

PAES Instructional Enhancement Initiative

College of Education, The Ohio State University

Spring Workshop: Faculty Teaching Tips—Set for April 30

Important Dates for Spring

April 12—Proposals due to Darcy for the PAES Instructional Enhancement Award

April 30—Spring Workshop: Faculty Teaching Tips

May 7—Deadline for Spring issue of the Newsletter

June 7—Eggheads & Eggrolls: Preparing Doctoral Students for Academia

It's time to start thinking about the Spring Workshop—Faculty Teaching Tips. It's an opportunity to share ideas and learn from your colleagues. Each presenter will have 10-15 minutes to give a brief overview of a "teaching tip" and entertain some questions and dialogue. Please think about sharing one of your teaching tips with your colleagues in this format. A call for presenters will go out soon.

Already on the agenda: A overview of the project, by the winners of the 2004 PAES Instructional Enhancement Award; tips learned from the Lilly Conference on Teaching & Learning, by those who attended; and changes made to our teaching, by previous participants in the PAES Book Clubs. But, there's still room for more! Hope you'll share your ideas— and put the date on your calendar now!



Spring Workshop

Friday, April 30

12:00-2:00

Rm 306 Pomerene

Lunch will be provided

Eggheads & Eggrolls: Next Discussion Date is June 7th

Aha! Got your attention!! After the very successful discussion group on Graduate Exams (and Chinese food luncheon) during finals week autumn quarter, the PAES Instructional Enhancement Committee is pleased to announce: "Eggheads & Eggrolls: A Discussion Series for PAES Faculty." We'll meet several times a year, over a Chinese food luncheon, for informal discussions about important issues in teaching. Coming June 7th (the Monday of Spring Quarter Finals Week): Preparing Doctoral Students for Life in Academia. We'll use the informal discussion format to think about how we can best prepare our students, and we'll learn some great tips and ideas from other faculty in our own programs as well as those across PAES. So, mark the date on your calendar, look for more information in the Spring, and see what good fortune it is share your ideas and learn from your PAES colleagues!

At the Autumn PAES workshop, we had a WONDERFUL discussion on preparing graduate students for their oral exams. During finals week, 29 faculty met to talk about this process. Many commented that this was the first time they had talked aloud about the philosophy and goals of the graduate exam. Now it's time to follow-up...what did you learn? What do you want to change? What discussions can you have in your section or program to take the next steps? All faculty who attended the workshop are strongly encouraged to pull out your notes (or see the notes that Dr. Kathryn Plank took, available on the PAES Instruction website) and keep the discussion going!

Proposals due April 12 for PAES Instruction Award

The Second Annual PAES "Instructional Enhancement Award" will be given during the spring quarter to members of the PAES faculty. The award winners must demonstrate a collaborative effort in instruction (e.g., several faculty members, a program, a section), and attention will be given to how this collaborative effort enhances the academic plan and/or the mission of the college and school. The winners of the award will receive money to purchase items to further enhance their instructional plans and will be asked to highlight their efforts in instruction at the PAES Spring Instructional Enhancement Workshop. Submissions are due April 12—and should include a 3-5 page summary of the proposed project, including (a) an overview and description; (b) goals; (c) a description of how the project meets one or more components of the academic plan; (d) a plan for project evaluation, and (e) appendices as necessary to support the proposal. Resubmissions are encouraged.

Creating Culturally Responsive Classrooms: Considering Culture When Teaching

By Donna Y. Ford

As I study and read about the poor achievement of culturally diverse students (specifically, African-American, Hispanic-American, and Native-American students) in schools and their poor performance on achievement and intelligence tests, I share the growing sense of urgency among educators that we need to better understand factors that contribute to these troubling and persistent findings. In addition to addressing issues of low performance and underachievement by culturally diverse students, educators have sought to increase the recruitment and retention of these diverse students in colleges and university.

Variables that contribute to under-representation among diverse students in colleges and universities have been explored by many scholars, particularly Tinto (e.g., 1993) and Sedlacek (e.g., 1991), both of whom have research-based model of retention. These models explore variables regarding quality of life on campuses for diverse students, including relationships with professors, relationships with classmates, diversity of classrooms and campus, diversity of curriculum and course offering, classroom climate, and more.

Reactions to culture and diversity can be placed into at least three categories: (1) acknowledging differences among groups, educators seek to understand, negotiate, affirm and work with such differences; (2) operating in a cultureblind fashion, defined as ignoring, minimizing or negating culture and cultural differences, educators pretend that differences do not exist; or (3) holding negative and stereotypic beliefs about culturally diverse students, teachers are deficit-oriented in their thinking. With deficit thinking, educators recognize cultural differences, but in negative ways. Thus, students who are different may be perceived as disadvantaged or dysfunctional; their values, beliefs, norms, and practices may be viewed as ‘abnormal’, ‘wrong’ or ‘incorrect.’ Ford et al. (2002) argued that educators who hold either of the latter views – cultureblind or deficit thinking – may have learning environments that are culturally insensitive rather than culturally responsive.

Whatever view one holds of culturally diverse populations, we find ourselves in increased contact with people who are culturally different. Statistics on teacher and student demographics shed light on this point. Few teachers are culturally diverse. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2000), during the 1999-2000 school year, 84.3% of teachers were White; conversely, diverse students comprised some 30% of the U.S. population in 2000 (U.S.D.E., 2003). Finally, while the percentage of culturally diverse students is expected to increase significantly, the percentage of minorities choosing teaching as a profession is not expected to increase. The implications of increased student diversity (world diversity) are profound – they suggest that teachers must become more familiar with the realities of culture and its impact on teaching and learning. In this article, definitions of culture are presented, along with a model or framework for understanding cultural differences.

Definitions of Culture

The term ‘culture’ originates from the Latin word *cultura* or *culturus* as in “agri cultura”, the cultivation of soil. Later, other meanings were attached to the word. From its root meaning of an ‘activity’, culture became transformed into a condition, a state of being cultivated (Freilich, 1989).

Like the terms ‘intelligence’ and ‘gifted’, there are many definitions of culture. The question “What is culture?” has intrigued scholars in various disciplines for decades. Culture is an enigma in that it contains both concrete and abstract components (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The study of culture has ranged from a focus on architecture and landscape to the study of implicit principles and values to which a group of members subscribe (p. 9).

Ting-Toomey (1999) defines culture as a complex frame of reference that consists of patterns or traditions, beliefs, values, norms, and meanings that are shared in varying degrees by interacting members of a community. More specifically, D’Andrade (1984) offered the following definition:

[Culture is] learned systems of meaning, communicated by means of nature language and other symbol systems... and capable of creating cultural entities and particular senses of reality. Through these systems of meaning, groups of people adapt to their environment and structure interpersonal activities... Cultural meaning systems can be treated as a very large diverse pool of knowledge, or partially shared cluster of norms, or as intersubjectively shared, symbolically created realities (p. 116).

This definition of culture, and others, captures three points worth noting. First, culture refers to a diverse pool of knowledge, shared realities, and clustered norms that constitute the learned systems of meanings in a particular society. Second, these learned systems of meanings are shared and transmitted through daily interactions among members of the cultural group and from one generation to the next. Third, culture facilitates the capacity of members to survive and adapt to their external environment (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 9).

Hofstede (1991) is credited with coining the phrase: “The body is the hardware and culture is the software.” A MacIntosh and IBM computer serve the same functions, but do so in different ways due to different software. So it is with different groups – all people eat and sleep; eating and sleeping are universal, but different groups eat different foods (pork vs. beef vs. no meat) for different reasons (to celebrate, because of traditions, because of folklore) and in different ways (fork vs. chopsticks; utensils vs. hands). Further, different groups may have traditions relative to the foods selected and their significance (e.g., On January 1, some groups eat greens which represents money, pork for health, and black-eyed peas for luck, to name a few traditions).

Conceptually, many people also describe culture

Creating Culturally Responsive Classrooms: Part 1 of 2 (second part will appear in Spring Issue)

using an iceberg analogy. Above the surface of the iceberg are cultural artifacts – music, fashion, and art, for example. As described below, what is beneath the surface, termed ‘invisible culture’ or ‘deep culture’; deep culture includes cultural traditions, beliefs, values, norms, and symbolic meanings. Deep culture, using the computer analogy, is the software.

Culturally shared traditions include myths, legends, ceremonies, and rituals (e.g., celebrating holidays in certain ways) that are passed on, verbally and non-verbally, from one generation to another. *Culturally shared beliefs* refer to a set of fundamental assumptions that people hold dearly and without question. These beliefs can revolve around questions regarding the concept of time, the meaning of life and death, and the meaning of space. They serve as the explanatory logic for behavior, and as the desired end goals to be achieved. *Cultural values* refer to a set of priorities that guide such notions as good and bad, fair and unfair, and right and wrong. Cultural values also include views on individual competitiveness versus group harmony or collectiveness. *Cultural norms* refer to the collective expectations of what constitutes “proper or improper” behavior in a given situation. Norms guide the scripts to be followed in a particular situation (e.g., how we greet someone; how we introduce ourselves; how we eat; how we show gratitude; how we discipline children; how we treat elderly, etc.).

Scholars contend that our ignorance of different traditions, beliefs, values, and norms can produce unintentional clashes between people or groups with different traditions, beliefs, values, and norms or rules. We may not even notice that we have violated another culture’s norms in a particular situation. The concept of two icebergs clashing illustrates this point. Their experiences of adjusting to a new culture, one that is very different from their indigenous culture, describe what scholars refer to as ‘culture shock.’

A Model of Culture: A Discussion of Dimensions

[Editor’s note: In the next issue, this article will continue with a discussion of the five dimensions of culture. In the meantime, readers will want to start thinking about the implications of this information for teaching.]

Implications for Teaching

Differences between students and professors can result in cultural mismatch and/or cultural shock. However, professors who understand culture, who are familiar with the functions of culture, and who are aware of the dimensions of culture are less likely to experience such conflicts. Ideally, such knowledge and understanding will positively impact professors’ perceptions of and relationships with culturally diverse students. Questions worth examining include:

- (1) How do I feel about working with students who are different from me?
- (2) What stereotypes, biases and fears do I hold about minority students?

- (3) Which of these stereotypes hinder effective teaching and learning?
- (4) What aspects of my teaching and classroom practices (for example, my instructional style or reward system) hinder minority student achievement?
- (5) How are the expectations I hold of diverse students different from those of White students? (For example, are minority students given challenging assignments? Do I praise them?)
- (6) How much time and effort (in my curriculum, instructional and assessments) am I willing to devote to teaching about diverse groups and multicultural education?
- (7) How much time and effort am I willing to commit to learning about my diverse students?

This next step focuses on understanding students from different cultures, and toward this end, the following eight questions can be useful:

- (1) What is “culture” and how does it affect teaching and learning?
- (2) Where and whom can I turn to for more information and resources on diverse cultures?
- (3) What are the cultural beliefs, values, norms and traditions of the diverse students represented in my class and my school district?
- (4) How can I use my students’ cultural backgrounds as scaffolding for teaching and learning and, thereby, avoid adopting and practicing a colorblind philosophy?
- (5) How can I make learning culturally meaningful and relevant for all my students?
- (6) What are my diverse students interested in learning—that is to say, what topics and issues engage them?
- (7) What teaching strategies are culturally congruent and responsive?
- (8) How can I use praise and the curricula to affirm the dignity and worth of diverse students—that is, how can I avoid creating culturally assaultive classrooms or learning environments?

Part 2 of this article will appear in the Spring Issue

Another Very Successful Book Club!

Participants have just completed another informative PAES Book Club. Nine faculty participants and Dr. Kathryn Plank from FTAD met for 4 weeks to discuss Zull’s *The Art of Changing the Brain*. There were lots of good ideas and discussion, and there’s certain to be some real tangible changes in the classroom as a result. Check with these faculty to learn about the discussion and about the Book Club format...there will be another opportunity next winter!

Participants were Professors Buckworth, Goodway, Granello, Haag-Granello, Naumann, Petosa, Sherman, Stein, & Suminski. Thanks to all who contributed!!



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PAES TEACHING INITIATIVE WEBSITE:
WWW.COE.OHIO-STATE.EDU/PAES
THEN, LOOK UNDER “INFORMATION FOR FACULTY”

Diversity Update: Teaching International Students

Aubrey Durbin, School Psychology Master's Student & **Wendy Naumann**, PAES Diversity Coordinator

International students face their own specific challenges in the classroom, but teachers can greatly assist in the learning process of these students by employing certain teaching strategies. These strategies relate to classroom climate, teacher sensitivity, teaching students who are not native English speakers, and keeping students abreast of their performance. As for all students, instructors should establish a safe classroom atmosphere that is accessible to students regardless of their race, ethnicity and nationality. View the students on a continuum of learning abilities where all students can participate fully and work to make the coursework flexible to accommodate all learning differences.

Do not make international students feel alien in the classroom. Increase your cross cultural sensitivity by scheduling appointments with the student to learn more about them, their culture, and their country. If you show that you are curious, the students will feel more included. You can then relate class materials in lectures to the international students experience and even ask questions in class to show other students a different angle. When asking an international

student about their experiences or perspective, remember to ask the student as an individual and not as a representative of their country. Also, do not make educating yourself and the other students in your classes about international perspectives the sole responsibility of the international students in your class. Solicit their input in a manner that acknowledges multiple perspectives and validates their personal perspective, but foster a climate that places the responsibility for cultural sensitivity on all.

During your lectures, be sure to speak clearly while facing the students, and avoid using slang terms or colloquialisms. Avoid using long convoluted sentences; speak simply and use simpler terms when possible. Provide a glossary of new terms as well as lecture notes or outlines to follow, and be sure to pause for note-taking. Encourage students to tape lectures, or even tape them yourself. It is also a good idea to have a dictionary and thesaurus on hand in the classroom. Remember that students who are not native English speakers may appear to understand what you are saying because they may be afraid to ask for clarification. When sharing information, say what you want the students to learn in different ways using different words. Periodically check in during break or after class with a student who

may have difficulty with English to see how well s/he understands your style of speech or needs clarification regarding certain idioms you may have inadvertently used.

During the course of the quarter, be sure to provide adequate feedback and assessment so that the students know how well they are performing. Make sure you clarify and reiterate the criteria you will use for to assess all assignments and exams. You cannot imply what must be done, you should be very explicit about what is expected and how the assignments will be graded. For example many international students are often surprised that classroom discussion is part of their grade. You may also want to review the syllabus individually with international students to make sure they understand all course policies and requirements. On certain assignments such as papers and essays, you may want to weigh grammar and vocabulary less than the structure and ideas. Encourage the students to have others proofread papers before turning them in and refer students to any writing support services on campus. You may also offer a variety of assignment choices and extra credit so that students can express their knowledge in a way that best fits their learning style.