

**Moore's Musings:
Painting by Numbers**

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The gates of the schoolyard are padlocked and chained
 To keep all the children in out of the rain
 The art teacher's preaching the virtues of pastel shades
You pay no attention but it won't hurt your grades
'cause you're painting by numbers, connecting the dots
 They don't have to tell you, you don't call the shots
 You jump when they say jump, you don't ask how high
'cause painting by numbers they know you'll get by,
 painting by numbers you know you'll get by.

James McMurtry, "Painting by Numbers"
 From *Too Long in the Wasteland*

When my daughter was in middle school (7th grade), she brought home an assignment from her science teacher in which students were provided blank line drawings of various ecosystems and literally asked to color in the

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**Effective Ways to Promote Learning
and Program Improvement**

Barbara Leigh Smith, Special Assistant
 Enduring Legacies Reservation Based Program
 The Evergreen State College

In September 2005 The Evergreen State College and Grays Harbor College initiated a new program to provide Native American students with the opportunity to earn an AA degree at widely dispersed Indian reservations including Lower Elwha Klallam, Quinault, Muckleshoot, Nisqually, and Squaxin Island. This was a direct transfer program that enabled students to then enter any four-year program including Evergreen's upper division program that was already in place in a number of these communities. However, this was not an ordinary 2 +2 articulation effort! **The Enduring Legacies Project**



(From left to right) Stacey Gouley, Debbie Martin, Raven Bryson, Diana Palmer, Dale Croes, Nelson P. Dan, Billy Frank

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ePortfolios Are About Learning

Allen StandingBear Jenkins and Barbara Leigh Smith
The Evergreen State College

EPortfolios are not about technology, although we use technology to produce them. They are about critical thinking, reflective writing, and creativity. EPortfolios are about teachers, students, program and school goals, and assessment. If emphasis is placed on technology and not on the human factors, thinking, reflection, communication, and creativity, then you end up with sterile, lifeless busy work. But ePortfolios can be a wonderful vehicle for showing the world what you have accomplished and who you are. It is learning in a public way, with the student orchestrating how and what is to be presented.

We began experimenting with ePortfolios about a year ago in Evergreen's reservation-based program. We dreamed of creating an ePortfolio that would provide an engaging and seamless depiction of student work that spanned our lower division Grays Harbor AA program and the upper division Evergreen reservation-based program. We hoped that ePortfolios could make college learning outcomes come alive for students and provide a meaningful framework for reflecting on their work.

The initial pilot project was at our Nisqually site using ordinary software that every student had on his or her computers, Excel, PowerPoint, and Word. Little emphasis was placed on the "how to" of creating an ePortfolio, rather the emphasis was on reflection on their work, courses taken, studies made, internships and independent projects, papers written, and other products of their tenure in college. Upper division Evergreen students were asked to reflect on why they did each product, what they learned, and what connections could and should be made. They were asked to reflect on and write about the skills they used to create individual pieces and what they think they still need to learn. They were asked to demonstrate from their work how they have met the college's General Ed requirements, the expectations of what the college expects from their graduates and the skills a college graduate should have. Lastly, students were asked to create the vehicle to portray their learning. What was produced were individual works that displayed

the pride and accomplishments of each student. Collectively they demonstrated the achievement of program and college goals and expectations.

In the following year, our ePortfolio effort was stepped up to include all reservation-based Grays Harbor students with a framework that spanned the Grays Harbor and Evergreen curriculum. We developed ePortfolio software using Droople open source software. It turns out that there are numerous ePortfolio systems available, some through open source providers and some through commercial vendors such as Blackboard and Sakai. [The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching](#) has an e-Portfolio system that is easy and inexpensive to use, and a terrific website showing some of the ePortfolio projects they have supported. One major lesson we learned was that some ePortfolio systems allow more flexibility and creativity than others do which is an important consideration as students create ePortfolios. Moreover, many of the commercial systems are pricey. We have heard that many ePortfolio discussions are stalled on the issue of which software to use.

Our ePortfolio framework was organized around the learning outcomes of an AA degree at Grays Harbor College and the BA learning expectations at Evergreen. The ePortfolios were intentionally longitudinal and developmental so students could map their progress over time and look back at what they had accomplished. We hoped our ePortfolios would provide numerous opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and their progress from an AA at Grays Harbor through a BA at Evergreen. While the ePortfolio was designed to draw upon all of their courses, reservation-based students from Grays Harbor and Evergreen enrolled in a common two-credit ePortfolio class to learn how to construct one. In this class, they wrote a number of essays that asked them to look at their journey as a learner, their goals and aspirations, and the college learning outcomes. They posted "best work" in terms of the learning outcomes and through that process, defined what these learning outcomes meant to them. They also commented on their growth in indigenous knowledge, an additional learning outcome of this reservation-based program.

Now three quarters later, the student ePortfolios con-

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Reflections from “Creating Significant Learning Experiences”: The 2007 Pacific Northwest Higher Education Teaching & Learning Conference

“The gathering of teachers in one place is always inspiring & thought provoking. So many dedicated professionals concerned about developing skills to support student success.”

(Comment from a conference participant)

Many thanks to the more than 300 college and university educators who came together in Vancouver, WA the first week in May for the eighteenth PNW Higher Education Teaching & Learning Conference “Creating Significant Learning Experiences”. For many of the participants, the only problem was trying to decide which of the great sessions to attend.

The keynote address “The Joy and Responsibility of Teaching Well” brought by Dr. L. Dee Fink, Professional Consultant in Higher Education, was well received. As one conference participant said Dr. Fink was an awesome speaker. Through the use of a PowerPoint presentation, Fink shared his thoughts and provided concrete ideas on issues educators need to re-examine, e.g., **What** We Teach, **How** We Teach, **How** We **Gear Up** and **Who** We Are. As he says in “Creating Significant Learning Experiences”, Jossey-Bass, 2003, “*All teachers face the challenge of designing their courses and teaching in a way that leads to learning that can be deemed to be truly significant, as viewed by both students and others.*”

One of the highlights of the 2007 Conference was the inclusion of students as presenters in a number of sessions. Recognizing the need to know more about what is important to students and how students perceive their learning, the planning committee decided early on to encourage faculty to include students whenever possible in their presentations. As seen from the comments below, educators who attended these sessions found them to be stimulating and thought provoking:

- A great dialogue. Impressive, engaged students. Faculty and students appeared to learn from each other & many practical teaching strategies were shared.
- Student leaders are knowledgeable, ex-

cellent discussion leaders and led us in a purposeful discussion that awakened me to the need to pay more attention to student voices.

- Terrific! Great conversation. Thank you so much for caring enough to be here and for being here and sharing your thoughts, voices, selves with the rest of us! Great session.
- Loved learning from the students. They did a great job! We learned so much from them. It’s great having the student perspective.

In addition to sharing their perspectives on learning during sessions, students also participated in a challenge with faculty **Are YOU Smarter Than YOUR College Students?** at the closing plenary. Though close, the students definitely rose to the occasion! Hopefully, student/faculty participation at future conferences will continue to grow as we seek to learn from one another, and, in so doing, deepen the learning experience for all involved.

Sixty widely varying sessions in content and format representing five overall strands ranged from “What Does Evidence of Student Learning Mean” to “Aligning Mathematics Placement with Curricular Goals for Quantitative Literacy”, “Challenging Students with Quality Curriculum: A Learning Community for Beginning Level Developmental Students”, “Multiple Perspectives: Documentation Creates a Space to Examine Assessment, Teaching and Learning”, “The Journey from a Communication Class to a Club - A Dialog with Students”, “The Courage to Teach: Renewing and Sustaining our Passion for Education” to “How Virtual Are You: Utilizing Second Life, Facebook, My Space, Blogs and Other Virtual Spaces in the College Classroom”.

Another highlight and new feature of the conference was the presentation of the **1st Annual Teaching, Learning & Assessment AWARD(s)** and a **Distance-Learning Award**. The Awards, presented at the opening day’s lunch, recognize the efforts and great work of educators in making meaningful contributions to student learning. With this being the first year to

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present the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Award the committee recognized 12 individuals whose contributions to teaching and learning have been significant for their colleges, their colleagues and their communities. Congratulations go to:

- * George Dennis, Lower Columbia College
- * Mike Witmer, Skagit Valley College
- * Tom Drummond, North Seattle Community College
- * Shiloh Winsor, Grays Harbor College
- * Rebecca Martin, Clark College
- * Marilyn Chu, Skagit Valley College
- * Dennis Olson, Spokane Falls Community College
- * Stephen Berard, Wenatchee Valley College
- * Gary Brown, Washington State University
- * Lynn Dunlap, Skagit Valley College
- * Gwen James, Columbia Basin College
- * Claus Svendsen, Skagit Valley College

Also receiving the Distance Learning Leadership and Innovation Award was Karen Johnson, Walla Walla Community College.

Plans for the 2008 Conference are underway, so be sure to make plans now for the opportunity to meet and learn with colleagues from across the Pacific Northwest. Dates are April 30 - May 2, 2008 at the DoubleTree in downtown Spokane. Information on submitting a proposal will be in the October issue of eWAG, so begin thinking now about what you can share with folks from around the Pacific Northwest!



(From left to right) Mike Witmer, Shiloh Winsor, Tom Drummond, Gwen James, Rebecca Martin, Marilyn Chu, Gary Brown, George Dennis, Claus Svendsen



The Man In The Arena

By Theodore Roosevelt

(From a speech delivered in Paris in 1910)

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by the dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who, at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.

**To Everything There Is a Season...
Ecclesiastes 3:1 (attributed to King Solomon)**



Anna Sue McNeill
State Board for Community
& Technical Colleges

For the past several issues of eWAG, I have included [Random Thoughts](#) from Louis Schmier. His postings to the web cover a span from April 1993 through November 2006. Inspiring and thought provoking, Louis Schmier calls attention to the human dimension of education, showing that the heart of teaching is to care about each student as a unique, sacred human being. I particularly like his final posting on November 30, 2006 which he calls "[A Departing Testament](#)" that speaks to our will and the significant part it plays in what we do and how we spend our time.

And, speaking of time, "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven" and a new season and time begins for me at the end of June—when after 28.5 years I will retire from the SBCTC. As many of you know, it has taken more than a little bit of time and a whole lot of anguishing over when to retire—a truly difficult decision as I have been blessed with getting to know and working with some really great people.

I can remember, my first day, December 14, 1978, when I arrived so promptly and asked for Mr. Hale—Earl is the one who hired me—and people began to chuckle; first off, because of the term "Mr." rather than Earl, and secondly, because of me not knowing that Earl was not always at the office at the stroke of 8:00 a.m. Since then, many wonderful folks have crossed my path and I can earnestly say, my life has been blessed because of them. It is impossible to mention all, but I do want to thank Bill Moore, a truly super guy who made me feel that what I was doing was of value and that in some small way actually helped him, Jan Yoshiwara, who gave me all kinds of opportunities to do new and different things, Jackie Eppler-Clark and Linda St. Jean, who were always so supportive and then so many other folks

here at the SBCTC and throughout the system that made coming to work—at least on most days—something I really wanted to do.

With the changes ahead and a new season beginning, Schmier's words and thoughts in a *Departing Testament* express so much better than I can how I feel about spending the time we are given. It speaks so clearly to the importance of providing education with meaning; meaning to our students and meaning to each of us—teacher, family, friend. I was thinking about this last night, as I lay awake contemplating my last few days with the SBCTC, and the thought came to me that every experience during a day teaches us something—something about ourselves, our families, our society. It is our choice,—one of my favorite words and most powerful—of what we do with those experiences.

As educators, the part we play in providing experiences for students builds on their past and future experiences. Sort of like, building a snowman, one snowflake though beautiful in itself needs many snowflakes to become "Frosty". Each of us are one of the snowflakes; important, but needing the others. And, it is we who determine how significant a snowflake we want to be.

Well, I guess, after more than 14 times around the earth just driving back and forth to work—weekends and major holidays excluded—and more than 1/3 of my life (7,200+ days) at the SBCTC, it truly is time to say goodbye. I wish each of you a great 2008 filled with many and varied opportunities to make a difference in the lives of the people you touch. You have made a difference in mine!



To Subscribe to eWAG or submit an article,
please email the Editor:
[Jackie Eppler-Clark](#)
SBCTC, 360-704-4351.

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pictures—no analysis, no reflections, just coloring. When my wife and I asked about it—in a friendly, non-threatening way, I think—the teacher muttered something about multiple learning styles and “I do it with the kids and I learn a lot,” but she couldn’t really tell us what it was exactly she learned. My daughter muttered something about “busy work,” and it was hard to argue with her—but she dutifully colored them all and submitted her assignment.

That’s a literal example of what I think is a much larger problem raised metaphorically here by James

McMurtry, one of my favorite singer/songwriters (and the son of the novelist Larry McMurtry): to what extent are we in education allowing, even encouraging, our students to get by with “painting by numbers,” and what are the consequences for them and for our society? I expect there’s a role somewhere in the learning process at some point for a little “painting

“At a minimum, citizens in a media-drenched democracy like ours have to do a lot of sifting through misinformation and dis-information just to have a reasonably well-informed opinion about critical issues (with “reasonably well-informed” being the key description and challenge there).”

by numbers,” but in the increasingly complex, uncertain, and fast-moving world our children and our students are facing, they need to be well-prepared for, and comfortable with, moving considerably beyond just painting by numbers. It’s hard to imagine what kind of progress we’re going to make on the range of problems we need to address in the coming years without considerably more people having the skills and intellectual tools to think for themselves and make judgments in the face of incomplete, and sometimes contradictory, evidence. There may have been a time when it was adequate for a small educated class to have those tools and make decisions for everyone else, but even if that were true it’s not the case now. At a minimum, citizens in a media-drenched democracy like ours have to do a lot of sifting through misinformation and dis-information just to have a reasonably well-informed opinion about critical issues (with “reasonably well-informed” being the key de-

scription and challenge there).

I used McMurtry’s song as the context for a presentation I did in 2004 to teacher educators, but I thought of it again recently when I listened to a couple of [NPR podcasts from John Merrow](#) (produced as part of a PBS special called *Declining by Degrees*—by the way, Merrow’s most recent report was *Discounted Dreams*, focusing specifically on the role of community and technical colleges in U.S. education): “Expecting More—and Getting It” and “Expecting Less—and Getting It.” These interviews are lengthy (45-50 minutes) but worth the time, I think; the contrast between the two teachers is striking and provocative. In “Expecting More...,” the professor (Austin Sarat, Amherst College) talks about the importance of and successes with challenging students to think, explain their positions, and argue for their points of view; in “Expecting Less...,” the professor (Paulette Kurzer, Arizona State University) describes her mutual, if unspoken, arrangement with her students to not challenge them to think very much or work very hard. She argues that it’s because they’re uninterested, unmotivated, and too busy with other things to bother doing anything beyond taking notes (when they bother showing up); in any case, she feels sufficiently over-worked and under-paid to not go beyond the minimum expectations of presenting her lectures and answering the occasional question about what’s going to be on the test. These two political science professors certainly teach in very different baccalaureate institution settings, but at least initially I didn’t believe that the differing contexts and student populations completely explain the differences in approaches. I agreed with what seemed to be Merrow’s obvious point: expectations matter, and that as a teacher you get from your students, at least to some degree, what you ask for and what you expect, a version of what some call the “Pygmalion effect.” If you expect them to think critically and make judgments based on evidence, they’ll do so; if you give them assignments asking them to color inside the lines, they’ll be happy to oblige.

The more I think about it, though, the more it seems that institutional context and student population may be a bigger, or more disturbing, part of this equation than I thought at first. I’m serving on an advisory

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group to the State Board of Education’s *Meaningful High School Diploma* committee, and we’ve had two lively meetings in which we’ve discussed what all students should have to take in high school in order to acquire the competence they need for the variety of next steps available to them when they graduate. These discussions often revolve (usually, though not always, more implicitly than explicitly) around issues of what certain students can and can’t do, and therefore *shouldn’t be expected to do*—for example, the notion that algebra demands too much abstract thinking for the brains of certain students who think concretely and thus are better off avoiding the rigors of courses like Algebra II and the like. I’m sure the people making these assertions are well-meaning, but the practical effect is that for certain 16- or 17-year-old students opportunities are shut off and doors are closed, potentially permanently. And in the real world of K-12 education in America, issues of race and class are inevitably involved—the students “counseled” to avoid these courses are disproportionately students of color and students from lower-income families. Certainly there are challenges for many students in tackling difficult subjects, whether it’s math, English, or social studies—but given the combination of lower expectations and a pedagogical tradition geared toward the typical high-achieving student, can we honestly say certain students literally can’t acquire these skills? Based on what evidence?

At a broader level, of course, a similar argument is often made about community and technical college students in general: they’re attending open-admission institutions, after all, and one can’t expect them to need or handle intellectually rigorous inquiry and synthesis skills. Unfortunately, there’s a strong case to be made for such skills being fundamental to success in the 21st century as the U.S. struggles to find its economic niche in a world where jobs have gone global and relatively cheap labor abounds (see the [AAC&U report, *College Learning for the New Global Century*](#), as one example). I hear that argument far more often from people outside of the two-year college system, and even from students themselves, than from faculty in the system; most faculty I know care about their

students acquiring these core thinking skills and challenge their students accordingly. On the other hand, I believe most faculty in the system are well aware of the broader societal context in which they operate; in general they know how poorly-funded two-year colleges are relative to the rest of education, and they know in part that two-year colleges are expected to operate on the cheap because of the lower expectations about their students’ needs and capacities. Given the teaching loads and the reliance on part-timers in many academic areas, many of them are genuinely over-worked and under-paid; it’s hard to imagine that those factors don’t have some influence on attitudes toward and expectations of the students they teach. Energy is finite, there are only so many hours in a day, and the college’s accountability depends on good student retention; those are all powerful forces undermining a teacher’s enthusiasm for pushing students beyond “painting by numbers.”

So those are the issues that are swirling around in my head these days, mostly around what kind of math do all students need and why, but more generally around what kind of learning do all students need to be prepared for the world they’re going to face (and eventually shape). Is “painting by numbers” really all that some students can handle (or all that they will need), and if so, which students, and who gets to decide? If not, then how do we get beyond all of the rhetoric and sloganeering and truly get serious about creating the educational conditions that will allow us to challenge and support all students so that they’re able to create their own metaphorical masterpieces? I think it begins with having expectations—of our students, ourselves, and the system as a whole—that challenge all of us in appropriate ways while at the same time understanding the critical need for support in meeting those challenges. Personally, I don’t think any of us should be able to get by with “painting by numbers,” and it’s a loss for all of us when that’s all we expect of our students and ourselves.



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was designed as a “high tech/high touch” hybrid distance learning program. The new initiative was a complex undertaking involving the development of the new AA degree drawing on courses from a dozen community colleges, culturally sensitive course redesign, faculty development, and building the inter-institutional infrastructure to sustain the initiative. A complex array of players supported the effort including tribal-based study leaders at each reservation site and a new outreach coordinator/advisor. Washington Online coordinated the online learning course offerings. Additional complexity resulted from the program’s close relationships with Evergreen, which purposefully created numerous opportunities for the lower and upper division students to work together in some of the face-to-face shared classes.

Many students have only a course-by-course relationship with higher education which can easily be broken when they face obstacles. Fortunately, our students entered and progressed through the program as a cohort and saw this as a long term relationship, which greatly enhanced the sense of community and student retention. Not all courses worked as well as we would have liked, and students, quite frankly, had some difficult quarters because of the many personal challenges in their lives. Nonetheless, the over-riding sense of being part of an enterprise that cares about them *in the long-term* has allowed most of them to maintain their commitment to education despite numerous setbacks.

A Different Kind of Program Evaluation

We think our evaluation approach also dramatically improved program performance. Too frequently evaluation is done too late in a project to improve performance, and there is often little feedback to the participants. Rich and extensive formative assessment practices were placed at the center of our initiative because we thought this would facilitate communication, program improvement, and program sustainability.

A complex evaluation plan was developed that divided assessment responsibilities between an external evaluator (Peter Ewell from NCHEMS) and Evergreen’s former Provost, Barbara Leigh Smith, who became the

internal evaluator and program coach. Many years earlier Smith and Jean MacGregor founded the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education, which had used interviewing and high feedback systems as a way of supporting the fledgling effort to begin learning communities in Washington State. This approach seemed ideal in building a high feedback system for the new Native initiative.

Throughout the quarter the internal evaluator lurked on the online classes, attended a number of the face-to-face classes, and communicated with faculty as well as study leaders about student attendance at the required weekly class at each reservation site. It turns out that online classes are an unusually rich source of information on student progress since they include participation information and very regular submission of work.

But the centerpiece of the internal evaluation approach was an end-of-quarter interview process whereby the internal evaluator did 20 minute telephone interviews with all of the faculty, key staff, and the study leaders. She also did in-person interviews of the students at the last face-to-face class each quarter using the Small Group Instructional Diagnosis approach (SGID) as well as occasional written surveys administered in class.

She then wrote up the results of all this interviewing in a document called *Gleanings* which was sent back to the faculty, study leaders, and program leaders. Both descriptive and analytic, *Gleanings* helped readers to see not only what was happening in the program as a whole but also to learn from one another in terms of the different approaches taken and problems encountered. The quarterly report ended with a series of conclusions and recommendations that were then reviewed by the leadership team. Each quarter we learned some things that have helped improve what we are doing. In fact, every issue of *Gleanings* thus far has generated a list of 12-20 recommendations for improvement as well as clear evidence about what is working well. Numerous changes have been made as a result including adding additional training, re-sequencing courses, developing new courses to fill gaps, addressing workload issues, redesigning assignments, changing the structure of site class meetings, and clarifying expectations.

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Lessons

Now, as we enter the sixth quarter of our new program, we've learned a great deal, and we believe this approach has broader value. We hope others might learn from this and consider using this approach. While the approach is labor intensive, we think this is time well spent. Clearly, interviewing everybody is a critical aspect, and we believe telephone or in person is better than surveys for continuous improvement (although surveys are easier to administer and report).

For us, some of the big lessons are -

Purposefully building long term relationships improves performance and student persistence. The evaluation process itself can be a vehicle for building long term relationships, better communication, and a sense of community.

The end-of-quarter interview and feedback process is invaluable in program development and fine-tuning. One teacher observed, "We need to make this a permanent part of our culture. Assessment is a cornerstone to maintaining quality in any organization, including colleges. It is impossible to know where you are going if you don't know where you've been." Another said, "From a program administration and curriculum development position this information is invaluable for making decisions to improve the program. It's a great tool for developing benchmarks and for following the progress of the program. It also offers ways of collecting information about resources and helps connect sites and faculty that are geographically remote. It is also a great tool for challenging faculty to try new teaching methods and resources, always stretching for better ways to facilitate learning."

Faculty expressed great appreciation for the larger perspective this approach offers. As one commented, "I find this internal program evaluation process very positive and community-building. My experiences and voice matter to the process, and they result in new learning for me, for others, and for the institution / program." Another said, "You just don't see the bigger picture most of the time, only your little part," while her colleague said "Without these lines of communication, online instructors who are in another physical place may feel cut off from what is going on in the program as a whole. We establish a relationship with

our students, but not necessarily with everyone else in the program. So communicating about what is going on is a valuable function and certainly will continue to be an important factor in the continued success of this special community's collaborative efforts."

- Many faculty expressed interest in knowing what one another was doing and learned from the descriptions of their colleague's classes. As one put it, "In the quarterly debriefing, I learn what has worked for my colleagues, and what hasn't. I get a closer feeling of camaraderie and shared endeavor with my peers." It's become clear to us that most faculty receive no regular feedback on their work, but all of them were very interested in ways to improve their courses and learn from others. This approach satisfies that need. Another pointed to the value of having both the telephone interviews and the students voice saying "I thought both parts of the process worked well in tandem. For example, in the phone interview I explained my approach on use of the Discussion Board and later used the student report in *Gleanings* to place my own thoughts in the context of how students experience that part of an online course."

- The approach encourages both learning and experimentation and accountability. This balance is important. As one administrator pointed out, "Gleanings is about what we are learning, not just about what went wrong. *Gleanings* creates a common history for each quarter and also points to next steps." One of the study leaders said "this is really the 'what works' and 'what doesn't work' about our program. It holds me as a study leader accountable for getting our job done each quarter. I look forward to the feedback."

This type of formative evaluation helps build and communicate the collective vision as well as a sense of community in higher education. As one put it, "Reading about others' experiences and about the students, especially students I have had in class, makes me feel a

"I find this internal program evaluation process very positive and community-building. My experiences and voice matter to the process, and they result in new learning for me, for others, and for the institution / program."

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part of a community of educators doing valuable work with our students.” Without this larger sense of the common enterprise, our overall educational effort may be less than the sum of the parts, simply because of miscommunication, misunderstanding, and lack of alignment. This form of internal evaluation and feedback can help build the collective vision.

Finally, acting on the information is critical. As one faculty member said, “The willingness to change directions and strengthen the program for the learners really encourages me. The candor is important, to know what is idealistic and what is practical... What makes this work is that there is effective decision-making and follow-through with the collected information. It’s not information collected for its own sake but rather something applied intelligently and strategically.”



“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take but by the number of moments that take our breath away.”

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tinue to grow and deepen, providing vivid descriptions of student intellectual development and growth. Some of the lessons we have learned through this process are as follows:

Students were very positive about the experience. As one student put it, “I thoroughly enjoyed having a way to collect my writings and inspirations in a logical and presentable format. The concept encouraged me to explore my creative and artistic side. I felt inspired to experiment with new computer programs and gained a foundation to continue in the future.”

EPortfolios can be built around many different software systems, including commonly used programs and tools such as WORD, PowerPoint, and Excel. The external evaluator also noted, “These students had mixed feelings about the e-portfolio technology. Some found it difficult to master and suggested a brief written guide or “hint sheet” be prepared.

And all of them seemed a bit disappointed that the current platform could not do the things they were shown as illustrations at the beginning like being able to post videos and music.”

EPortfolios can take various forms and be positioned in an individual course around individual course goals or around larger curricular goals of a major or an entire degree.

EPortfolios can make college outcomes real and alive for students. A number of students said it never occurred to them to look at and think about college learning outcomes before. In his interviews with these students, our external evaluator noted, “One student mentioned that the portfolio process

“One student mentioned that the portfolio process made the GHC and Evergreen statements of learning outcomes real to her for the first time because they had to think about how to demonstrate them...”

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(Continued from page 10) *“ePortfolios Are About Learning”*

made the GHC and Evergreen statements of learning outcomes real to her for the first time because they had to think about how to demonstrate them, and other students immediately agreed. One emphasized that having to tie learning outcomes to her work through the portfolio was very useful in allowing her to ‘recognize and label’ what she had accomplished.”

The public nature of our ePortfolios created new opportunities and some discomfort. Many ePortfolio projects are not built around public sharing and commenting on one another’s ePortfolios, but this was an important feature of our ePortfolio system. Students could look at and comment upon their classmates ePortfolios. (Students could also make individual parts of the ePortfolio private.) The external evaluator noted that “There were mixed feelings about the ‘public’ nature of the portfolio, with some students feeling that it was “premature” to ask them to share their work with others (one pulled a paper after actually seeing how it looked on the portfolio) and others reporting that they liked the pressure this put on them to do good work. All of them believe that the portfolio process has stimulated them to learn better, but it was mostly seen as a motivating device rather than an aid to learning in itself. The ability to comment on one another’s work was also seen as helpful.”

Students’ opinions changed over time. As one said, “I was resistant to the e-portfolio project at first. I did not want my work and personal information out somewhere for all to read. I was not excited to learn another computer language either. Now, I have learned that sometimes the things I most resist turn out to be some of the best things for me. ... I find this project to be a very interesting progression. I have changed many of the papers I have posted and will continue to

“Now, I have learned that sometimes the things I most resist turn out to be some of the best things for me. ...”

do so. I removed my original picture and have a new one to post. I have not figured out how to get it posted yet, but I know I will. I love the comments from the other students and instructor. I have become curious how this will turn out in the future. I would even like to learn how to have

music and a scene and to have my e-portfolio represent me professionally. To dream is to be.”

EPortfolios can push students towards higher standards of performance. Many students noted that their peers’ ePortfolios provided concrete alternatives and inspired them. They also said that they frequently went back and redid their work as they saw more effective ways to present it.

It was fascinating to see what examples students chose to exemplify their best work. The ePortfolios provide a student perspective on what were meaningful assignments.

While our ePortfolios were not intentionally designed as a tool for program assessment, they could certainly be used this way. The ePortfolios also graphically display the kind of assignments students are asked to do. We have a strong preference for integrative assignments that push students towards higher order reasoning, and these were often the assignments students used as examples of their best work.

EPortfolios work best when they are an integral part of all of the students work. Some classroom assessment practices, such as end-of-quarter summative student self-evaluation, have a natural fit with ePortfolios.



Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."
Harold Whitman

Links to Articles of Interest to Educators

[Setting the bar for college—and work ready Math](#)

(Erin Brown, Creating Opportunities, February 2007) Looking at what it means to be college-ready in Math and Washington State's efforts to allow students to gain Math skills in new and innovative ways.

[2 Years of Science, One-of-a-Kind Results](#)

(Elyse Ashburn, The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 25, 2007) - Students' performance at Massachusetts Bay Community College rivals that at universities. The reason? Bruce Jackson.

[Mapping the Misunderstood Population of Adult Students](#)

(Elyse Ashburn, The Chronicle of Higher Education, April 13, 2007) - A recovering alcohol and drug addict in her 30s. A former truck driver who lived in his car for six months. And a single mother with epilepsy. Each of them is part of an all-too-often invisible class of Americans: adult college students.

[So What Did You Learn in London?](#) (Inside Higher Ed, June 1, 2007) - With assessment and accountability at the center of policy discussions in Washington and elsewhere, international educators emphasized an increased need for research on measurable study abroad outcomes and what particular program characteristics cause student learning gains...

[Rejuvenating the Classroom](#) (Inside Higher Ed, May 21, 2007) - The Community College Content Literacy Program has some serious fans. It was effective enough...to convince one faculty member nearing retirement to stay on and keep teaching. Others who had taught for decades raved about its rejuvenating effect in their classrooms.

[Elephant Not in the Room](#) (Inside Higher Ed, May 1, 2007) - The empty seats started to irk him. Blair Hedges, a professor of biology at Pennsylvania State University, noticed an increasing number of them in the lecture hall where he taught his biology class. This wasn't an 8 a.m. distribution requirement snoozer, either; it was a late-morning, advanced-level course designed for majors. Attendance hadn't been an issue for Hedges throughout the 1990s, when he estimates

that, on average, 80 percent of enrolled students came to his class. But he noticed a decline over the last five years.

[Great\(er\) Expectations](#) (Inside Higher Ed, April 19, 2007) - A state-by-state report outlining progress on aligning high school and college curriculums details a promising upswell in activity, with more states raising graduation requirements, administering college readiness tests and...

[Revising the Teaching of Writing](#) (Inside Higher Ed, April 13, 2007) - How are students best taught to write at the college level? By professors who are based in disciplines outside writing and rhetoric, or by those who focus on composition? With a focus on writing for a non-academic audience or for their professors? And who should teach writing? Experts or graduate students in English and adjuncts?

[Getting Serious About College Readiness](#), (Dave Spence, Inside Higher Ed, March 22, 2007) - As someone who works with many states to improve education, I'm deeply troubled by the lack of our national progress — and the missing urgency in postsecondary education — toward improving students' readiness for college and their prospects for completing college degrees. Many in postsecondary education agree the readiness problem must be addressed, and a few states have taken strong early steps toward a solution. So, why haven't we moved closer to solving the readiness problem?

[Introductory Course Makeovers](#) (Inside Higher Ed, March 15, 2007) - Intermediate algebra at the University of Alabama used to be your basic introductory class — lecture format, little interaction.

Conferences, Workshops, & Professional Development Opportunities

[ISSOTL 2007](#) "Locating Learning: Integrative Dimensions in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning; July 2-5, 2007, Sydney, Australia.

[National College Learning Center Association \(NCLCA\) Institute](#)

July 8-11, 2007, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

ATP Online Workshops (These workshops will be offered as an open entry/open exit workshop where participants may visit any module at any time.)

[Three-Pack On-line Workshop](#); June 11, 2007 through August 5, 2007. The three pack will be a reprise of Cognitive Learning and Its Applications to the Tutorial Setting, Outcomes, Objectives and Assessment of Academic Support Programs and Communication, Ethics and Tutor Roles and Responsibilities, all of which were offered over the past year.

["Beginning a Tutorial Program: From Idea to Implementation and Beyond"](#); July 9, 2007 through August 12, 2007.

["Defining and Documenting Big Ideas"](#), Leavenworth, WA, August 18-20, 2007.

Transition Mathematics Project ["Summer Math Institute 2007"](#); Leavenworth, WA, August 20-24, 2007.

[National College Learning Center Association \(NCLCA\)](#), "Learning Centers by Design"; September 26-29, 2007, Renaissance Concourse Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia.

[Strengthening Student Success II - Making a Difference Conference](#); October 3-5, 2007, San Jose, CA.

[CRLA 2007: A Focus on Learning](#); October 21 - November 3, 2007 DoubleTree Hotel and Executive Meeting Center, Lloyd's Center, Portland, OR

[2007 Assessment Institute](#); November 5-6, 2007, Westin Indianapolis, Indianapolis, Indiana

[12th Annual National Learning Communities Conference](#); November 7-9, 2007, University College at Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI).

[13th Sloan-C International Conference on Online Learning: The Power of Online Learning: Making a Difference](#); November 7-9, 2007, Caribe Royal, Orlando, Florida.

[The Association for Career and Technical Education Research \(ACTER\)](#)

41st Annual Convention and Career Tech Expo
December 11-13, 2007, Las Vegas, Nevada.

[National Association for Developmental Education \(NADE\)](#)
["Developmental Education: The New Revolution"](#)

February 27—March 1, 2008, Boston Marriott Copley Place, Boston, Massachusetts

Courage to Teach, [Washington Courage & Renewal, 2007-08 Seasonal Retreat Series](#) scheduled to begin Fall 2007—It takes a lot of heart and courage to stand up for the children and families of our community these days.

You may know from your own experience (or have heard from friends) how revitalizing the programs of Washington Courage & Renewal are.

Our programs sustain the heart and spirit of those who teach, lead and serve. They are open to anyone in a "serving" field - education, human services, early learning, childcare, philanthropy, non-profits, community service, clergy, healthcare or related fields. They are a gift to you and those you serve.

"If I had to design a setting that was designed to make really good teaching extraordinarily difficult, I would design lectures to large groups of students who found it very easy to be invisible."

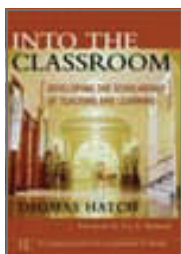
Check out these Resources:

[Learning Matters, Inc.](#)—Learning Matters strives to use media to encourage and enrich public dialogue about education, youth and families, and to expand learning opportunities for youth. Of particular interest would be the weekly [Podcasts](#) they post to their website. [FAST Free Assessment Summary Tool](#)—Provides users with a simple online tool for assessing their students' impressions of their courses and their teaching.

[Indian Mounds of Mississippi](#)—Explore 11 publicly accessible American Indian mound sites in Mississippi and experience these impressive ancient structures. This virtual tour allows you to learn about how the Middle Woodland (100 B.C. to 200 A.D.) and Mississippian Period (1000 to 1700 A.D.) mounds were built and examine the artifacts and other clues archeologists use to understand the cultures that made them.

The Learning Assessment section of the [Center for Student Success](#) archive contains 122 cases of practices in the areas of developing SLOs; assessing SLOs and using the results to make changes to programs and courses. Recently they have added 39 new cases to the Learning Assessment archive from 17 community colleges in California. Each case contains a description, contact information and access to additional supporting resources. At the home page, click on the Learning Assessment section to select from 12 different categories of practices.

[Historical Voices](#)—The Historical Voices Educator's; Forum provides an opportunity for teachers and students to explore and experience primary historical aural artifacts, traditionally unavailable to classrooms. This site engages educators in more intensive ways to incorporate aural resources into the teaching practice, and at the same time allows students to explore beyond the limitations of a text book. Materials available on the Educators' Forum website have been reviewed for quality by experienced educators.

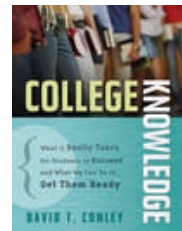


Thomas Hatch, [Into the Classroom: Developing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#), 2005; Jossey-Bass—Teachers are the "lone rangers" of education. They are sequestered in their classrooms, unable to

see what their colleagues are doing. All too often, good teachers have few, if any, opportunities to share their teaching techniques with others in their profession.

Based on the development of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, *Into the Classroom* clearly shows the advantages of bringing teaching into the public arena and making it possible for many people to see the nature and quality of the teaching that goes on inside schools. Once teaching is more public, we can create unprecedented opportunities for teachers to learn from one another and for others to participate constructively in supporting and improving schools. *Into the Classroom* outlines the myriad issues that must be addressed in order for the teaching profession to become a true learning profession.

David T. Conley, [College Knowledge: What It Really Takes for Students to Succeed and What We Can Do to Get Them Ready](#), 2005;



Jossey-Bass.— Although more and more students have the test scores and transcripts to get into college, far too many are struggling once they get there. These students are surprised to find that college coursework demands so much more of them than high school. For the first time, they are asked to think deeply, write extensively, document assertions, solve non-routine problems, apply concepts, and accept unvarnished critiques of their work. *College Knowledge* confronts this problem by looking at the disconnect between what high schools do and what colleges expect and proposes a solution by identifying what students need to know and be able to do in order to succeed.

Based on an extensive three-year project sponsored by the Association of American Universities in partnership with The Pew Charitable Trusts, this landmark research identified what it takes to succeed in entry-level university courses. This groundbreaking book delineates the cognitive skills and subject area knowledge that college-bound students need to master in order to succeed in today's colleges and universities. These Standards for Success cover the major subject areas of English, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, second languages, and the arts.