



EXCHANGE

New England Faculty Development Consortium

Message from the President

Jeff Halprin, President, NEFDC

Cockeyed optimism is an awfully valuable quality in a teacher. Being too realistic, remembering too vividly students who didn't succeed or course plans that fell flat, saps the very thing that supports students in believing in themselves.

And that is why the NEFDC is in the optimism business. When Randy Bass shared stories, as keynoter of last November's Conference, about a technology-assisted course strategy that hadn't worked as well as he had hoped, it was to help us understand the strength of his commitment to continually exploring and trying new things. When Bob Kegan, keynoter this coming November (November 15th, Holy Cross), leads us in an interactive exploration of Transformational Learning, it comes out of his powerful conviction of the extraordinarily positive ways that learning changes the student and the teacher.

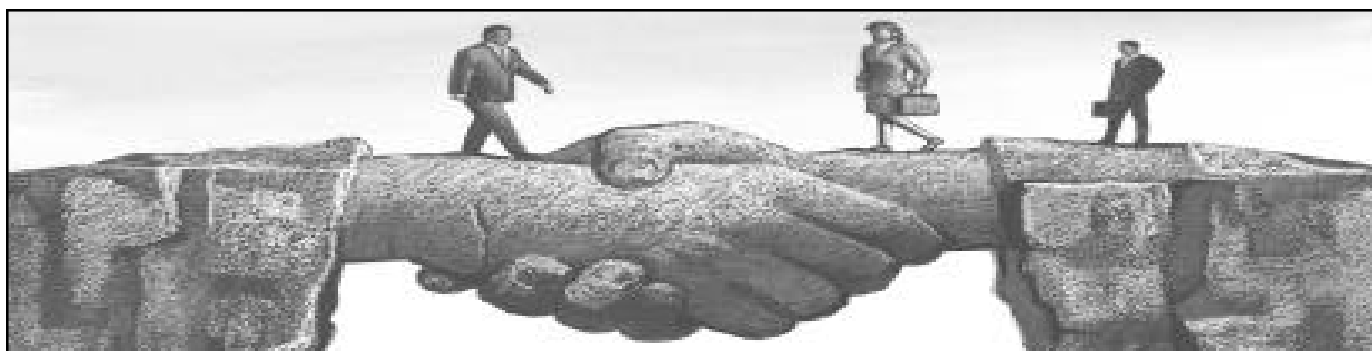
Our Consortium depends on that optimism in the dozens of teachers and faculty developers from across New England "and beyond" who come to the conferences to present sessions on the theories and programs and strategies they have built in their classes and their schools. Each of those conference sessions has at its core the thrill of having brought a new idea to fruition.

And my fellow members of the NEFDC Board put aside the grading and planning and struggling in their classes and their schools in order to

get together through the year to think about what they can do to help the NEFDC move forward, engaging and supporting faculty in New England in the consideration of effective teaching. In recognition of that optimism, I want to thank all the member of the Board and urge you to contact them at the Conference or by email to let them know what issues in teaching and learning are the center of your focus right now. I particularly want to thank Ellen Nuffer, from Keene State University in New Hampshire, who steps off the Board after several years of thoughtful and engaged contribution. And I most definitively want to recognize the optimism of our newest Board members, Rob Schadt, from the Boston University School of Public Health, and Jeanne Albert, from Castleton State College in Vermont. It is the continual renewal of the NEFDC and the Board by experienced and active teachers and faculty developers like Jeanne and Rob which makes it possible for the Consortium to bring so many faculty together for learning and for support.

We look forward to seeing you at Holy Cross in November.

Jeff Halprin is an Associate Professor of English and Director of the Nichols College Faculty Teaching Center.



In This Issue...

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Accommodating Differences

*Lisa Isleb,
Worcester Polytechnic Institute*

Creating informative and appealing course materials that are accessible for everyone may seem like a daunting task; however, it does not need to be. This article provides brief descriptions of some common disabilities as well as associated basic accommodations for each. The use of technology with certain disabilities will also be touched upon.

The disabilities and impairments included in this article are Learning Differences, Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD), Visual Impairments, Hearing Impairments, and Physical/Mobility Impairments.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, a disability is defined as a limitation to the normal physical, mental, or social activity of an individual. Disabilities may be of varying types (functional, occupational, and learning), degrees (partial or total), and durations (temporary or permanent). An impairment is a loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical function.

Learning Differences

Learning Differences are neurologically-based conditions that interfere with the acquisition, storage, organization, and use of skills and knowledge. The student may have one or more deficits in academic functioning and processing, including memory, auditory, visual, and linguistic deficits. The Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities (CCLD), a coalition of national organizations within the learning disabilities community, defines a Learning Disability as “a neurobiological disorder in which a person’s brain works or is structured differently.”

The following table from the CCLD presents four common learning disabilities and their associated effect on ability to perform.

Learning Disability	Effect on person's ability to perform
Dyslexia:	a person has trouble understanding written words, sentences or paragraphs.
Dyscalculia:	a person has difficulty solving arithmetic problems and grasping math concepts.
Dysgraphia:	a person finds it hard to form letters or write within a defined space.
Auditory and Visual Processing Disabilities:	a person with normal hearing and vision has difficulty understanding and using language

Basic accommodations that may be made for students with learning differences include extended time on tests and quizzes, alternative testing arrangements, note takers, audio taping of class sessions, books on tape, computers for voice output, spell checkers, grammar checkers, and readers and scribes.

ADD/ADHD

ADD and ADHD are neurological conditions that affect learning and behavior. The severity of symptoms varies. Students with ADD/ADHD are typically easily distracted, impulsive, hyperactive, inconsistent, disorganized, and forgetful. They may have difficulty with completing tasks and time management, be prone to procrastination, and exhibit mood swings.

Along with the accommodations mentioned for learning differences, students with ADD/ADHD may benefit from an alternative testing site free from distractions, handouts and visual aids, written instructions for multiple-step processes, multimedia, and reduced course loads. Breaking tasks and homework into “chunks” and providing additional structure may also prove beneficial.

Visual Impairment

Not everyone with a visual impairment is completely blind. As the aging population of the world grows, the incidence of age-related visual impairments such as low-vision will likewise increase. Although color-blindness is not typically considered a disability, creating designs that rely on colors may prove problematic. There are different types of color-blindness and varying degrees of severity. Approximately 10 percent of the male population and .5 percent of the female population experiences some form of color deficiency. The colors that present the most potential for confusion are reds, greens, oranges and yellows. Brighter, purer colors are less likely to be



confused than darker, more muted tones. The key here is to ensure that materials do not rely on color alone. Vischeck (<http://www.vischeck.com>) provides the ability to simulate how materials would look to a person who is color-blind.

Basic accommodations for students with visual impairments include seating near the front of the room, audiotaped texts, extended time on exams and quizzes, note takers, readers, scribes, and assistive technology. These individuals will also benefit from materials design that allows text sizes to be enlarged, limits the number of graphical text elements, and minimizes the amount of scrolling required.

Hearing Impairments

With the increased use of sound, video, and multimedia programs, an increasing amount of content is proving to be inaccessible to students who are hearing impaired. The technology exists to provide either closed or open captioning for materials in the same manner that it is provided for television shows and movies. Unfortunately, materials that make use of this technology are few and far between.

Basic accommodations for students with hearing impairments include front row seating, note takers, speaking slowly, naturally, and clearly, keeping facial hair (in particular mustaches), well trimmed, circular seating arrangements, looking at the student when speaking, captioning films and videos, repeating student comments and questions, and using assistive listening devices.

Mobility Impairments

A broad range of mobility impairments exist, ranging from minor conditions to more profound disabilities that restrict voluntary movement almost entirely. Some people with mobility impairments are able to use a keyboard or mouse. These individuals may not have fine motor control, however, so clicking on small links may prove difficult. Others use assistive devices such as a mouth stick or a head wand to access a keyboard. These methods typically are slow, but are nevertheless functional. Others are limited to "puff-and-sip" switches such as those installed on some wheelchairs. As these devices are

capable of emulating the functionality of the standard keyboard, to one degree or another, keyboard access to materials is paramount. If a mouse is required to access a certain link or function, that material may be inaccessible to these individuals.

Basic accommodations that can be made for students with mobility impairments include extended time on tests and quizzes, alternative testing arrangements, note takers, audio taping of class sessions, books on tape, computers for voice input and output, as well as accessible classrooms and labs. In New England, flexible attendance may also prove to be extremely valuable to a student who is in a wheelchair on a snowy or icy morning.

Resources

The Rich Media Resource Center (<http://ncam.wgbh.org/richmedia>) of the CPB/WGBH National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM) provides a growing collection of resources for developers and users interested in ways to make rich media accessible to people with disabilities. The IMS Guidelines for Developing Accessible Learning Applications (<http://www.imsglobal.org/accessibility/index.cfm>) provide a framework for distributed learning with the goal of ensuring education that is truly accessible.

In general, helping students who are disabled is not difficult unto itself. As with all teaching, knowing your audience is vital to success. Students who are disabled are fully aware of their disability and also know what does and does not work for them. The best way to help students is to ask them.

Following accessible design principles benefits everyone. How can you design instruction to maximize the learning for all students? The field of universal design can provide a starting point for developing an inclusive model for instruction. Please see the follow-up article in the next issue.

Lisa Isleb is the Manager of Educational Technology Services, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

The NEFDC EXCHANGE

Sue Barrett, Boston College

The NEFDC EXCHANGE is published in the Fall and Spring of each academic year. Designed to inform the membership of the activities "of the organization and the ideas of the members, it depends on your submissions. Please keep us up-to-date with listings of events you are putting on, as well as book reviews, descriptions of successful programs, and discussions of issues which have engaged your interest.

Reach me at: Academic Development Center, O'Neill Library, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA02467 617-552-0835 and barretsc@bc.edu

I am very pleased that this issue of the Exchange includes pieces by three new authors. Wayne-Daniel Berard, of Nichols College, has contributed a lively account of his "Zen and the Art of the College Classroom" session at last year's fall conference. I know that many of you enjoyed that session and will look forward to Wayne-Daniel's upcoming workshop this year. Lisa Isleb, of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, has provided a concise overview of accessibility issues that we should all keep in mind when we design our course materials; our next issue will carry a follow-up article with a suggested approach to creating accessible materials. And Ron Weisberger, of Bristol Community College, gives us a review of two books by Robert Kegan, our keynote speaker at this year's conference. I hope the review intrigues you, as it did me, and that you're looking forward to attending the conference on November 15th. And I hope that more of you will be encouraged to submit articles!

Sue Barrett

From the Editor

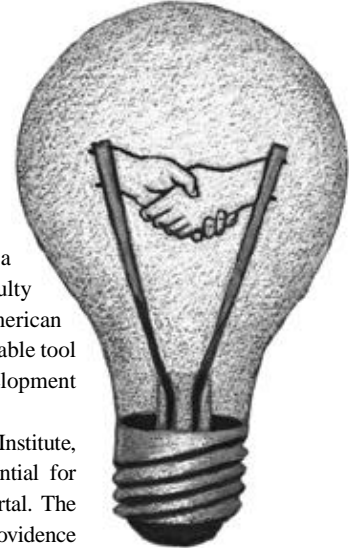
NEFDC SPRING 2002 ROUNDUP

*Pam Sherer, Associate Professor of Management,
Providence College*

“Best Practices in Faculty Development Web Portals” is the Keynote Address at the NEFDC Spring 2002 Roundup

A number of institutions have developed teaching and learning web portals as a means of organizing and focusing faculty development resources, both online and face to face, and both on campus and off campus. These institutions are discovering that an online portal can serve several purposes. First, the portal can serve as a resource for the explosion of on-line faculty development resources available at different institutions and across the Internet. Secondly, the portal can serve as a “one-stop” connection to any number of on-line communities that might be of interest to a faculty member – an active learning group, a distance learning group, or a group focused on teaching American history. Done well, an on-line faculty development portal can provide a powerful, surprisingly affordable tool for institutional change on a scale heretofore impossible for many programs, and can put faculty development at the center of an institution’s mission.

On May 31st 2002, at the NEFDC Spring Roundup, held on the campus of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, the keynote speakers explored the growing world of faculty development web portals, their potential for connecting faculty to both people and resources, and the faculty developer’s role in creating a portal. The speakers were old friends of NEFDC, Eric Kristensen of Orion Consulting and Pamela Sherer of Providence College, along with a new friend, Timothy Shea of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Participants saw examples of successful campus portals, had opportunities to discuss the issues through breakout sessions, and were provided with handouts containing examples of many different kinds of on-line, faculty development resources currently available on the Internet. Provided is a summary of the references mentioned. All links were accessible as of May 29, 2002.



List of References

Strategies for Utilizing On-Line Faculty Development Resources

Eric Kristensen, Orion Educational Development, orion@post.harvard.edu
Timothy Shea, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, tshea@umassd.edu
Pamela Sherer, Providence College, psherer@providence.edu

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Edventures, Inc. See www.edventures.com

An expensive subscriber information site that “is the leading, independent research firm dedicated exclusively to the coverage and service of learning markets” and provides current information and trends about the K-12, post-secondary, and corporate training markets. While much of the material is restricted, quite a bit of overview information is available.

Eisler, D. (2000). Dave’s Web Page. Retrieved May 29, 2002 from the World Wide Web: http://weber.edu/deisler/portal_content.htm.
A Provost’s personal web site with excellent material on portals: portal content; portal vendors; and design issues.

Friesen, G. Bruce. (2001). “To portal or not to portal: Is your client ready?” Consulting to Management, Burlingame; September, 12 (3), pp. 16-19.

Article discusses the development of a large scale corporate portal, that is, how Kmart recently created Bluelight.com. While the specifics of Bluelight.com may not be directly relevant to building a faculty development portal, the beginning (explaining the four layers of the Internet) and the end (lessons for consultants) provide useful information. Article available on ABI/INFORM Global (ProQuest).

Gilbert, Stephen (2001). Applying Open Source Principles, Practices, and Tools to Teaching, Learning, Professional Development and Planning: an Invitation to Develop an Open Source Professional Development Environment (OSPDE). A Work in Progress. Retrieved May 29, 2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.tlgroup.org/OpenSource/OSPDEIntroProposal.htm#_Introduction_and_Summary
Stephen Gilbert’s call for an open source approach to the development of professional development resources, instructional materials and support strategies and planning in higher education.



- JA-SIG, (2002). Portal framework project. Java in Administration Special Interest Group (JA-SIG) Clearinghouse. Retrieved May 29, 2002 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.mis2.udel.edu/ja-sig/portal.html>.
uPortal is now free, sharable portal under development by institutions of higher-education. It is a collaborative development project with the effort shared among several of the JA-SIG member institutions. You may download uPortal and use it on your site at no cost.
- Kvavik, Robert (2001). Vision and Strategy for an Enterprise-Wide Portal at the University of Minnesota. Powerpoint presentation. Retrieved May 29, 2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.ahc.umn.edu/WEBsters/KvavikPresentation/Kvavik_portal_files/Kvavik_portal.ppt
An Associate Vice President's presentation concerning his university's implementation of an enterprise-wide portal.
- Link, David. (2001). "How HR can shape corporate portals". HR Magazine, Alexandria; September, 46 (9), pp. 131-137.
Article available on ABI/INFORM Global (ProQuest). It discusses components of a corporate portal, how HR Manager is the right point person for such a portal [Ed note: just like the Faculty Developer is the right point person for a faculty development portal], keys to good design, and achieving portal success.
- Norman, M. (2000). Portal technology: in the looking glass. Converge: Special Publication. Retrieved May 29, 2002 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.convergemag.com/SpecialPubs/Portal/portal.shtml>
An excellent, detailed primer on portals including chapters on the historical perspective, the higher education perspective and creating strategic advantage.
- Pittinsky, M. (1999). Campus and course portals in 2015. Converge, Retrieved May 29, 2002 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.convergemag.com/Publications/CNVGOct99/Possibilities/Possibilities.shtml>
Although an awful lot has happened around the portal concept in the two and a half years since this article was published, the core discussion of campus and course portals is still valuable.
- Sistek-Chandler, Cynthia. (2000). Portals: Creating Lifelong Campus Citizens. Converge, Retrieved May 29, 2002 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.convergemag.com/magazine/story.phtml?id=253000000001150>
This article discusses the model of "a single Web portal for everyone" on campus, and how to succeed at politics, finances, extending relationships, and build vs. buy.

Selected Online Faculty Development Sources and Examples

University Portal Resources

- David Eisler's Campus Portals Site
http://catsis.weber.edu/deisler/campus_portals.htm
- Robert B. Kvavik's Presentation on Univ. of Minnesota's "One Stop" Portal Project
http://www.ahc.umn.edu/WEBsters/KvavikPresentation/Kvavik_portal_files/Kvavik_portal.ppt
- University of Minnesota "One Stop" Portal
<http://www.onestop.umn.edu>
- University of California, Los Angeles
<http://my.ucla.edu/welcome-facstaff.asp>
- Virginia Tech
<http://www.vt.edu/2000/facultystaff.jhtml>
- uPortal
<http://mis105.mis.udel.edu/ja-sig/uportal/>
- Prometheus
<http://company.blackboard.com/prometheus/>

Virtual Teaching, Learning & Technology Centers and Programs

- The Appalachian College Association Virtual Teaching, Learning, and Technology Center
<http://www.acaweb.org/VCenter/>
- Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS)
<http://www.georgetown.edu/main/provost/candles/>
- Virginia Tech: Faculty Development Institute and Course "designSHOP"
<http://www.fdi.vt.edu>
<http://www.edtech.vt.edu/edtech/id/index.html>

University Center Online Workshop

- The Adams Center for Teaching Excellence at Abilene Christian University Active Learning Workshop
<http://www.acu.edu/cte/activelearning>

Online Teaching & Learning Courses

- Distance Education Certificate Program University of Wisconsin, Madison
<http://www.wisc.edu/depd>
- UCLA – Online Teaching Program (OTP)
<http://www.onlinelearning.net/CourseCatalog/index.html>

Directories of University & College Teaching and Learning Center Websites

- Dalhousie University's Instructional Development and Technology Sites Worldwide
<http://www.dal.ca/~oidt/ids.html>
- University of Kansas Listing of Worldwide Teaching and Learning Centers
<http://eagle.cc.ukans.edu/~cte/resources/websites.html>

Publishing Companies

- Houghton-Mifflin's Faculty Development Programs
<http://www.facultytraining.com>

Commercial Learning Portals

- Blackboard
<http://www.blackboard.com/>
- eCollege
<http://www.ecollege.com/>
- WebCT
<http://www.webct.com>
- Tutor.com
<http://tutor.com/>

Online Newsletters

- National Teaching and Learning Forum (NTLF)
<http://www.ntlf.com>
- TLT Group Flashlight Newsletter
<http://www.tltgroup.org/resources/flight.html>
- Infobits
<http://www.unc.edu/cit/infobits/index.html>

Online Journals & Magazines

- The Educational Development Resource Center: List of 50 Online Journals in Education
http://158.132.100.221/INET_EDU.folder/OnlineJrnls.html
- The Technology Source
<http://ts.mivu.org/default.asp>

Book Review

**Ron Weisberger, Coordinator of Tutoring
Bristol Community College**

Robert Kegan. *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*. Harvard University Press, 1994.

Robert Kegan & Lisa L. Lahey. *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work: Seven Languages for Transformation*. Jossey-Bass, 2001.

**In order to help another effectively,
I must understand what he understands and
The way he understands it**

—Kierkegaard

As we attempt to reach out to students, we often wonder whether we are really communicating with them. We wonder whether we have been clear enough or have used the proper methods. Sometimes we feel satisfied; however, too often we are left feeling frustrated and either blame ourselves or, more often, the students. In two recent books, *In Over Our Heads* (1994) and *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work* (with Lisa Lahey, 2001) psychologist and educator Robert Kegan attempts to help us to go beyond the “blame game” to uncover what is going on in the minds of our students as well as in our own.

As a constructive-developmental theorist, Kegan uses an organizing principle stated by an earlier theorist, William Perry, that “organisms organize and human organisms

absorbed. The ability to take perspective on one’s ideas—and feelings—begins with late childhood; however, it is only with late adolescence that most people can fully develop the capacity to distinguish between themselves and their wants and others’ needs and wants.

In an earlier and more abstract work, *The Evolving Self* (1982) Kegan lays out his theory of development in great detail. However, he builds on this theory in his second major work, *In Over Our Heads*, where he makes his developmental scheme more accessible. In the book he uses a fictitious family as an example of how the theory plays out in different venues including the family, friendships, the workplace, and educational institutions. Kegan’s emphasis on post-adolescence makes it particularly useful for community college instructors because of the age range of the students who enter our doors. He emphasizes that the ability to understand complex ideas and to see how they relate to oneself as well as the world depends on the nature of the experiences we encounter. This is where the educational environment comes into play.

College can provide a supportive environment for developmental change. Kegan emphasizes in his book that in a post-modern world, such development is essential because of the constant change and the diversity that we encounter in our daily lives. What is needed is a combination of support and challenge on the part of college

***Kegan sees the ability to make
sense of the world as an ongoing
process from birth to death.***

organize meaning.” Kegan sees the ability to make sense of the world as an ongoing process from birth to death. Each stage is a consequence of growth made possible by both age and our interaction with the environment. Kegan’s developmental scheme centers on humans becoming conscious of who they are, i.e., the self, as well as their ability to interact with others. At earlier stages that generally correspond with particular age levels, humans tend to be self-

personnel. However, a central point in the book is that if educators are going to be successful in this endeavor, they have to see both themselves and their students as having particular mental capacities—ways of seeing the world—that differ. Consequently, what we expect them to understand might be different from what they are capable of understanding, at least initially. Our job as instructors is both to gain a “reading” of where our students are, and then

to reach out to them in a way that helps them move beyond where they are to where they need to be.

Kegan emphasizes that it is essential for instructors and other college personnel to be able to reflect on what is happening when they are encountering students. They need to engage in a dialogue with themselves as well as colleagues about what is helping or impeding their work with students. In his latest book, *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work*, Kegan takes his theory to the next step and provides readers with the tools that can help overcome the gap between what is desired and what is actually accomplished. In the case of working with students Kegan and Lahey help us to look at our good intentions and compare them with particular assumptions that we hold that impede us from being truly effective.

In what is essentially a workbook that combines both practice and theory, Kegan and Lahey examine what they call internal and social languages. “Languages” such as complaint, blame, prizes and rules, and policies often get in the way of achieving our goals. The authors help us to transform these languages into what they call a “new powerful mental technology.” This process, they argue, should be done in groups (although it can also be done individually) where insights can be shared and ultimately techniques and policies can be changed. Intertwined with the exercises are theoretical explanations and case studies.

I feel that Kegan and Lahey have done us a great service by taking important theoretical insights and bringing them “down to earth.” This is not to say that they have provided us with simplistic explanations or solutions. This is not a routine do-it-yourself manual. Rather, it is the result of many years of theory building and reflection on the part of the authors, which, I believe, can help us not only in our work at the College but also in our private lives.

Note: Kegan’s article, “What ‘Form’ Transforms? A Constructive-Developmental Approach to Transformative Learning,” in Jack Mezirow and Associates’ Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress (Jossey-Bass, 2000), summarizes his perspective.

Robert Kegan will be conducting a workshop built on the approach developed in these writings at the Annual Conference of the New England Faculty Development Consortium, to be held on Friday, November 15, at the College of the Holy Cross.

Ron Weisberger is Coordinator of Tutoring at Bristol Community Colleg.

Kegan emphasizes that it is essential for instructors and other college personnel to be able to reflect on what is happening when they are encountering students.



NEFDC FALL CONFERENCE

“Transformational Learning”

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Robert Kegan

Author of
*How We Talk Can Change the Way We Work:
Seven Languages for Transformation*

**Friday, November 15, 2002
The College of the Holy Cross
Worcester, Massachusetts**

AGENDA

8:30 - 9:00	Conference Registration
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome
9:15 - 12:15	Interactive Keynote: Transformational Learning for Faculty Development. Dr. Robert Kegan, William and Miriam Meehan Professor of Adult Learning and Professional Development at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. Author of <i>In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life</i> and <i>How We Talk Can Change the Way We Work: Seven Languages for Transformation</i>
12:15 - 1:15	Buffet Lunch (vegetarian items available)
1:15 - 2:30	Concurrent Workshops & Teaching Tips
2:45 - 4:00	Concurrent Workshops & Teaching Tips

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

- Transformational Teaching Strategies
- Assessment to Promote Learning
- Working with Diverse Student Populations
- Making Connections with and without Technology
- Reflecting on Our Practice

Our website, www.nefdc.org, will contain a complete listing of presentations as it becomes available, as well as directions to Holy Cross and membership details.

Please contact Judy Miller at jmiller@wpi.edu for more information.



NEFDC FALL CONFERENCE

Please submit a registration form for each participant.

Name: _____

Institution: _____

Address: _____

Work Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Registration Fee Information

Early Registration (postmarked by October 19th)

Member Fee: \$50.00

Non-member Fee: \$75.00

General Registration (postmarked by October 19th)

Member Fee: \$70.00

Non-member Fee: \$95.00

Student: \$20.00

Annual Membership:

Individual: \$35.00

Institutional: \$150.00

Make checks payable to:

NEFDC (Fed ID#: 04-3422583)

Submit registration to:

Judith Miller

Director, CEDTA

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

100 Institute Road

Worcester, MA 01609

NEFDC UNPLUGGED: Zen and the “Wired” Conference

“They’re never going to go for this!” I thought to myself as I keyboarded away. After all, the theme of the conference was *Higher Education After Technology: Faculty Work in a Wired World*. And here was I, with my proposal on Zen! I didn’t know much about NEFDC, but my colleague, Jeff Halprin, did, and he’d been very encouraging. And I truly believed that, especially in a “wired world,” an Eastern approach could be more important than ever. “The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single . . . click!” I hit the “send” button.

To my own surprise and delight, my proposal, entitled *No Self, No School: Zen and the Art of the College Classroom*, was enthusiastically accepted. Not long after, I found myself in a room at Holy Cross; on the front desk, my old cassette player (loaded with my trusty “Guru Ram Das” tape), on a side table, plates of round Portuguese breads concealed under cloth napkins. And, facing a room steadily filling with high-tech conferees, just myself and an easel pad, with the words “*How do you know if a problem is real or imaginary?*” written on it. How indeed?

I’d been teaching for twenty-five years, fifteen in the English/Humanities Department at Nichols College in Dudley, MA. And for ten years I’d been an interfaith clergyperson, called a Peace Chaplain, commissioned by the Peace Abbey in Sherborn, MA. My study of the East and my own meditation practice had led me not only to incorporate Eastern technique in some of my

classes, but to change my approach to education almost entirely. Like everyone else, I’d been formed, in the classroom and out, by the traditional, Western, Aristotelian-based way of seeing and reacting to reality. But there was another way, a way through which I had found, in my life and my classroom, much of what I’d been seeking in both. And apparently I wasn’t alone in that search; folks had started bringing in chairs from the hallway.

What is the sound of one man’s weating?

After sharing some ease-putting and interesting introductions (this Zen Buddhist topic had attracted self-described “Jubu’s,” “Episcobu’s” and “Cathobu’s”), I asked the participants to briefly answer (in writing, no names, full sentences!) the question with which I usually began my Expository Writing courses: “Why are you here in this place?”

The responses were every bit as honest and varied as my freshmen always were: “I have a passionate interest in the possibility of an education that works!” “I’m new to the area, got invited.” “I’m trying to teach more personally, effectively and honestly.” I’m one of the planners.” “This topic. It takes a lot to get me waking up early on my day off!”

I then asked the group, “Apart from the words “this conference” or “this session,” what term did you hear repeated over and over?”

“I!” they joined in, almost unanimously. I love educators! I put a big capital “I” on the chalkboard.

“I would submit that the real question in education, in this classroom or any, is “Who is this ‘I’?” Silence. Attention. I love educators.

Which “I” were we talking about? The “I” that we show to our children? (This might actually change from child to child). The “I” that we show to our students? (same changes). What of the “I” that we show to this colleague or that—or to our chair?! How about a spouse, a partner, a parent?

“I’m forty-nine years old,” I said, “and my parents still don’t have the slightest idea who I am. It’s just easier, isn’t it?”

The East maintains that we have many “I’s,” many “selves,” but that never are they fully real, are they truly who we are. After all, once we were not educators, or this one’s colleague, or that one’s boss. And the time may come when we once again are none of these. Do we blink out of existence when those “selves” no longer exist? Isn’t there a self, below all the layers of half-selves and false selves with which life shellacs us



like an old table, a self that is always there, no matter what? Zen calls this “the original self,” and maintains that it is so unlike our own version(s) of ourselves that it should more accurately be called “the no self.”

I then related to the group the second question of my Writing course. I would ask my students for a show of hands: “How many really don’t like to write very much, especially for school?” Always almost every hand would go up. (I’d maintain that, with honesty, the same would be true for almost any subject, even in classes filled with that subject’s majors. How seldom today does enjoyment impact career-choice!)

“At this point,” I explained, “I would turn to my students and say, ‘My guess is that most of you never wrote a thing in your life, especially not for school! Oh, there were squiggles on the paper, but you didn’t make them—not the real you inside.’” For one of the “selves” that we develop very early is the one I call “The Schooly-Self,” a parody of a person who walks through the halls with his/her guard extended, who doesn’t want to engage this thing called school, but just to snatch the three credits and get the heck out of there! “And The Schooly-Self is not just for students,” I added. Indeed, one of the hand-outs in my session’s packet read, “‘You’ve rarely learned anything, written anything, passed/failed anything, taught anything.’”

In a Zen classroom, lessons can be cues, and information manifestation...

And that is not only unfortunate, but, according to the East, non-realistic. For the East, all things are a unity. A basic Zen maxim is, “No two, but one.” And so the primary Western approach of observing something outside oneself, dissecting it, analyzing it and pronouncing upon it is illusional. You already are everything there is. There is nothing to gain, no distinctions. No subject, no learner. No school.

The Avatama Sutra describes it best: A great pearl net hangs high up in the heavens. Its pearls are strung in such a way that each reflects all the others. A single pearl contains all.

What is needed, as Ram Das has written, is simply to get those “selves” the heck out of the way. Hence the cassette player; in each class meeting, for a brief period, I meditated with my students, to facilitate their moving beneath and beyond those layers of selves (especially Schooly-Self!) to that original self within, the no-self.

This applies not only to Writing courses. According to the East, there is no “subject matter,” nothing that is not a

part of that original self. The foreignness of material, the anxiety of academics begins to melt away when we realize that, as Noah benShea writes, “We are the border we must cross to our promised land.” We have deep, constant, experiential knowledge of everything that is. There is no unknown to fear, no ignorance to overcome. There is only unlearning—of separateness, of inadequacy, of limitation. As Cheri Huber writes, “Regardless of what you have been taught to believe, there is nothing wrong with you.”

“Have you ever struggled with a doctor?” I asked the session. “S/he says this about your body, but you are your body; you know the diagnosis feels wrong. Whereas a correspondence with the information literally leaps up from within us when it is right. The same can be true for any subject. In a Zen classroom, lessons can be cues, and information manifestation . . .”

Now it was time for breaking bread.

Employing an image from benShea’s *Jacob the Baker*, I passed out the round, fluffy loaves. Inside each was a slip of paper with a saying on it (I have a very lovely wife! Together we’d stuffed bread ‘til two a.m.!) Some of the slips held half a koan, a zen riddle like the one on the easel. “My storehouse having burnt down . . . (I now have an unobstructed view of the glorious moon!)” Or “Why me? Why me?” (Why not you? You’ve looked everywhere

else!)” As with the wisdom of the true self within, each phrase spoke of and from the center of our nourishment.

We closed by meditating together; the room was suddenly no longer crowded. I hadn’t taken a tally, but the final count, I thought, was one.

And that koan on the easel: “How do you know if a problem is real or imaginary?” Before we left, I flipped the next page. It read, “If it doesn’t have a solution, it’s imaginary.”

Perhaps this is why we have so many unsolvable issues in education?

No self, no school. No problem.

And, thanks to a wonderful group of seekers, no sweat.

Wayne-Daniel Beard is Associate Professor of English and Interfaith Peace Chaplain at Nichols College. He will lead a workshop at this fall’s conference, entitled Teaching the Boulder: Zen Parable and Practice for Today’s Classroom.

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