

PAES Instructional Enhancement Initiative

College of Education, The Ohio State University

*If at first you don't succeed ...
Try, try again!*

Once again, PAES will submit materials for the OSU Departmental Teaching Award. If you have information you would like to have included in the packet, or you can secure letters of support from students or alumni, please contact Darcy (granello.1)

Winter Book Club

The PAES winter quarter book club will focus on a book that highlights the more philosophical components of teaching.

Books under consideration:

Svinicki (2004) *Learning & motivation in the post-secondary classroom*. (the book that FTAD will be reading this year)

hooks (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*.

Kegan (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*.

Schon (1990). *Educating the reflective practitioner*.

Shor (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*.

Any reactions? Ideas?
Books you recommend?

Autumn Workshop: Teaching Students with Disabilities

The PAES Autumn Quarter Workshop, co-sponsored by the PAES Diversity & Instruction committees, focused on how we can improve our classroom instruction to be appropriate and inclusive for all students. Patty Carlton, Interim Director of the Office for Disability Services, spoke about classroom accommodations and the services offered by her office. Next, Scott Lissner, the ADA Coordinator,

spoke about legal ramifications. Finally, a wonderful panel of outspoken and courageous students with disabilities offered suggestions for faculty. Student panelists were: Jake Martin, Peter Bossley, and Evelyn Clevenger. These students reminded us all to make our classrooms inclusive places where all students feel welcome. Thanks to all who attended!



Dr. Chris Zirkle, winner of the 2004 PAES Collaboration in Instruction Award, along with community supervisors Jim Pinchak & Susan Nell, used their funding, in part, to develop a CD on taking the PRAXIS exam. Recently, 106 participants attended their training and received a CD.

Eggheads & Eggrolls: Next Discussion Date is Dec. 6

It's autumn quarter. It's finals week. That can only mean one thing: Eggheads & Eggrolls!

This is another opportunity to discuss the more philosophical side of teaching. What are our goals? Our values? And how do we express these ideals to our students? Does what we are doing line up with what we believe? In the past, we have had great turnout at these events, and PAES faculty have noted how wonderful it is to "carve time out" of their busy lives to engage in these thought-provoking and challenging discussions with colleagues. So, mark the date on your calendar, look for an RSVP form coming soon, and get ready for some great food and even better discussion!

The topic has yet to be determined. Right now we are considering one of these:

- How do we accommodate doctoral students with mental illnesses and other disabilities, particularly at the exam and dissertation stage?

- How do we mentor our doctoral students, and how do we document that mentoring? (how do we mentor teaching, research, and service?)

- Or, do you have a topic you would like to see discussed?

Please send your comments/feedback on any of these ideas, or your ideas for discussion, to Darcy (granello.1). See you December 6th!

PAES to Present at the Lilly Conference on College Teaching

Four PAES faculty (Drs. Sherman, Goodway-Shiebler, Miranda, & Haag-Granello), along with Dr. Kathryn Plank from FTAD will present on "Creating a Departmental Culture Where Teaching is Valued" at the 24th Annual Lilly Conference in Oxford Ohio, on November 19th. Participants will learn about the rationale, components, and outcomes of the Initiative, and how the Initiative has brought teaching to the forefront in faculty discussions and now permeates the culture of PAES.

Guidelines for Creating Web Content Accessible to All

**By Joe E. Wheaton, Associate Professor
Rehabilitation Services, PAES**

Why Should I Make My Pages Accessible?

Accessibility is for everyone. Although there are legal mandates requiring institutions of higher education to make all its educational materials accessible (e.g., the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act), accessibility is fundamentally just good web page design. For example:

- Computers can read the text on a screen but images, graphs, and charts are meaningless to persons without vision. Redundancy increases the likelihood that information will be understood by everyone. Text descriptions of graphs and charts (needed by persons without vision) increase the understanding of difficult concepts for everyone.
- Captioning video, needed by persons who are deaf, also helps students with learning disabilities. Furthermore, it also assures that important information is clearly conveyed to all students, including those for whom English is a second language and those connecting to the Web over slow connections.
- Pages that are accessible are better organized and therefore more usable by all. Accessible pages render properly on a wide variety of user interfaces (e.g., PDAs and cell phones), they are easier to navigate, and they convey information in a consistent, logical manner. For pages to appear properly in all these environments, they must be well designed. Although I cannot do more than touch the surface on web page design and accessibility in this article, I will identify some common problems, offer solutions, and suggest some resources to help you. Ohio State has the Web Accessibility Center, located in the Office for Disability Services, to help with advice and support.

Graphics & Multimedia

Persons with visual impairments use screen readers to read web pages. The simplest way to understand what a user experiences when visiting a page through a screen reader is to think of that person listening to a baseball game over the radio. The game cannot be seen, so the user must rely on the announcer for a description of the action. You are that announcer describing the game. Of course, screen readers are more literal than an announcer, because they read every word (and sometimes punctuation), but, like the radio, they have one big drawback: they cannot read pictures. This is where you as the author is challenged to provide content. It's up to you to give meaningful descriptions of images for your audience. Here are some general guidelines to follow:

- Images include everything from blank spacers to complex graphs. There are several ways to cope with these images that insure the user gets all the information they need, but in all cases something must be done. There are two main ways to describe images: alt-tags and long descriptions.

Many photos, logos, and images require only a short description, called an "alt-tag," named from the HTML code that executes it. All the commercial web page authoring tools (e.g., FrontPage, Dreamweaver) make this easy.

When adding an image with these and similar products, the properties of the image will contain a box to insert alternative text. The screen reader will read this text. For example, a photograph of me on my web page might carry the alt-tag "Photo of Joe Wheaton." Alt-tags are short, usually no longer than about 150 words, and convey basic information about the image. There is also a special type of alt-tag called an empty alt-tag that gives even less information. In fact, it gives no information at all, and the screen reader just skips it. Spacer images and icons are such images and they often carry no important information but are merely added for visual affect. In such cases add an empty alt-tag, an alt-tag with nothing in it. Note that an empty alt-tag is not the same as no alt-tag. When there is no alt-tag, a screen reader will typically read "graphic" or "image" every time it hits an image. Imagine listening to a page that repeatedly says "image, image, image." The listener will think the web author a fool.

- Some images, such as graphs, require information more than an alt-tag can convey because of the complexity of their information. In such cases, use a long description (longdesc for short). This is a link to a text only file that describes the graph in detail. This can be of any length (it's a completely separate web page). If this page opens a new window, be sure to tell the reader so he or she knows how to return to the page where they started.
- Multimedia presentations, such as video clips with audio tracks, often have poor quality sound tracks if recorded on ambient microphones or in live settings. Moreover, lip reading is impossible in these small, sometimes jerky videos. The best way to ensure this type of information is perceived accurately is to provide either a transcript or synchronous captioning. Although speech to text technology exists, it is currently unreliable. Thus, you will need a transcript of the audio track. This can be more labor intensive than making the video itself.
- Image maps (images divided into areas that link to another page) need redundant text for each link, which should be added either above or below the image map.

Layout & Presentation

- Unless you only have one page on your web site, your viewers will have to navigate your web. Make your navigation simple and consistent from page to page. Don't make your viewers learn a new way to navigate on every page or you'll lose them. In their book on web site design, Nielsen and Tahir (2002) recommend keeping your links to a few specific words and to use the typical blue, underlined text for links. This helps readers (both visual and computer) scan the page for links. Avoid phrases like "click here," which tells viewers nothing.

Web Guidelines, Continued

- When designing your page, make sure the background and text contrast well. This seems like a no brainer, but many of us have seen web pages with red text on a black background, or yellow on white. Also, don't use only the size, the color, or the formatting of text alone to convey important information, as it may render differently on different monitors and with different browsers. And of course color is meaningless to persons with the inability to see color. Test your pages by photocopying them, especially several times. Can you still read them?
- Let the user control the page. That is, don't initiate actions automatically that can't be stopped. For example, avoid pop-up windows. Avoid redirecting people to a new web site without their permission.
- Language and writing style should be clear and simple. Break large blocks of information into smaller sections for easier reading. Most people find that a narrow column of text is easier to read than text all the way across the page. Use only a single column of text whenever possible; it's easier to scan.
- Browsers have the ability to display text in different languages, so screen readers need to know the language used on your page and when language changes.
- Use headings to organize your page but don't use them just for formatting. You can layout a page like an outline – major heading (H1), subheadings (H2), and further subheadings (H3, H4, etc.). Each one of these heading can be individually formatted to help guide both the visual and nonvisual reader. Visual readers can scan for the major section breaks. Nonvisual readers can tab to each section. Moreover, word processing documents that use headers correctly can be converted to accessible PDF files.
- Usually you will want your font size to be “relative.” That is, sized not as pixels, but as “ems” or as a percentage of the base font. This allows people to quickly change font size for easier viewing of your page.

Tables, Frames, Applets

- Tables are a useful way to visually convey relationships, but they can also be used to lay out the page. If a table is used to lay out text on the page, layout it out so it will make sense when read from left to right (referred to as “linearized”). Never use a table summary or include cells formatted as headers in a layout table. In almost all cases, layout tables should be sized as a percentage of the page width. This will allow your table look the same (or nearly the same) on all computers, even those with older, low resolution monitors and eliminate the need to scroll left-to-right as one reads across the page.
- Conversely, if you use tables for data, summarize the table to aid reader comprehension. It helps all students to know the high points of a table. There are certain formatting guidelines for data tables, which are too specific to go into here, but one simple suggestion is to make sure you identify the header cells (first cells) in the rows and columns. Header cell information can be used by screen readers to identify important information and cross reference table cells with their respective row or column header.

- Frames, applets & scripts are becoming more frequent. The basic rule of thumb is to make sure your page can be read if these features are turned off. Frames are rarely a good idea, but if used be sure to give each a logical name.
- One of the best things to happen to web page design in recent years is the use of style sheets to format your pages. Using styles allows you to quickly make changes to any text and even all the text on thousands of pages simultaneously. All browsers released in the last couple of years support style sheets for formatted text. Your pages will have a consistent look, load faster, and will be easier to update if you use style sheets. In the future, style sheets will also be able to replace layout tables by precisely positioning text.

Validate Your Pages

Validation refers to checking your page for accessibility errors. There are free services to help you.

Bobby (<http://bobby.watchfire.com/bobby/html/en/index.jsp>) will check your pages once they are posted to the Web. It will compare your pages to either the WAI or the Section 508 guidelines. The Bobby web site will ask you for your web page address, automatically check the page for accessibility problems, and then link you to solutions. The free version will not be able to check pages that are password protected, such as WebCT pages, because these pages cannot be accessed. Some html knowledge is required to fix the errors.

A-Prompt (<http://aprompt.snow.utoronto.ca/>) will validate your page and provide menus with solutions. Download A-Prompt from the University of Toronto then run it on pages that are saved to your computer and before you upload them to the web. Because the pages are saved “locally,” A-Prompt can check your password protected pages before you post them to the Web or to WebCT. Much less knowledge of HTML is required to use A-Prompt.

WAVE (<http://www.wave.webaim.org/wave/index.jsp>) from WebAIM is free and can be downloaded as an add in toolbar. Once added to your browser, you need to only click on the WAVE icon to check your page.

Resources

The Web Accessibility Center, Office For Disability Services (WAC; <http://www.wac.ohio-state.edu>; webac@osu.edu or call 292-3307). The WAC can help OSU faculty and staff with a variety of web page accessibility issues.

The Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator creates and implements policy related to access and the inclusion of students with disabilities (<http://ada.osu.edu>) at Ohio State. Ohio State personnel may contact Scott Lissner at 292-6207 or e-mail him at lissner.2@osu.edu.



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To become more involved in the Initiative,
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THEN, LOOK UNDER "INFORMATION FOR FACULTY"

Diversity Update: Facilitating Success for Students with Learning Disabilities

By Wendy Naumann, Assistant Professor,
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Learning Disabilities are one of the most common "invisible" disabilities among college students, and graduation rates for students with learning disabilities are much lower than the rates for students without disabilities (Murray, Goldstein, Nourse, & Edgar, 2000). At OSU, graduation rates for students with disabilities and students without disabilities are fairly equal (Carlton, personal communication). Although self-identification, documentation and request for accommodations are solely the responsibility of college students, it is necessary for educators to develop an awareness of the issues that students with LD may present. In doing so, they can better create classes that may be beneficial to students of all learning styles. In one study, Heiman and Preceel (2003) found no differences between the LD and non-LD college students on grade point average and number of courses taken, and these results are consistent with data at OSU. Students with LD do report some differences from non-LD students in the areas of having more difficulties in humanities, social sciences, and foreign language classes and the use of academic strategies. Students with LD prefer

additional oral explanations or visual explanations, report more problems with concentration, anxiety and frustration, and need more time during exams. Additionally, students with LD who have higher scores on self-determination or higher scores on self-regulated learning skills that focus on higher level processing of material (Ruban, McCoach, McGuire, & Reis, 2003) have higher GPAs. The relationship between use of self-regulated learning strategies and GPA is higher for students with LD versus those without.

In a literature synthesis, (Mull, Stilington, & Alper, 2001), found the following support services and instructional adjustments to be useful:

- Instructional strategies (study skills, time management, organizational strategies, test taking skills, listening skills, note taking strategies, memory strategies and communication skills), tutoring, academic advising, compensatory strategies, social skills, self-advocacy skills, and transition planning to adult life.

- Instructional adjustments, including reading tests aloud, audio taping tests, large print tests, oral projects, instructor-prepared study questions, and assistive technology (recorded books and lectures), note-taking modifications, proof-reading and typing services, and lecture outlines.

Specific strategies (Sandock, 2004)

- Link previous lecture to current lecture
- Outline main points on overheads
- State class objectives
- Write key terms on overhead
- Leave overheads up longer
- Identify organizational patterns that are useful
- Make lectures interactive
- Link concrete examples with abstract concepts
- Link sequential and random information
- Facilitate use of tape recording
- Make notes available on the Internet
- Maintain student attention by varying delivery
- Move around the room
- Summarize or draw conclusions at the end

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- Ruban, L. M., D., McCoach, B., McGuire, J. M., & Reis, S. M. (2003). The differential impact of academic self-regulatory methods on academic achievement among university students with and without learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 36*(3) 270-86.