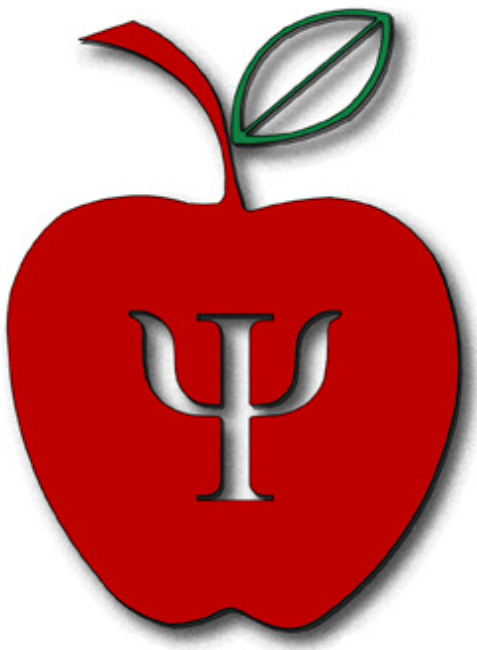


Essays from E-xcellence in Teaching

Volume VIII

A collection of monthly essays originally published on the
PsychTeacher™ Electronic Discussion List



Edited by

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These essays may also be retrieved from the site of their original posting, the *PsychTeacher™ Electronic Discussion List*, archived at <http://list.kennesaw.edu/archives/psychteacher.html>.

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Introduction

The Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP, Division 2 of the American Psychological Association) launched its Internet electronic discussion list, PsychTeacher™, in late 1998. In the spring of 2000, *E-xcellence in Teaching*, a monthly column devoted to the teaching of psychology, joined the list. The column features monthly essays devoted to teaching at the high school, community college, and university levels in general, and to the teaching of psychology in particular. The essays take the form of lessons learned, advice and hints on particular aspects of teaching, lore regarding teaching, book reviews, and reflections on our roles as teachers of psychology. In general, though, the primary focus of the column is to provide a forum for the discussion and promotion of effective teaching practices.

This compilation of essays forms Volume VIII of *E-xcellence in Teaching*. We thank the authors of these essays for their valuable contributions to the column and to the literature on the teaching of psychology and the scholarship on teaching and learning.

In the first chapter, Mary Kite discusses how narratives can enliven lectures and encourage students to make connections between their personal experiences and psychological science. She describes how the principles of the persuasion literature can guide the selection of a narrative. She discusses the advantages of using narrative and offers strategies for deciding whether a narrative meets an instructor's objectives.

In the second chapter, Michelle Dunlap discusses several hindrances to effective community service-learning. She recommends strategies for encouraging a more fulfilling service-learning experience for both faculty and students. These strategies include providing better infrastructure support for faculty and students, greater validation of this pedagogy at tenure time, adequate preparation around risk-management issues, and steady and well-integrated opportunities for learning about diversity issues.

Lonnie Yandell and Peter Giordano review problem-based learning (PBL) in the third chapter, which is a pedagogical approach that is experiential, student centered, and requires students to grapple with real world problems in order to learn important curricular information. They describe five key suggestions for creating a PBL course and offer specific examples from classes they have taught using this teaching method.

The Society for the Teaching of Psychology embraces the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) as a way for psychology to improve the classroom experience. And as psychologists, we can turn to our scientific training to shed light on how to be a better teacher. As Janie Wilson states in Chapter 4, our rigorous scientific history provokes two questions: (1) Is SoTL research truly valued as much as our more traditional scientific areas of study in psychology?, and (2) Does SoTL research adhere to the same standards that we set for non teaching-related research?

The *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (SoTL) can answer why a class goes awry, or why students fail to grasp the concepts we seek to share. In chapter 5, Regan Gurung provides a description of SoTL, demystifies the origins of the term and uncouples it from Scholarly Teaching, and provides key reasons why we should all be doing it. He also provides key resources to catalyze pedagogical research and comments on the state of SoTL in psychology today.

From a constructivist perspective, students act as “architects of knowledge” in actively and interactively formulating meaningful changes in understanding by integrating new information with their pre-existing knowledge. Drawing from his own classroom research and practice, Joseph Mayo overviews a range of constructivist pedagogical applications that highlight student-centered learning in Chapter 6. Among

the constructivist approaches that he discusses are autobiographical and biographical narration, case-based instruction, concept mapping, the repertory grid technique, dialogue, peer critique, and analogical reasoning.

As teacher-scholars we are uniquely qualified and indeed have a calling to teach others about the science of psychology. One way of realizing this is by contributing to online wikis. In Chapter 7, Marianne Miserandino explains what wikis are, describes current wikis in psychology, discusses the advantages of wikis in teaching, and suggests how to contribute to wikis and how to use wikis in teaching.

Classrooms that are enriched by creativity have the potential to more fully engage our students, encouraging them to flex their cognitive muscles and make richer connections among a broad array of ideas. Yet, all too often, creative ideas in the classroom are stifled in favor of “safer” teaching methods. In Chapter 8, Robert Smith proposes that infusing a little creativity into our teaching is well worth the risks, and makes us and our students better thinkers and learners.

Although discussions of pedagogy frequently center on the role of teaching in benefitting students’ learning, teachers also benefit richly from this process. In Chapter 9, Bill Buskist describes 10 ways that teaching provides some form of personal enjoyment for professors: rising to the intellectual challenge, solving course design problems, improving communication skills, demonstrating passion for psychology, changing students’ lives, passing the torch, delighting in self-discovery, having fun teaching, affiliating with other instructors, and enjoying being good teachers.

What can college and university faculty learn from high school teachers, what can high school teachers learn from college faculty, and how can this benefit our students? With a first-hand look at the teaching of psychology in high school and at the undergraduate level, Charles Ovando, Suzanne Baker, and Dana Dunn discuss skills, content, and context relevant to the transition from secondary education to college education in Chapter 10.

In chapter 11, Bill Addison examines the dimensions of effective teaching as determined through factor analyses of student evaluation instruments. The results of four different studies suggest that there are two key factors involved in effective teaching: skill and rapport. Among the implications of these findings is that the interpretation of student ratings should not be based on a single score, but rather should be done by examining the ratings in terms of these two dimensions.

In the final chapter, Keisha Paxton provides suggestions for how to incorporate writing into psychology courses and techniques that make grading these assignments more manageable for instructors. Although many psychology courses use multiple-choice exams, writing can effectively help students understand course material, increase their class participation, and improve their performance on exams. Beyond traditional term papers, writing assignments can take many different forms, so it is important for professors to consider how to incorporate writing into their curriculum relative to their instructional goals.

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