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# REACHING THROUGH TEACHING

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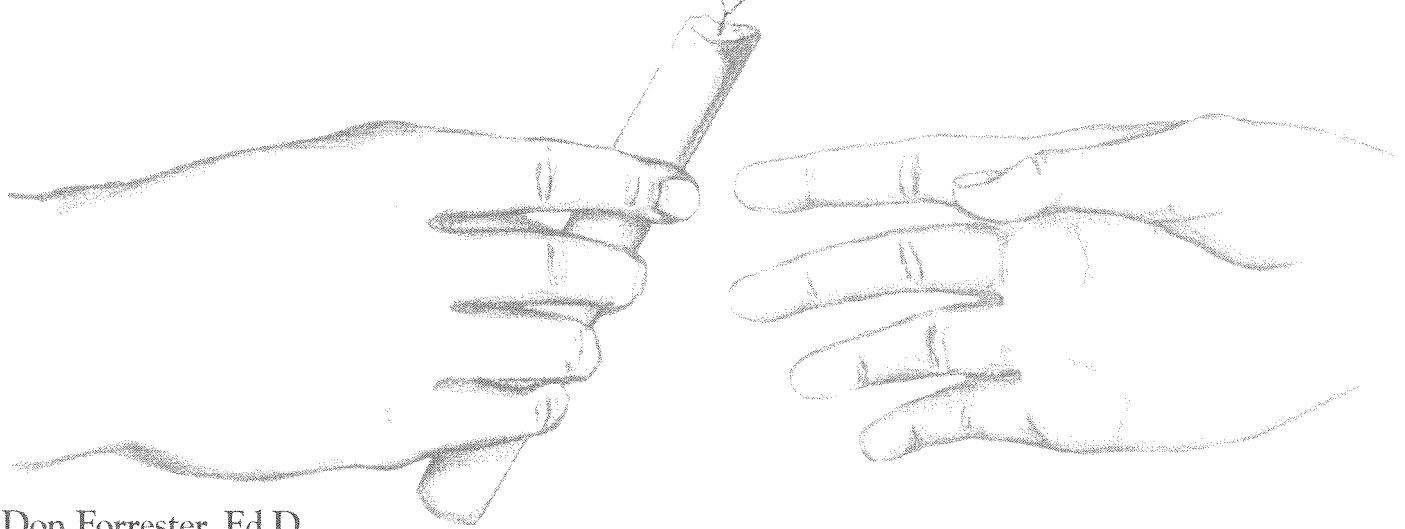
A NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTING CLASSROOM PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE AMONG KENNESAW FACULTY

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THE EDITOR CONSIDERS . . .

## PASSING THE MANTLE



**Don Forrester, Ed.D.**

Director of CETL

This account is extraordinary not because such happenings are rare, but because they are seldom discussed and much less often confirmed. In a casual conversation, I picked up a bit of information that intrigued me so that I decided to do some detective work—some “nosing around,” if you prefer—to see just what was taking place. This is what I found.

Some time ago, at Agnes Scott College, our colleague, Professor of English, Jo Allen Bradham, the 1992 Distinguished Teaching Award recipient, had a student in her 8 o'clock Eighteenth Century Drama class. This young woman had put off taking Dr. Bradham's course as long as possible because she was terrified of her. But by 8:05, this formidable professor had her class of 12 to 15 frightened students eating out of her hand.

“I found the best,” maintains Jo Allen's former student, “and I learned what it meant to be the best. Great teaching can make anything interesting, and Dr. Bradham turned me on to teaching.” This student was none other than Joy Farmer, now *Doctor Joy Farmer*, an assistant professor of English at KSC.

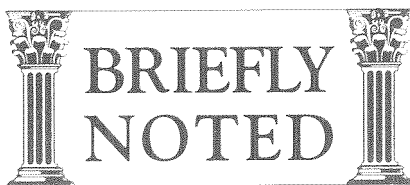
The story doesn't end here. Not many quarters ago, on this campus, a student named Patsy Grider discovered a profound interest in poetry and also in teaching.

“My professor,” she relates, “had not only knowledge, but sound pedagogy and genuine enthusiasm which so inspired me that I decided to become a teacher myself.”

After completing her B.A., she continued her studies at KSC, taking some post-baccalaureate courses which will qualify her to teach in high school. “I hope to excite my students the way Dr. Joy Farmer excited me,” says Patsy Grider.

But the story doesn't end here either. Patsy Grider, for the past couple of years or so, has been working as a tutor in KSC's Writing Center, already putting her interest in teaching to work. One of her students, Zack Gibler, entered college with special permission as an adult student with no high school diploma. When it came time for English literature writing assignments, which were analyses of poems students were studying in class, Zack found he needed some help from the Writing Center. “Patsy helped me a lot structurally,” he remembers, “but more importantly she gave me new insights into the poetry, which had not meant very much to me. Also, I'm a political science major; what I learned about writing made my grades improve there. Regardless of what I do in life, I'll always use the skills and insights Patsy Grider helped me develop.”

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## BRIEFLY NOTED

*Issues and Inquiry in College Learning and Teaching*, edited by Robert G. Kraft and Sally Knight. Eastern Michigan University, FCIE Offices, 519 Pray-Harrold, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197-2210, (\$15.00 per year).

This quarterly publication, formerly called *The Journal of Professional Studies*, addresses that growing audience of higher education faculty who are truly interested in improving teaching. The journal, which describes itself as innovative, was still willing, in its fall, 1991 issue, to devote two cover stories to "improving the lecture." The traditionalist, it would seem, could be as comfortable here as the innovator.

While *Issues and Inquiry* does not have a very professional appearance (obviously desk-top published), it does contain solid, timely articles written in a style which does not turn off college faculty who are often suspicious of anything smacking of "methods." With the loss of public confidence in post-secondary teaching, it is hard to find much fault with any publication addressing the improvement of teaching and learning. 🍎

*Developing and Using Tests Effectively*, by Lucy Cheser Jacobs and Clinton I. Chase. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 1992. (231 pages).

Although not apparent from the title, this book is specifically about college-level testing. Considering that college professors spend as much as 20 percent of their time evaluating learning, it is ironic that so little preparation is given to developing the crucial skill of testing. At one time or another, nearly every college

teacher feels the sting of this deficit when students respond negatively to a test they perceive as being unfair or when half the class fails a test over material we thought they had mastered.

*Developing and Using Tests Effectively* covers every phase of testing from planning to assigning grades. It discusses validity and reliability and provides guidance in creating fair, clear and effective multiple-choice, true-false, matching, completion and essay questions. It examines the advantages and limitations of computer-assisted testing from machine scoring to item analysis. As more instructors move away from traditional modes of testing, the authors' treatment of take-home, oral and open-book tests should prove useful. Even a section on how to deal with cheating is included.

This is highly recommended reading for the new college teacher. However, if the goal is to continue to improve one's skills at creating fair tests which measure what they are supposed to measure, delineate achievement levels and teach students something in the process, even the seasoned professor may find this a useful volume. 🍎

*Editor's Note:* All materials reviewed in Briefly Noted are available from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Rooms 220-221 in the Library.



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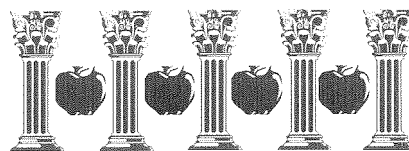
Please share with us your ideas about teaching and the exciting strategies you use for making your classrooms successful. Please send all articles, typed double-spaced, to Don Forrester in THE CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING.

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These thoughts are echoed by Linda Lewis, a non-traditional nursing student who, after 20 years, re-entered college only to find herself stymied by the writing requirements of English 102. "Patsy Grider patiently walked me through the process of learning to write," she says gratefully. "And what's more, she helped me believe in myself."

Finding four teaching/learning generations on one campus may not be newsworthy, but it is, I think, immensely comforting and affirming to those whose lives are given to teaching. It is *our* story, symbolic of that stream of life and learning of which we all are a part.

And the story doesn't end here. 🍎