From this group of dynamic, innovative educators, the training series “Scaffolding Independence in the Classroom” evolved. The Scaffolding Independence framework includes four components: “Experiencing Discovery,” “Spiraled Objectives,” “Personalized Challenge,” and “Classroom Dynamics.” Though placed in a certain order in the sequence of training modules, they are not actually to be experienced sequentially by the students. They interweave with one another within the same lessons, with Scaffolding Independence as the overall result. We represent

this relationship through a visualization based on a Mobius strip. [See Figure 8] “Experiencing Discovery” operates on the premise that discovery is key to authentic learning across different disciplines. If students can experience that, they will be more drawn to the material, and also utilize and develop higher cognitive functions. “Spiraled Objectives” draws on the concept that spiraling—encountering the same concepts repeatedly, used differently and with added complexity, often across years and grades<sup>4</sup>—builds toward deeper learning, and supports students who master material at different paces learning together in the same classroom. “Personalized Challenge” further differentiates, meeting

students where they are, and bringing them to next levels, through multiple modalities. This also fosters greater independence, as students work toward answering questions to which there are many right answers. “Classroom Dynamics” reframes the concept of “classroom management,” which can devolve into a cult of appreciation for student silence. In Classroom Dynamics, each student is challenged and supported to participate, in multiple ways, at growing levels of ability.

In the form presented here, Scaffolding Independence in the Classroom is a group of eight training modules, totaling more than 50 hours of training time, that can be done as a full sequence or as discrete components. Scaffolding Independence in Classroom can help both relative newcomers to the classroom as well as veteran teachers as they work to build the capacity for independence in their students in a framework mindful of the needs and potential of adolescent learners. We have organized the modules as follows:

1. The Scaffolding Independence Teacher  
By the Scaffolding Independence Team
2. Experiencing Discovery  
By Seth Halvorson
3. Spiraled Objectives  
By John B. Weinstein
4. Personalized Challenge  
By Lori Ween
5. Classroom Dynamics  
By John B. Weinstein
6. Scaffolding Independence Applied: Humanities Focus  
By Ena Onami
7. Scaffolding Independence Applied: STEM Focus  
By Tiffany Morris
8. Scaffolding Independence Applied: Research Focus  
By Matthew Park

The modules’ most frequent use thus far has been for training teachers coming from a traditional college-aged teaching background, with the aim of preparing them for the more explicit structures necessary for students at a younger developmental age, in particular for the 9th and 10th grade classes leading up to Early College courses. I consider the 9th and 10th grade instruction preceding the college credit-bearing courses to be just as much a part of Early College pedagogy as the college courses. From my experiences in Newark and beyond,

successful 9th grade teaching and learning is an even more significant and differentiating determinant than the first college credit-bearing courses.

The first application of the Scaffolding Independence training modules came in the summer of 2018, when earlier versions of modules 1, 3, 4 and 5 were taught to new faculty of BHSEC Baltimore and the Baltimore School of the Arts (BSA) as part of the Bard's MAAPP (Maryland Approved Alternative Preparations Program), under the title of Early College Pedagogy.<sup>5</sup> A significant factor, both symbolically and practically, was that the first trained cohort of teachers were not just from a Bard Early College campus, and not even just from early college programs. Training new teachers for the Baltimore School of the Arts demonstrated broader applications of these concepts. There were certain affinities, given that that school often draws its faculty from professional artists who may be new to full-time teaching and new to high school aged students, not so different from the Bard Early College project of training college professors to work with younger students. Though originally designed from, and for, Early College teaching, including the 9th and 10th grade high school courses leading into Early College, the Scaffolding Independence approach can apply to high school and college pedagogy more broadly, and even into younger grades.

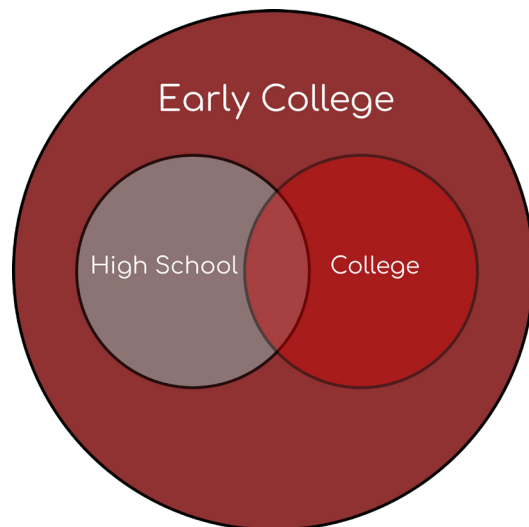


Figure 9: Early College Venn diagram

A key tenet is that a learner is, simultaneously, open to approaches from all years prior to theirs. We teach this through an exercise with Sandra Cisneros' "Eleven," from *The House on Mango Street*. Cisneros writes, "What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one."<sup>6</sup> If learners are multiple ages at once, then there will not be any one single "age" of teaching approach that exclusively reaches them. As a result, we

should not differentiate between "high school teaching" and "college teaching" practices as distinct from one another. I myself might now say the more cumbersome, but to me more accurate, "practices more frequently associated with high school teaching," to acknowledge that an approach, such as checking for understanding, may be talked about more in high school contexts, but there is nothing about the technique per se that makes it only a high school technique. Scaffolding Independence insists that the educator question the notion that certain steps must come in a certain order, and for certain ages. It calls upon the educator to draw upon pedagogy from multiple ages, explore the intersections of those, and then envision what exists in neither, but needs to, to



meet the evolving needs of young people. One conceptualization we use in the modules—presented not as the answer, but as a prompt for reflection and discussion—places a Venn diagram intersecting high school and college within a larger circle of Early College. [See Figure 9] Within the Early College movement, which at times has given more emphasis on what college pedagogy could teach to high school pedagogy, the push toward a bidirectionality of adult learning—what high school and college pedagogies can learn *from one another*—is a key mindset shift promoted by the Scaffolding Independence team.

Scaffolding Independence can, then, contribute to meeting the needs of all educators; so, too, can it do so for all students. *All* is essential. In my years in Newark, and beyond that time, I often encounter trainings and programs geared toward a certain type of student, described as “underserved,” “disadvantaged,” “underrepresented,” the even more vague “urban,” or whatever the euphemism du jour may be. The indication seems to be that other students are already well-educated, or even worse *well-educatable*, but this group needs something more, so that they can become better served, more advantaged, or more fully represented (and perhaps someday suburban). The various trainings that I have attended that are geared toward reaching this group can sometimes give the impression that envisioning and enforcing cell phone policies is the key to equalizing educational outcomes. While the Scaffolding Independence documents do, along with many other areas, have some moments referencing cell phones – cell phones do make an appearance in the rubric in Figure 5 – it is more as subtopic than silver bullet. I also want to note that back in 2007, years before I encountered students with cell phones in Newark, and before cell phones had become quite common in American classrooms, my traditional college-aged students in Tainan, Taiwan were on their phones in class. So, I really do mean *all* students.

---

DR. JOHN B. WEINSTEIN is the Provost and Vice President of Bard Academy and Bard College at Simon’s Rock. He previously served as founding faculty of the first Bard High School Early College in New York City, where he established the programs in Chinese language and in theater; as Faculty in Chinese and Asian Studies at Simon’s Rock, as well as Director of the Writing and Thinking program and Emily H. Fisher Faculty Fellow; on the founding team of Bard High School Early College Newark, first as Dean of the Early College and later as Principal; and as Dean of the Early Colleges for Bard College. A scholar focusing on modern Chinese and Taiwanese theater and performance, he edited and co-translated the book *Voices of Taiwanese Women: Three Contemporary Plays*, and has authored numerous chapters and articles. He is a leading authority on liberal arts early college education in both private and public contexts, and he trains teachers in early college pedagogy within and beyond the Bard Network.

## NOTES

- 1 The concept of metacognition in the first Scaffolding Independence module, as explained in Kimberly Tanner, “Approaches to Biology Teaching and Learning: Promoting Student Metacognition” (2012), *CBE-Life Sciences Education*, Vol. 11, 113-120.
- 2 The Writing and Thinking Workshop, which begins the academic experience for students at Bard Academy and Bard College at Simon’s Rock, and which begins all four years at each Bard High School Early College, utilizes teaching practices from the Institute for Writing and Thinking (IWT) at Bard College. These pedagogical practices are used in Bard programs worldwide. For more on IWT, see <https://iwt.bard.edu/>.
- 3 I discuss this Small Group Critique technique in more detail, including the specific language of each step, in my chapter in *Educating Outside the Lines*, a book about the pedagogy of Bard College at Simon’s Rock. See John B. Weinstein, “Intellectual Warm-Ups: How ‘Writing and Thinking’ Prepares Students for College Study,” in *Educating Outside the Lines: Bard College at Simon’s Rock on a ‘New Pedagogy’ for the Twenty-First Century*,” ed. Nancy Yanoshak (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 28-29.
- 4 The concept of spiraling was first introduced by Jerome Bruner; see Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge: The President and Fellows of Harvard University, 1960).
- 5 For more on the Baltimore School of the Arts, see <https://www.bsfa.org/>. For more on Maryland Approved Alternative Preparations Programs, see <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DEE/Program-Approval/MAAPP.aspx>. The MAAPP has also included sessions on Writing & Thinking taught by IWT Associates, as well as sessions on other topics taught by BHSEC Baltimore-based faculty and staff.
- 6 Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (Vintage, 1991).