

**NCCCJTI**

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The aim of NCCCJTI is to provide all North Carolina Community College faculty and staff with an outlet for publishing manuscripts of research and practice, as well as provide open access to readers or scholars interested in higher education topics surrounding North Carolina community colleges.



# NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE JOURNAL OF TEACHING INNOVATION

The Journal of North Carolina Community Colleges

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## Editor's Note

Creating a journal from the ground up proved to be difficult, but continuing the journey had its own perils. My mind started racing with unanswerable questions. Will we stay relevant? Will we have submissions for a second issue? Will our editors stick around? Will the quality of the journal be maintained? Will we be accused of nepotism if we publish an article from someone who has already been published? Will we be chastised for publishing work from our own editors? Was the formatting received well for the first issue? Was the content? How many people read the first issue? How many will read the second? Are we marketing enough? Will we gain OJED status? Are we doing enough for faculty and staff?

When we hosted our launch party last spring, over 100 attended virtually, with another 100 viewing the recording after the event. Aside from the launch party, emailing a ListServ, and posting on our social media, however, we haven't even scratched the surface of marketing this journal. And, now that I have a capacious column at my disposal, I'm able to provide our vision for the journal's future. In October we will recruit a dozen more editors. We will also find representatives from all 58 community colleges to assist in our solicitation of full issues and calls for submissions. The journal and the NCCCFA (which you should join if you haven't already) will be launching another new project — our own research podcast exclusively focused on studying North Carolina community college teaching. We will look toward open access, we will look toward grant sponsorship, we will look to partner with other states in the mid-Atlantic, and we will create a research collective that moves higher education FORWARD.

There are so many stories waiting to be told, there are so many strategies needing to be shared, and there are so many individuals that need an outlet for innovation. That's what we hope this journal can and will do, and hey, we completed our first year!

I would like to humbly thank the entire editorial staff for their contributions to this issue, those in the system office who gave us a shot and provided funding for hard copies of issue one, the NCCCFA for allowing us the opportunity to share a booth at the state conference, the authors of the collected articles, and most importantly, you (the reader). We hope you enjoy our new issue, we hope you are inspired by the articles, and we hope that you continue to impact students across the great state of North Carolina.

Happy Reading!

Dr. Josh Howell—Editor-in-Chief



## Theories of Embodied Rhetoric and the Trauma-Informed Writing Course

Kelly Wisdom

### Abstract

This article explores the insights that community college writing instructors can gain by using theories of embodied rhetoric as a conceptual framework for a trauma-informed course design. I briefly share my early experiences as a community college student dealing with trauma and my more recent experiences as a writing instructor who has worked with many students who take writing assignments as opportunities for processing traumatic experience. A variety of groups and organizations around the country have begun to engage in conversations about trauma-informed principles, and educational institutions are important sites for this work. Writing teachers engaging in trauma-informed work must be prepared for the risks as well as the rewards involved when students choose to write about their trauma in our classes. Theories of embodied rhetoric can allow us to consider the lived experiences of students dealing with trauma more critically and compassionately, as we shift ideas about subjectivity, intentionality, and agency in the writing classroom.

*Keywords:* trauma-informed pedagogy, rhetoric, writing, embodiment, agency, subjectivity

*Content warning:* Brief mention of various types of traumatic experience

### Theories of Embodied Rhetoric and the Trauma-Informed Writing Course

Throughout my childhood, I scribbled poetry and stories—sometimes for fun, sometimes to process my pain and confusion. Like many people, I found writing to be a powerful tool for healing. My

writing endeavors intensified in my teenage years as I began working through the trauma I'd experienced. Actually, the previous sentence implies an intentionality, a clear and deliberate choice on my part to seek healing, that I can only now apply to what was going on with me in my late teens and early twenties. At the time, my actions felt less like intentional seeking and more like flailing. Having dropped out of the University of North Carolina Greensboro in my second semester, I returned to my hometown, where a former teacher recommended I check out a creative writing course at the local community college. In the spring of 1996, I took the course. At the end of the semester, I received a grade of D—I only submitted the creative assignments for the course, unable to bring myself to do any of the more academic work—which gave me a 1.0 GPA (an entire point higher than my GPA from Greensboro).

From an outside perspective, this might seem like a failure, a waste of time and money. But I had learned something vital. I'd learned that through writing I could at least partially capture the whirl of confusion and self-hatred that plagued me, and I could share my feelings and experiences with others in a way that ever so slightly diminished my emotional pain, something I would only later learn to call *trauma*. In no way did that course miraculously heal me, erase the effects of trauma from my life, and set me on a path to "success." It would take me nine more years to finish a bachelor's degree and begin learning to heal. Still, in the years since then, I have returned in my mind to the memories of that course

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and the glimmer of hope that it gave me. If only for a moment, writing saved my life.

Now I find myself on the other side of that experience, having taught writing for the past 14 years at the same community college where I took that initial course. Every semester I find myself reading student writing—an essay, a poem, a short story, a journal entry—that recounts a tale of trauma and its lingering effects. Very often, those students share in their reflective writing how grateful they are to have found the space to give voice to a situation, event, or set of feelings that has lived silently within them, sometimes for years. While giving feedback to students, I have found myself many times writing these words: “I am so glad you were able to use this assignment to process this experience.” I try to express my hope that they have someone in their life to talk to and, if the writing makes me feel like they need immediate help, I provide information for campus support services. No matter what I write, it never ever feels like enough.

I’ve had these experiences with students for over a decade, but only in the past few years have I been introduced to the larger conversation around trauma-informed pedagogy. Since 2019, I’ve become more consciously engaged in the study of trauma as a doctoral student in the cultural foundations of education and, during that time, I’ve come across trauma-informed approaches in settings as various as therapy, tattooing, and yoga. Many people seem interested in the subject of trauma. *The Body Keeps the Score*, a 2014 book on trauma and the possibilities for healing written by psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk, has returned to the bestseller lists and remained there. As of this writing, the book is number six on Amazon’s list of most sold nonfiction books, having spent 64 weeks there (Amazon, 2022), and it is number three on the *New York Times* combined print and e-book nonfiction list, with 105 weeks there (“Combined,” 2022). As van der Kolk (2014) attests, trauma affects many of us:

Research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has shown that one in five Americans was sexually molested as a child; one in four was beaten by a parent to the point of a mark being left on their body; and one in three couples engages in physical violence. A quarter of us grew up with alcoholic relatives, and one out of eight witnessed their mother being beaten or hit. (p. 1)

People are hungry for some understanding of trauma

and are looking for the possibility of a reprieve from its aftermath.

Educational institutions are particularly important contexts for this work. The North Carolina Resilience and Learning Project, an initiative of the Public School Forum of North Carolina, offers training and support for school districts in order to “create trauma-informed learning environments that are safer and more supportive for ALL kids” (North Carolina Resilience and Learning Project, 2022, emphasis in original). On the whole, institutions of higher education seem to have been slower to directly engage the ubiquity of trauma, but recently I have encountered a smattering of trainings and articles on the subject. In September 2020, Magna Publications offered an online training titled “Trauma-Informed Pedagogy: Teaching in Uncertain Times.” In their fall 2020 issue, the journal of the Two-Year College English Association—Southeast published an article, “Student Writing and Trauma Informed Response” (Berresheim, 2020). This March, the North Carolina Student Success Center, a partner of the North Carolina Community College System Office, offered a workshop on “Becoming Trauma-Informed.” It is possible that the upheavals of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in an increased awareness of how many people are living with trauma, and, of course, the pandemic caused a cascade of trauma around the world. Considering the social disruptions of the past few years, I believe that this increased awareness of the need to address trauma in the classroom will only continue to grow.

As a doctoral student, my research interests have arisen from my personal experiences with using writing as a part of trauma recovery and my interactions with students who seem to be doing something similar. I have focused my studies on trauma writing in the community college classroom in an effort to bring a more trauma-informed approach to the way I teach and design my courses. A major concern that arises in this topic is the possibility of a writing course causing further harm or retraumatizing a student. In addition to seeing students using writing to find pathways to healing from (or at least reckoning with) trauma, I have also witnessed situations in which a writing opportunity created a moment of great difficulty for a traumatized person. One former student found herself having to switch topics mid-project when the subject matter became too much for her to manage in the classroom setting. I have also seen people walk out of writing workshops

when the activity pushed us deeply into the realm of personal reflection. Writing teachers engaging in trauma-informed work must therefore be prepared for the risks as well as the rewards involved when students choose to write about their trauma in our classes.

Rhetorical theories that include an understanding of embodied experiences can offer a guide to navigate these risks and rewards for writing instructors interested in designing a course curriculum that offers opportunities for reckoning with trauma and avoids causing further harm. Many theories of rhetoric seem to ignore embodied experience; rhetoric is viewed as a mental exercise, not a physical one. As Dolmage (2009) explains, “We [rhetoricians] have erected a rhetorical tradition that...valorizes the split between the mental and the physical” (p. 2). The latest science on trauma and the brain reveals that the mind-body split is nothing but a fiction. The “memory of trauma is encoded in the viscera, in heartbreaking and gut-wrenching emotions, in autoimmune disorders and skeletal/muscular problems” (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 88). For every student, the body in all its complexity and vulnerability is involved in the writing process from beginning to end. For students who have experienced trauma, this involvement is fraught with even more complexities and vulnerabilities. The discipline of rhetoric/composition has long held many assumptions about subjectivity, intention, purpose, and agency that ignore the lived, embodied experiences of many students. Very often these are students who have in some way been pushed to the margins of society—students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students with financial hardships or reeling from trauma’s effects. Intersectional theories also alert us to the ways that oppression intensifies for those marginalized in multiple ways. As part of the work of creating more equitable classrooms, writing instructors need to re-see and revise our curricular practices to take these embodied experiences into account.

### **What Is Embodied Rhetoric?**

A handful of scholars have specifically addressed the lack of attention paid to the body in western rhetorical traditions, theorizing a type of embodied rhetoric. As early as 1997, Susan Kates described how Hallie Quinn Brown, an African American elocutionist who lived from 1845 to 1949, devised a

pedagogy of embodied rhetoric, which Kates (1997) defines as “a rhetoric located within, and generated for, the African American community” (p. 59). Kates uses Brown’s work as a model that “may help us [educators] to generate rhetorical curricula that will respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse student population” (p. 61). While Brown updated traditional methods of elocution pedagogy in order to celebrate the linguistic culture of her students, some rhetorical scholarship seeks to update longstanding theories and expand on the connections between rhetoric and the diversity of embodied experiences.

For example, Dolmage (2009) highlights the “canonical view of rhetorical history that not only overlooks the body but also...uses disability as a master trope of disqualification” (p. 1). He digs into classical rhetorical texts to find places where the body and rhetoric were more aligned, noting that even Plato advocated for training for both mind and body. In later Platonist traditions, rhetoric (in comparison to philosophy) was viewed as “bodily and therefore inferior to philosophy” (p. 4). Dolmage’s argument is that rhetoricians have ignored rhetoric’s historical relationship to the body and have instead chosen a tradition imbued with “a fear of body and of bodily difference that has limited our ability to recognize and communicate with and from our own real bodies” (p. 3). He revives the Greek concept of *mêtis*, which refers to a “cunning, adaptive, embodied intelligence” (p. 5, emphasis in original) and advocates for “using our bodies significantly and making rhetoric significantly bodied” (p. 4). The cunning of *mêtis* is a kind of maverick intelligence that might offer more rhetorical power to those operating at the margins of society.

Like Dolmage, Knoblauch (2012) acknowledges the “link between bodies and language” (p. 50) in the history of rhetoric and asserts the importance of embodiment in an inclusive theory of rhetoric. She writes, “it’s difficult to imagine discussions of the rhetorical practices of members of marginalized groups without reference to lived bodily experiences” (p. 50, emphasis in original). Knoblauch reviews the work of other rhetorical scholars who have identified connections between rhetoric and the body, categorizing the different concepts discussed in their scholarship. She differentiates between embodied language, embodied knowledge, and embodied rhetoric. Embodied rhetoric, she argues, involves “the

purposeful effort by an author to represent aspects of embodiment within the text he or she is shaping...the author attempts to decipher how these ‘material circumstances’...affect how he or she understands the world” (p. 58). While acknowledging that her categorization is only one way to articulate the various ideas present in discussions of rhetoric and the body, Knoblauch provides a starting point for thinking about what embodied rhetoric involves and how we might continue incorporating it into revisions of traditional rhetorical theories.

Ultimately, as I have read the works of these scholars and applied them to ideas about trauma-informed pedagogy, I have noticed my own thinking shift on a few key concepts pertinent to the teaching of writing. Using theories of embodied rhetoric as a conceptual framework for a first-year writing course design can adjust ideas about subjectivity, purpose/intention, and agency in a way that will benefit instructors taking a trauma-informed approach.

### Subjectivity

Traditional western views of subjectivity, descending from Descartes, have posited the existence and priority of the solitary rational individual as the center point from which all thought, knowledge, and truth flow. Postmodern theorists have long worked to dislodge this view of the subject, recognizing the fragmented nature of existence. Much of the writing of Michel Foucault demonstrates the socially constructed nature of the self, revealing how we are entangled in structures of power (over which we also exert our own power) and how the subject is produced through these entanglements. More recent theorists have highlighted not only subjectivity’s fragmentation, but also its instability and ever changing complexity. As Rice (2012) states, “We generally recognize that subjectivity is not a state of self-presence or consciousness, nor is subjectivity something solidified over time. It is an articulation of multiple narratives, practices, and apparatuses that coalesce at any given moment” (p. 44). Lawiecki-Wilson (2013) argues that our rhetorical traditions do not recognize this fluid nature of the subject; they are bound up with “the liberal model of a core, autonomous, and stable self” (p. 160). Trauma takes you into an especially vivid understanding/experience of the fragmentation and instability of the self. As Anzaldúa (2002) notes, “The life you thought inevitable, unalterable, and fixed in some

foundational reality is smoke, a mental construction, fabrication” (p. 558). You become simultaneously the person you were before the trauma and the person the trauma made you into.

In writing courses, however, we guide students toward composing arguments from a rational, singular perspective. This is an important objective. A longstanding goal of the field of composition/rhetoric is preparing students for democratic participation in society by teaching them to use what James Berlin (1988) called *social-epistemic rhetoric*. However, a course that only allows opportunities for writing linear arguments supported by external sources does not fully take into account the embodied experiences of students living with trauma. Rice (2012) describes how “publics create subject positions from which people are invited to speak” (p. 46). The “familiar patterns of public discourse” (p. 47) in composition classrooms and the genres of writing promoted therein work to hail particular kinds of subjects. Who is invited to speak/write by the traditional argumentative writing assignment? Is it the traumatized student, suffering from a damaged “relationship to...physical reality?” (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 21). The singular rational subject is the one we hail in our course design, from the syllabus policies to most essay assignments to the structure of in-class discussions. How might we instead invite students dealing with trauma to write themselves into new possibilities? As van der Kolk (2014) explains, “Language gives us the power to change ourselves and others by communicating our experiences, helping us to define what we know” (p. 38). A trauma-informed approach could consider these revised theories of subjectivity in order to shift the familiar patterns of discourse in the composition classroom or even create new ones.

Integrating the teaching of social-epistemic rhetoric into memoir and other types of narrative or personal writing assignments might provide one key to the project of shifting ideas of subjectivity in the trauma-informed writing course. Smith’s (1998) concept of the autobiographical manifesto describes effects that are more political than therapeutic, but her ideas can apply to the context of trauma. She writes, “Autobiographical practices become occasions for restaging subjectivity, and autobiographical strategies become occasions for the staging of resistance” (p. 434). When trauma has made the world unbearable, autobiographical genres offer space for

the student to write their way toward a more bearable existence. “Calling the subject into the future,” Smith explains, “the manifesto attempts to actively position the subject in a potentially liberated future” (p. 438). Developing one’s skill in social-epistemic rhetoric and writing a personal story can be two aspects of the same writing project. Healing from trauma was, for me, a precursor to greater political awareness. Personal writing can provide a first step in developing a critical consciousness, as students begin to understand their experiences within a larger social context.

But narrative, too, can be tricky when trauma is involved, when a solitary, stable self is invoked. The traditional memoir assignment, with its emphasis on a structure of exposition–rising action–climax–resolution can lead students to feel they must produce “I was lost but now I’m found” narratives, when that might not be the case. A student carrying trauma with them into the classroom might need to write what sociologist Arthur Frank (2013) calls a *chaos narrative*, which he differentiates from both *restitution* and *quest* narratives. In a chaos narrative, the “plot imagines life never getting better,” and the story is told “without sequence or discernable causality” (p. 97). Narratives without a resolution that are told with no logical order probably don’t receive passing grades in most writing classes. However, as Frank argues, “to deny a chaos story is to deny the person telling this story, and people who are being denied cannot be cared for” (p. 109). Some might argue that caring for students is not part of the job, but from a trauma-informed perspective it must be. It’s possible, therefore, that new methods of assessment, such as *ungrading* (Blum, 2020), would be more appropriate than letter grades in a trauma-informed course.

Putting one’s traumatic experience into words can be retraumatizing or even impossible. Van der Kolk (2014) describes the condition of alexithymia, in which traumatized individuals have “no words for feelings” (p. 100). Writing from a Lacanian perspective, Richardson (2004) describes this as a lack of an adequate signifier, claiming that “the result of this lack is precisely the desire or need to produce new signifiers which are never quite right, are always contingent on/in the present, but which nonetheless form the condition for—the cause of—writing” (p.

496). Perhaps this explains why I continue to write the story of my own trauma decades after the initial events. Trauma is a perpetual writing prompt, yet the writing produced is as shifting and unstable as the self, contingent on time and place, how much healing has occurred, and more. Richardson explains, “We might then say that narrative at any particular moment is always insufficient... narrative, by its nature, must keep moving in order to cover up what is always already missing from it” (p. 500).

If any narrative is insufficient to the moment, how do we even assign and assess narrative writing? If the story will never be sufficient, how can writing it help the traumatized person? My answer is that those writing about their trauma might not need to be aware of the contingency of what they produce at the time of writing; sometimes the narrative can serve to move someone through a particular moment of recovery or healing, like those first poems I spat out when I was 19 years old. Sometimes the “fantasy of completeness” (Richardson, 2004, p. 501) is enough for the time being. But as we craft our assignment instructions, guide our students through the writing process, and then offer feedback on their work, we can allow this knowledge about narrative’s contingency and incompleteness to inform what we ask students to write and how we respond to what they have written.

Even though what we call subjectivity or the self is shifting and unstable, that does not mean that people don’t live real, flesh and blood lives. “Bodies are texts,” Knoblauch (2012) writes, “and are therefore unstable and subject to shifting positionalities, transformation, and continually revised and reconstructed histories...but that does not dismiss the very real lived experiences of that flesh, of *people*, not metaphors” (p. 60). The conscious, rational self is a sometimes necessary fiction that can be held loosely and deployed in the writing classroom to help our students in the various processes of becoming with which they are engaged, including processes of healing from trauma. As Cooper (2019) states, “Writers emerge as new entities along with their writing” (p. 13). The questions I’m chasing here are these: What new kinds of entities can emerge when our view of subjectivity is expanded? And when that view expands, what other traditional concepts might shift or even collapse?

## Purpose/Intention and Agency

When theories of embodied rhetoric are considered, the longstanding linkage between a writer's purpose or intention and their rhetorical agency is disrupted. Danielewicz (2017) sums up the traditional view on agency: "Rhetorical agency describes the situation when writers act with clear goals in mind" (p. 16). However, if rhetorical agency requires clarity of purpose, what happens to students dealing with trauma, who might be writing themselves in the direction of purposes they don't yet fully understand? Do they not have rhetorical agency as they write to discover what they're thinking and feeling, to make a first attempt at giving words to events they have thus far been unable to name? I did not have clear goals in mind when I entered that first community college creative writing class. I was following the advice of a respected teacher and responding to the faint glimmer of some as yet unrecognizable drive within me. Once in the class, when I was assigned the task of writing a poem, I was not clearly thinking, "I am going to write about my trauma so that I may heal." But that is what I did. Did I not possess rhetorical agency at that moment, since my goals weren't clear?

In fact, I was working myself toward clearer goals with each poem I wrote. Postmodern rhetorical theorists acknowledge the fact that even those who think they begin with clear intentions for writing are only imposing them in hindsight. In *The Animal Who Writes*, Cooper (2019) states, "In thinking about writing, the most important aspect of becoming is the way intentions, purposes, plans—and even writers themselves—do not exist prior to writing but rather emerge in the process of writing" (p. 13). We only ever think we know not only who we are at any one moment, but also what we're doing. And in this act of erroneously tying agency to clear intentions, rhetorical theory denies rhetoricity to entire populations of students. The agency of autistic people can serve as a helpful example here. In *Authoring Autism*, Yergeau (2018) challenges the commonly-held view of autistic people as living lives "beyond the realm of voluntary action and intentionality" (p. 8). Parallel to what a traumatized individual might experience, students with autism are often viewed as having "a lack of purpose, a lack of audience awareness, a lack

of control over one's own person" (p. 8). In defense of the rhetorical agency of writers with autism like themselves, Yergeau asks, "How might we reinvent discourse on rhetoricity and intentionality...in ways that are critically savvy and conscious of disabled embodiment?" (p. 31). Traumatized students will similarly benefit from new perspectives on intentionality in the writing classroom. For the sake of students—autistic, traumatized, and others—who don't fit the neurotypical norm, writing instructors can develop more patience and understanding for what might at first be perceived as a lack of clarity or intention.

A new understanding of rhetorical agency, like the expanded view of subjectivity, can open space in the writing classroom for traumatized and neurodivergent students to write from their embodied experiences without having to adjust themselves to standards of clear intentionality. Not only might these rhetorical opportunities serve students as potential moments of healing, their stories, arguments, poems, and journals can also effect social change by unearthing previously dismissed or subjugated types of knowledge. As Smith's (1998) writing on autobiographical manifestos demonstrates, personal writing can "bring things 'into the light of day,'" and "make manifest a perspective on identity and experience," which "affects an epistemological breakage of repetition. The legitimacy of a new or alternative knowledge located in the experiences of the margins is affirmed" (p. 436).

This view of the epistemological power of personal writing aligns with Martinez's (2020) writing on critical race *counterstory*. While some stories can serve the purposes of hegemonic powers by claiming a particular viewpoint as "objective, universal, and true" (p. 16), other stories can also be used to counter those supposedly universal and implacable dominant narratives. Traumatized individuals often carry within them sociocultural narratives that tell them what happened to them was their own fault, so they live with not only the harm that was done but also unbearable feelings of guilt and shame. For example, those who have experienced sexual trauma very often come up against the idea that their actions invited the assault. In the writing classroom, we can offer our students the opportunity to write against society's often damaging and marginalizing grain. As

disabled scholar/activist Eli Clare (1999) writes, “And as for the lies and false images, we need to name them, transform them, create something entirely new in their place, something that comes close and finally true to the bone, entering our bodies as liberation, joy, fury, hope, a will to refigure the world. The body as home” (p. 13). Within college writing courses and without, writing my way home has been one of the most important endeavors of my life, and I want to offer all my students similar opportunities for healing.

### Conclusion

A semester of digging into theories of embodied rhetoric has revealed to me how much of the writing classroom can be unaccommodating to those who don’t conform to the straight, white, cisgender, able bodied, neurotypical/non-traumatized norm. Our assumption of these norms creates an inaccessible world. In 1990, a greater awareness of the lived experiences of physically disabled people led to changes across the country as the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed and implemented. Students can now receive a variety of accommodations in our courses, and our campuses must be designed for accessibility. Similarly, as we learn more about the lived experiences of those who have experienced trauma, our ideas of subjectivity, intentionality, and agency need to shift. A deeper understanding of various types of embodied experience should be a vital part of the writing teacher’s theoretical toolkit, which can inform the ways we plan for and conduct our classes. From syllabus policies and classroom practices to essay assignments and assessment strategies, we can work to design a trauma-informed writing course that offers greater opportunities for success and even the potential for healing to students dealing with trauma.

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## The Part-Time Adjunct Instructor Dilemma in North Carolina Community Colleges

Joshua J. S. Marsh



### The Part-Time Adjunct Instructor Dilemma in North Carolina Community Colleges

Part-time adjunct instructors teach the majority (69%) of North Carolina community college courses (Quinterno, 2020). The expectations for these employees can vary significantly from institution to institution (Ellison, 2002). Adjunct employees may struggle to manage the expectations of quality instruction when faced with low pay and low benefits (Way, 2018). These issues have led to a shifting culture on college campuses regarding full-time instructors (McKenna, 2015). To ensure students receive a quality education, colleges need to examine factors that impact adjunct quality (Mueller et al., 2013). The following discussion will relate to improving instructor pay and course design expectations to address adjunct quality and overall course quality for students in North Carolina community colleges.

Kendzior (2014) highlighted how adjuncts struggle with lower pay, no benefits, and job security. In “The Adjunct Crisis is Everyone’s Problem,” she discussed how these instructors struggle due to many variables impacting their work. Kendzior notes, “Debates continue over the quality of adjunct teaching, but the fact remains that contingent instructors do not receive the same support and resources as their tenured colleagues” (p. 2).

When trying to understand more about how adjuncts are dealing with the current climate in community colleges in North Carolina, data is limited (Young & Townsend, 2021). According to Young and Townsend (2021), we have no baseline to stop the unfair treatment of adjunct employees in colleg-

es because we lack data to inform the quality of higher education. In addition, adjunct instructors are struggling to meet the needs of institutions due to pay (Guerra, 2018; McKenna, 2015; Way, 2018) and variable expectations at different community colleges across the state regarding course design.

Depending on the institution and courses taught, some instructors could make as little as \$1,000 per course (Guerra, 2018). A quarter of adjuncts struggle to make a living wage and receive public assistance in the form of food stamps and Medicaid (McKenna, 2015). Additionally, there is no guarantee that courses will have the necessary enrollment to be added to the schedule, and adjunct instructors would receive no compensation based upon their employment status. Since North Carolina is an at-will employer, most adjuncts have no grounds for due process (Casagrande, 2015). Additionally, adjuncts are hired on a semester contract basis, which means they are not eligible for unemployment should they not receive a contract.

North Carolina community colleges obtain a large portion of their budget on full-time equivalent (FTE) students. According to a 2022 report, North Carolina community colleges receive funding based on the FTE they generate (Ezzone, 2022). Adjuncts are paid based upon the course taught, which means they receive the same amount whether they teach five or 25 students, and this number can vary from institution to institution across the state. Some institutions have reported testing out new structures for instructor pay, such as compensating instructors with additional funds based on the number of students enrolled in the course (Lieberman, 2018).

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While many factors go into the pay structure for adjuncts, it may be time for colleges and the system office to reconsider the pay scale for adjunct instructors.

Another area for further investigation and consideration is the area of adjunct expectations. Community colleges across North Carolina can have different expectations for adjuncts regarding course design. Some colleges may have a course shell already prepared for adjuncts, while others may require adjuncts to build courses from the ground up. These differences can be detrimental to adjuncts and compound stress on adjunct faculty members (Dailey-Herbert et al., 2014). A uniform approach to adjunct expectations can improve treatment and college operations (Ellison, 2002).

While there are many benefits to being an adjunct in the North Carolina Community College System, there are still many struggles regarding pay and course design expectations for faculty and the quality of instruction. Therefore, community colleges should consider adding new pay scale parameters and a uniform course design policy to address these issues. There may not be a solution to this problem overnight, but it is definitely an investigation worth pursuing.

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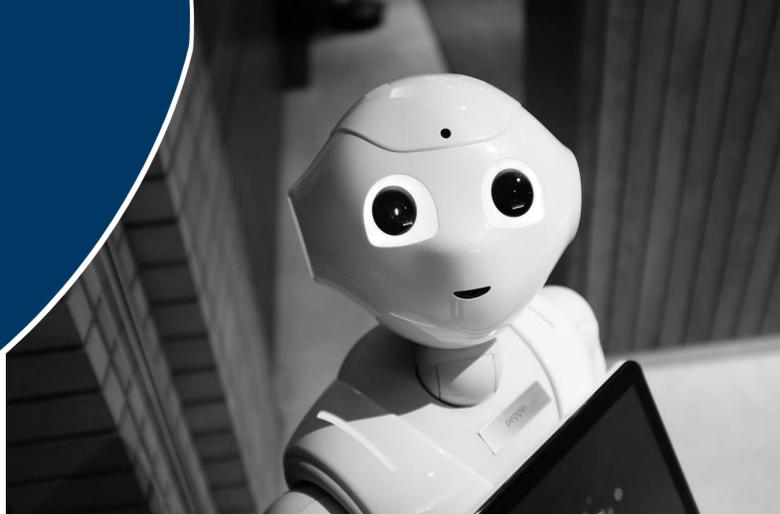
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## A Case for Science Fiction at Community College

Ian Wolf



### Abstract

Science Fiction Literature (SF) is a sorely needed course, especially within community college programs. Yet it is equally absent from course catalogs. In addition to bringing the broad benefits of studying literature, SF offers unique intellectual and emotional growth. There may be numerous obstacles that complicate offering such an excellent course; however, this piece offers pathways toward overcoming those restrictions.

*Keywords:* science fiction, literature, community college

### A Case for Science Fiction at Community College

North Carolina's 58 community colleges make accessible the benefits of higher education, and educators within these vital instructional and economic engines consistently prepare learners for an unpredictable future by inculcating strong foundations, critical thinking, creative problem solving, and much more. No literary tradition accomplishes these goals better than science fiction (SF), and yet it goes woefully underexamined and oft maligned. Since ENG 275: Science Fiction Literature has been in the Combined Course Library from as far back as 1997, why isn't it taught throughout the Great 58?

### Benefits

The benefits of reading fiction are well documented. Chief among them is the development of

cognitive empathy, or the ability of the reader to try on another's life, like trying on shoes. SF furthers this tradition by utilizing *cognitive estrangement*—presenting something familiar in a foreign context—which allows the reader to engage with familiar concepts with less influence from prior knowledge or social contexts. Thus readers can re-examine their thoughts and beliefs free from the noise of what others have thought for them.

Another strength of SF is the exploration of the distance between humanity's reach and its grasp. For example, SF can support the evaluation of technology's influence in daily lives (Toscano, 2011) or be a laboratory for "potential future ethical quandaries" (Hansen, 2021, p. 438). SF prepares students for an uncertain future and may help to define their role within it. Directly, SF empowers learners to manage the vicissitudes of an ever changing world.

### Obstacles

Although it may seem shortsighted, ENG 275 is often not taught due to resources. English departments tend to practice a utilitarian approach to course offerings, which regularly deprives students of the serendipitous excitement of encountering personally meaningful literary art. Every department tries, but under systemic constraints, the contagious nature of excitement often stalls. Additionally, obsolete disdain of SF continuously undermines ENG 275 by maintaining the course as an elective. Furthermore, the current description elevates science over literature, as though the

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original advocate withered under the jaundiced, disapproving eye of The Academy. Despite parity between SF and British or American Literature, influencing course labels is a tectonic process standing in the way of widespread offerings.

### Pathways

Yet if ENG 275's label accurately reflected its academic value, scheduling the course would be justified and would demonstrate greater alignment with the majority of the UNC System's colleges and universities. This is the best, most lasting strategy toward promulgating SF throughout the state; however, it is not the only path forward.

We must also recognize the disdain for science fiction as part of a broader obstacle to English instructor satisfaction. Many have a deep love for this genre that does not fit nicely into UGETC boxes. Denying instructors the opportunity to share that love in lieu of standard courses treats these highly educated, invested, capable professionals as fungible cogs grinding out yet another series of essays. What is the cost-benefit to establishing a rotation of pet project courses, especially considering reduced turnover? An adjunct could cover the lost sections of first year writing courses for approximately six instructors a year, granting those instructors the opportunity of sharing the delight which drew them to the discipline in the first place. The cost of the additional adjunct could very likely be offset by the improved staff retention, generated from the ability to demonstrate their versatility and occupational value.

Improved student retention may also result from SF's greater sense of connection and relevance. While students may struggle to relate to British literature, literature by women or Southern literature surely provides easier access. Likewise, students have often encountered SF in other forms of narrative, which may help it feel just as familiar. What is more, when courses are taught dynamically with strong interdisciplinary connections, learners have the opportunity to engage with the meaningful, highly transferable, and esteemed learning for which literature courses are known.

Finally, barring all other options, we can do what many already have done: shoehorn our passions into regular courses, eking out small measures of joy where we can. We may select favored readings for a literary analysis paper in ENG 112, for example.

Within the relatively recent eight-week model, this leaves little room for meaningful engagement with thought provoking materials, but it does, at the very least, expose learners to something new in an ersatz educational experience. In the wan face of such a depressing representation of our field, is it not time to demonstrate African American Literature, Literature by Women, Southern Literature, and yes, Science Fiction as more academically significant than free electives and raw credits?

### Conclusion

Science fiction has long been denied a place within our course catalogs. With the recent report about the return on investment of the Great 58 (Lightcast) and a quick survey of NCCCS mission statements, one can easily identify a hyperfocus on innovation, especially as it pertains to jobs. We have all heard the clichéd remark, “We must prepare students for occupations which do not yet exist,” but we consistently deny students the most accessible means of doing so. I cannot fathom a more effective avenue than SF, especially considering the direct connections between much of our current world and the imaginations of SF titans who came before—the number of prescient technological predictions made by Ray Bradbury alone is staggering. Science fiction does more than simply prepare students for an unprecedented future, bolster critical thinking skills, and develop greater resiliency for change; it also furthers our missions as community colleges. Should any instructors be interested in engaging with the genre, I am happy to share any and all of my materials.

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## The Benefits of Incorporating Proficiency Descriptors in Community College Foreign Language Instruction

Alexandru Lefter



### The Benefits of Incorporating Proficiency Descriptors in Community College Foreign Language Instruction

Across the nation, language programs at two- and four-year institutions of higher learning are grappling with program evaluation to ensure quality instruction and compliance with accrediting standards. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the nation's leading language assessment body, has put forth five proficiency levels applicable to all languages that systematize and facilitate language teaching, learning, and assessment. Ranging from novice to distinguished, each of these five levels lays out specific proficiency descriptors or can-do statements that convey what learners can communicate in the target language at each proficiency level.

The inclusion of ACTFL standards in college level language courses' syllabi helps to situate each course on the journey towards proficiency, facilitates determinations of equivalency among courses, and fosters quality assurance in the eyes of external evaluators. Community college language instructors whose courses have already been accepted into the Combined Course Library might not see a need to change them by incorporating proficiency standards. However, besides serving the external purposes outlined above, proficiency descriptors can greatly enhance the learning experience for our students. Moreover, while designed to enhance the quality of instruction and learning in foreign language courses, proficiency oriented can-do statements can be adapted across disciplines to improve student success more widely.

Firstly, the inclusion of proficiency descriptors,

or can-do statements, in the list of course learning outcomes and lesson plans would help gear instruction toward the communicative aim of language acquisition from the first day of instruction. Grammar explanations would be kept to a minimum, and time for conversation-based activities would be maximized. Rather than proposing the ability to conjugate verbs as a learning outcome, for instance, a performance descriptor would highlight telling time in the present tense as a beginning level outcome, or the ability to tell a simple story in the past tense at the intermediate level.

Secondly, the presence of performance descriptors would present students with a detailed overall picture of how their communicative abilities are expected to progress. In turn, students would gain more control over the learning process and would engage in honest reflection about their own progress. Communicating the expected level of performance to students early on, alongside detailed descriptors of what their output would look like to meet the learning objective, would also enhance the transparency of the instructional process.

Thirdly, tangible language proficiency benchmarks are often expected in foreign service careers and in study abroad programs, to name just two situations. By allowing teaching and learning to be driven by aspirational proficiency descriptors, instructors would prepare students for the eventual use of language abilities in professional and practical living situations in which functional communication would be key to both success and survival. For instance, individuals who pursue careers abroad with the U.S. Department of State are often required to sit for an Oral Proficiency Interview that certifies what they can and cannot do with the target language. The

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more complex one's duties are, the higher the expected proficiency level of the individual candidate. Since Oral Proficiency Interviews typically measure overall functionality (rather than mastery of discrete language points), candidates with previous exposure to proficiency-based language instruction can only stand to gain from being introduced to proficiency benchmarks in their coursework.

As experienced language teachers know well, students do not necessarily make linear progress in their communicative abilities. Fairly often, a learner may be well equipped to perform communicative functions in an intermediate language course, while still needing to practice some beginning level topics. Therefore, instruction driven by proficiency descriptors wouldn't automatically guarantee that a student has achieved their current level. It would, nonetheless, help ensure rigor, accountability, and long-term acquisition of the target language.

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## Peer Teaching in General Chemistry: Benefits to Information Retention and Lowered Student Anxiety

Donald W. Carpenetti



### Abstract

Students in the first semester of the general chemistry sequence participated in a peer teaching exercise and were subsequently evaluated for information retention and test anxiety. Test anxiety was measured through a pretest survey, and information retention was measured through scores on embedded exam questions and at the start of the next semester on a lab review assignment for students continuing to the second semester chemistry course. Participation in peer teaching showed an average 20% reduction in students' self-evaluation of test anxiety and an increase in information retention in both short and longer term evaluations. Students participating in peer teaching scored on average 20% higher on a final exam question than those who participated in a non peer-teaching review. This increased retention was shown to carry over into the subsequent semester in students participating in General Chemistry II.

*Keywords:* peer teaching, information retention, test anxiety, molecular structure

### Peer Teaching in General Chemistry: Benefits to Information Retention and Lowered Student Test Anxiety

Peer teaching broadens the more common technique of reciprocal peer tutoring (in which a pair of students alternates being the tutor or the tutee) and places each student at the front of the class to teach their classmates for part of an assignment. The nature of an assignment for peer teaching is open-ended, which allows the design to fit within the content of any course. Since explaining a concept to

someone else helps extend one's own learning and critical thinking abilities, this practice gives students the opportunity to better understand the material being studied, to become better problem solvers, and to develop enhanced critical thinking skills. Increased interaction between classmates helps students be more actively engaged in their education. This technique has been applied in General Chemistry I courses with follow-up evaluation in subsequent General Chemistry II. Obstacles to incorporating peer teaching, including getting students to "buy in" to the program, are discussed, as are the program's benefits, specifically with regard to retention of course information, increased problem-solving abilities and reduction of student test anxiety.

### Background and Literature Review

Several studies have shown that using cooperative and active learning strategies (like peer teaching or peer tutoring) can positively affect student performance and mitigate students' anxiety related to the subject or topic (Holmes & Hwang, 2016; Guita & Tan, 2018; Choi-Koh & Ryoo, 2019).

The benefits of cooperative learning strategies, particularly as related to mathematics, have been well documented (Alegre et. al., 2020). Science courses often invoke the same anxiety for students that has been studied for mathematics (general chemistry courses have significant mathematical content, often requiring a college algebra course as a prerequisite).

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This study extends the traditional model of reciprocal peer tutoring, wherein a pair of students alternates being the tutor or the tutee (Youde, 2020) to a classroom setting where each student in the class takes on the role of teaching for a portion of the exercise. Traditional peer tutoring has been studied across various disciplines, often with a focus on students with learning disabilities, and it has been found to have benefits for both proficient and struggling students across subjects (Huber & Carter, 2019; Mahoney, 2019; Sarid et. al., 2020; Griffin & Griffin, 1997; Griffin & Griffin, 1998; Rittschof & Griffin, 2001).

## Methods

The primary aim of this study was to determine the effects of a peer teaching exercise on college chemistry students' content retention and test anxiety. The hypothesis was that participating in peer teaching would (a) help students gain a better understanding of the course content while retaining that information to a higher degree and (b) minimize the effects of testing anxiety related to the course content.

Some sections of the relevant courses served as control groups where students completed the same set of problems on an individual basis instead of in the peer teaching format.

A total of 317 students in a first semester general chemistry course (CHM 151, General Chemistry I in the North Carolina Community College System catalog) participated in the initial study. A separate analysis of 121 students who had moved on to take the second semester course in the general chemistry sequence (CHM 152, General Chemistry II) was also conducted.

Students in General Chemistry I learn how to identify the shapes and bond angles of molecules after drawing a molecular structure that represents the characteristics of the bonding present in the molecule (a Lewis structure). One laboratory session of the course is devoted to students working through a series of molecular formulas to draw structures, identify the molecular shape and bond angles, and determine if the molecule is polar or nonpolar.

The peer teaching exercise involved students selecting two molecular formulas from a list of compounds used for a thorough review of the topic. Students were given a period of 15-30 minutes to pre-

pare a lecture on how to arrive at the structure, bond angles, shape, and polarity of their two molecules. Instructions specified that students should be describing their thought process in detail during their presentation; every aspect of how they reached an answer should be described during their teaching presentation. Students proceeded to take turns teaching the class on one of the selected molecular formulas. For the first presentation, the instructor picked the molecular formula that allowed for the more detailed teaching presentation. Often this was the more complicated of the two structures, but sometimes it was a structure that addressed topics not yet covered in class.

Students were not allowed to take any notes to the board as they offered their presentation. This requirement encouraged them to carefully explain each step in their process and to make sure they engaged with the other class members playing the role of their students. The members of the class who were not presenting were encouraged to ask questions of the teaching student. However, particularly early in the exercise, the instructor was prepared to serve in this role, as students who had not yet presented would generally not want to barrage the teaching student with questions. If time permitted, students could present their remaining structure/s as well. The interactions between students and teachers were often much more animated on the second pass as comfort with the exercise increased.

Information on student performance on a question related to the topic of the peer teaching exercise was collected for classes that participated in the exercise and for classes that reviewed the topic with a traditional worksheet of all the molecular formulas and an answer key. More long-term retention of the content was evaluated by comparing scores on a review of the material administered during the first lab exercise of the General Chemistry II course. Students who had participated in the peer teaching exercise were compared to those who had experienced the traditional review on a worksheet assignment.

## Results

A survey of student attitudes toward the topic of determining molecular shapes and bond angles was administered between the review period (where the students participated in peer teaching or a non peer-teaching review) and the final exam for the General Chemistry I course. The data from this survey was

compiled and sorted according to the method of review on the topic in which students participated. Students who had been part of the peer teaching group were significantly more confident in their knowledge of the topic (an average score of 7.4 out of 10, with 0 being completely lacking confidence and 10 being completely confident) than students who did the review as a worksheet (an average score of 5.3 out of 10). Standard deviation within the data set was 0.47 points for the peer teaching group and 0.49 points for the non peer-teaching group. See Figure 1. A few students who were part of the review and took the final exam in the course did not participate in or return the survey of confidence, resulting in a small difference in the total number of participating students.

After the final exam for the courses was completed and graded, the specific results for a question on molecular shapes and bonding (the question used involved drawing and analyzing five different molecular structures) was compiled and the data was sorted by the version of the review students experienced (peer teaching or non peer-teaching). Students who participated in the peer teaching exercise scored, on average, a full five points higher on the 25-point question on the final exam—a 22.8 average score for students in the peer teaching group versus a 17.8 average for students in the worksheet review group. Standard deviations in the data were 2.1 points for the peer teaching and non peer-teaching groups and 2.2 points for the no review group. See Figure 2. Both groups that participated in a review performed better than students who either missed the review or took the exam early (before the review exercise).

When students transitioned from General Chemistry I to General Chemistry II, their retention of knowledge on the topic was evaluated with an assignment during the first laboratory meeting of the subsequent semester. The improved performance of students who had participated in the peer teaching exercise was still evident, with peer teaching participants scoring 4.7 points higher on the 20-point exercise than students who did not participate in the peer teaching exercise during their General Chemistry I course. The standard deviation in both sets was 1.6 points. See Figure 3. Any student with a larger than usual gap between the two semesters when taking General Chemistry I and General Chemistry II (for instance, students in pre-engineering sometimes take General Chemistry I in the fall semester of their freshman year and General Chemistry II in the

spring semester of sophomore year with a yearlong gap in between) was excluded from the control group so as not to bias the comparison in favor of peer tutoring.

## Discussion

The original hypothesis was that participating in peer teaching would (a) help students gain a better understanding of the course content and retain that information to a higher degree and (b) minimize the effects of testing anxiety related to that course content. This hypothesis was shown to be correct for both premises. Data from final exams showed that students who took part in peer teaching performed better on questions related to the topic of the exercise. Evaluation of students' knowledge after they moved on to the next course in the general chemistry sequence also showed the increase in understanding was retained over the period between the courses. The second premise, that students would be more confident and exhibit lower anxiety about being tested on the material, was confirmed in survey data of student attitudes after the peer teaching exercise but before the course's final exam.

While the peer teaching exercise was shown to benefit students relative to the learning objectives of the course, there are some additional considerations of the activity that should be noted by an instructor wishing to apply this technique.

### The Role of the Instructor

The interaction between the instructor and the participating students is crucial for the success of the exercise (as is the case for most teaching interactions). Participating students need to be amenable to presenting in front of the class and responding to questions from classmates and the instructor. The instructor also needs to enforce that students are presenting with sufficient detail to qualify as "teaching" their classmates the concept. A student who turns their back to write on the board for a significant period of time and then begins to explain only after everything is written (i.e., points to their picture and says, "Here's what I have") is not engaging the task at a level that will help them gain a deeper understanding of the material or help their classmates see the problem solved through someone else's approach. An instructor needs to have a relationship with the students that allows interruptions

of someone who is not meeting the assignment expectations without resulting in that student feeling singled out. This potential problem can be assuaged if students understand the goals of peer teaching before participation in the exercise.

### The Role of the Student

Students with a very limited ability to present in front of the class may resist this activity. A large enough fraction of the class not being engaged could limit effectiveness. Additionally, students who are making no attempt to learn the course material will also inhibit the effectiveness of this activity as they will not be able to reasonably teach their assigned molecules without ample intervention from the instructor.

### The Role of Time

Since this activity requires the presence of the class, the time available is limited in a way that a worksheet approach for review is not. (If students do not finish the worksheet during class, they can continue the work outside of class.) While the peer teaching exercise can always be supplemented with additional problems done outside of class, the instructor should make sure that a sufficient number and variety of problems are addressed during the exercise that students get a thorough review of all aspects of the material. This is partially addressed by students preparing to present two molecular structures with the instructor choosing which one is presented initially.

### Conclusion

The main conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that peer teaching may be beneficial for student understanding of difficult concepts and for retention of that understanding. This increase in understanding leads to higher student confidence and lower anxiety.

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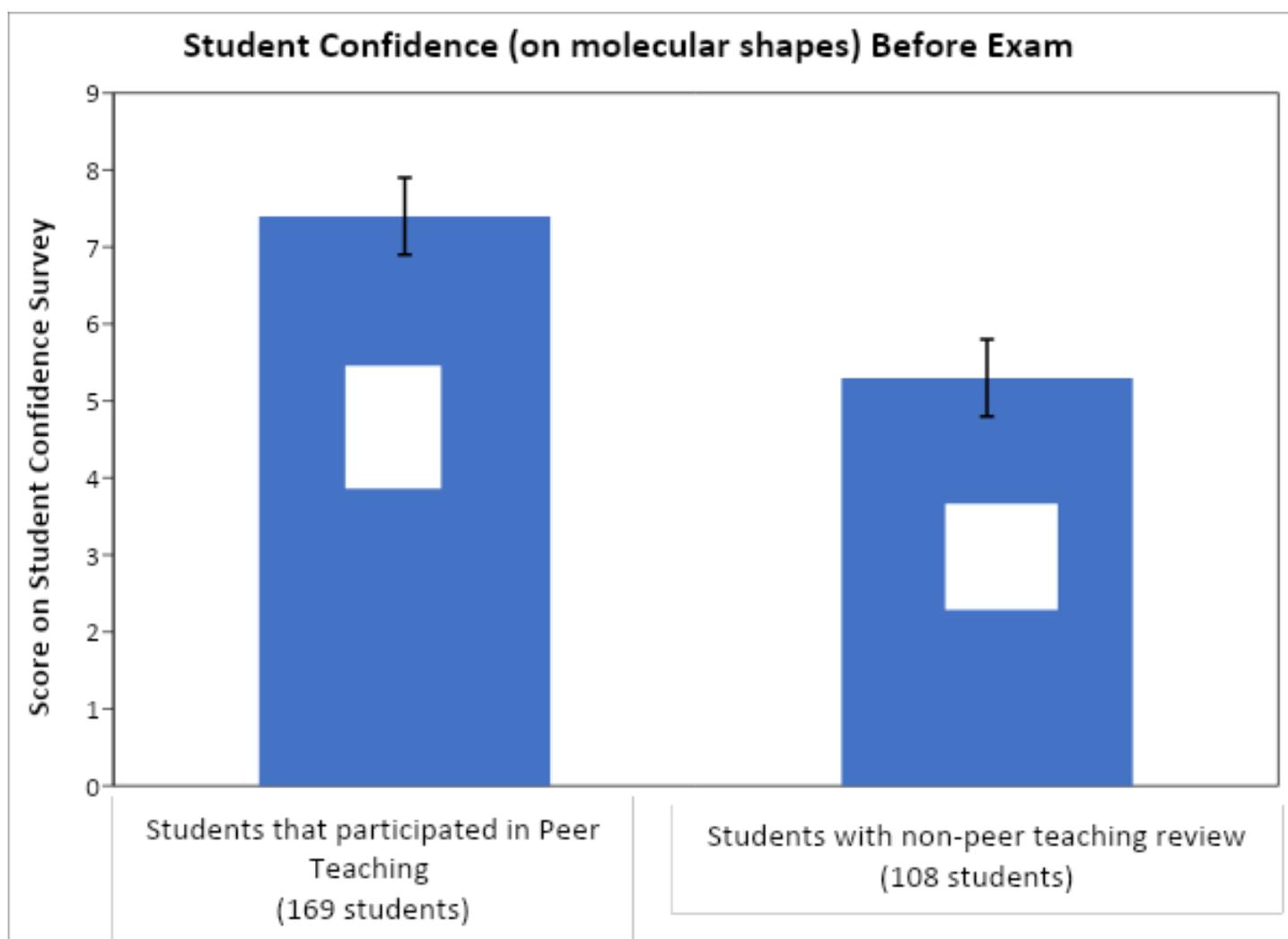
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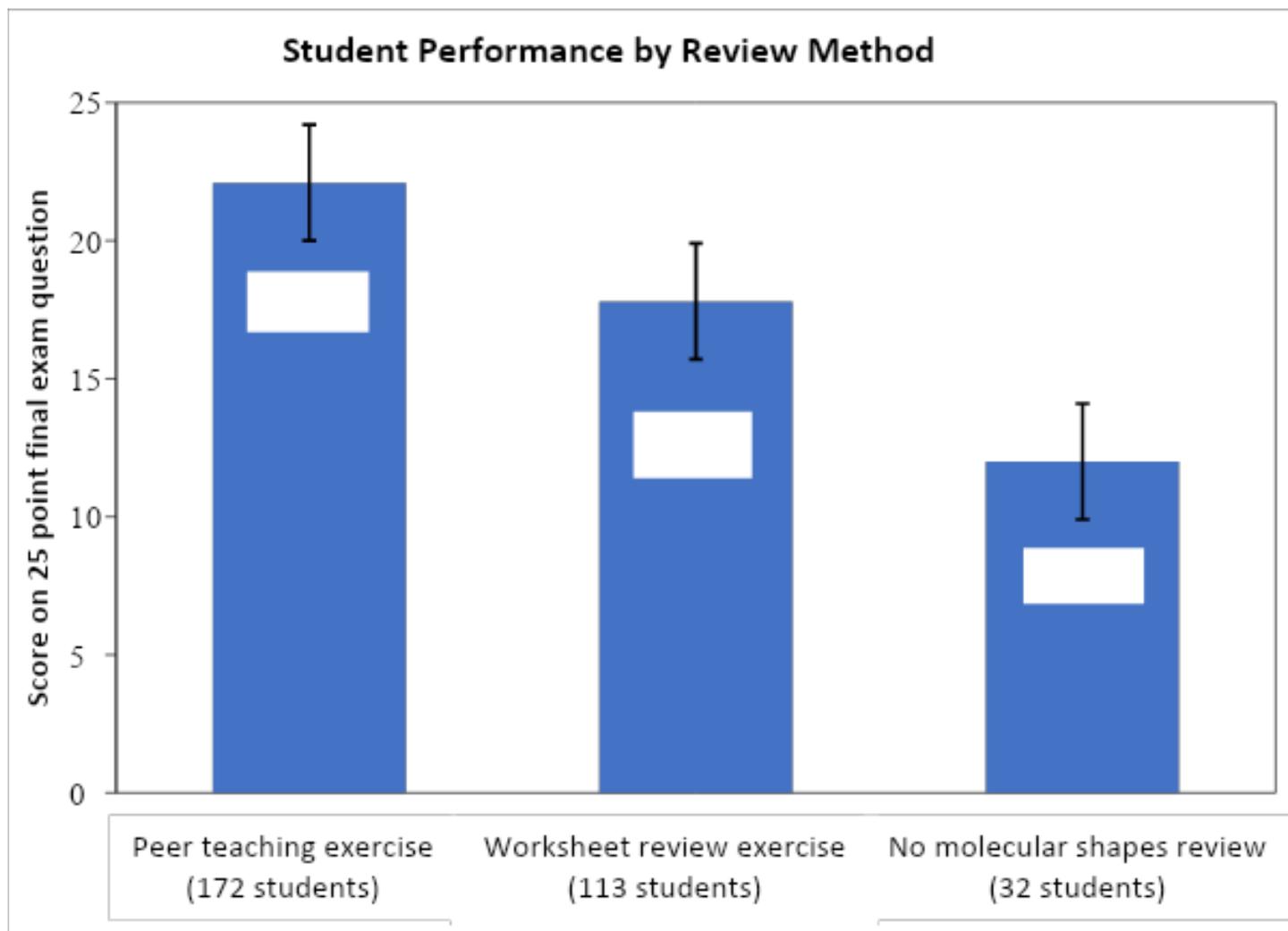
### Appendix A



**Figure 1**

*Comparison of Student Confidence Correlated with Review Method*

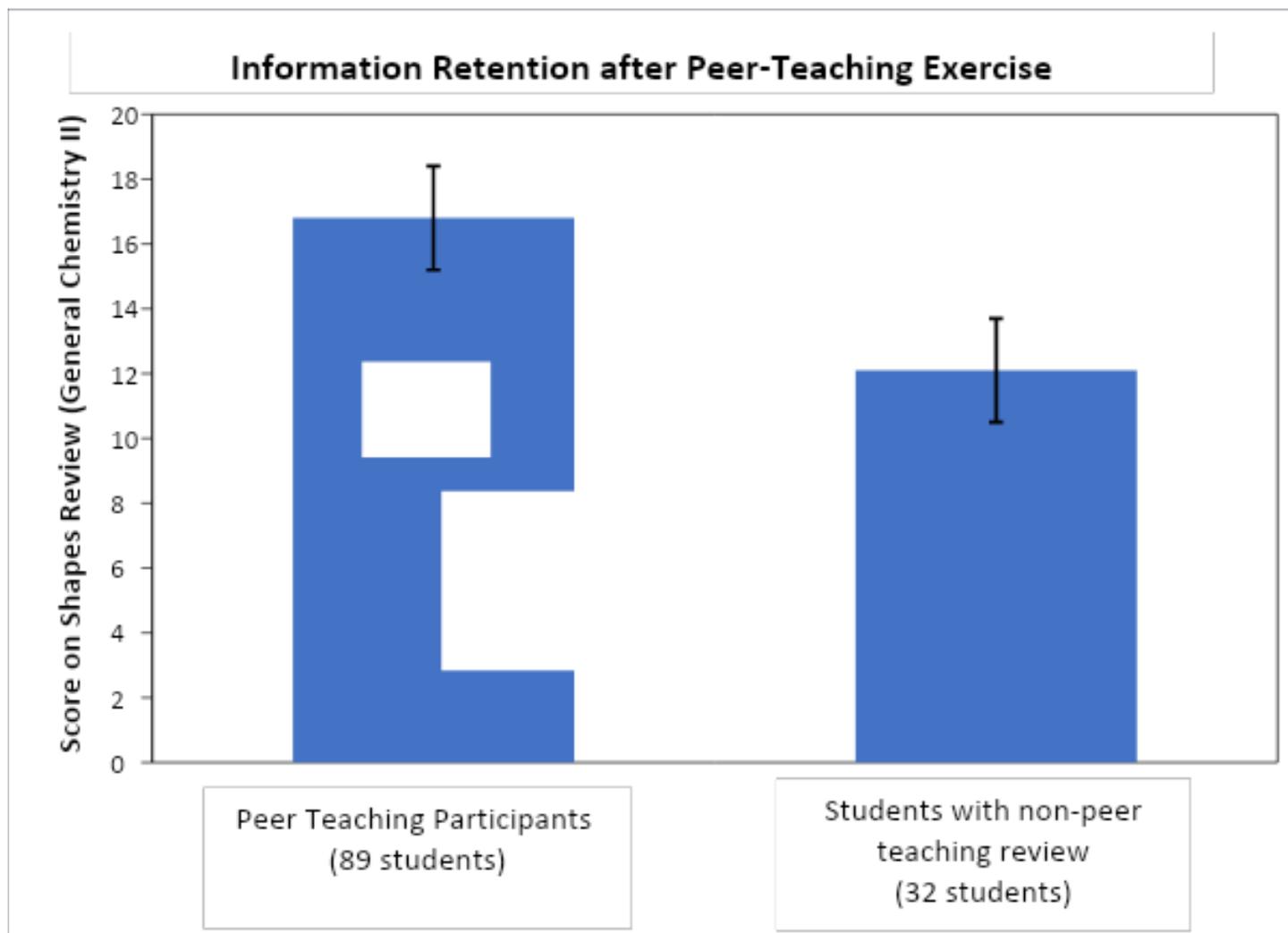
## Appendix B



**Figure 2**

*Comparison of Students' Exam Question Scores Correlated with Review Method*

## Appendix C



**Figure 3**

*Comparison of Students' General Chemistry II Lab Exercise Scores Correlated with Review Method From employed in Their General Chemistry I Course*

## Service Learning and Tutoring: An Exploratory Discussion

Brandy R. Daingerfield



### Abstract

The following examines service learning as a complimentary component of tutoring programs. This article is a preliminary discussion of integrating service learning into tutoring programs. Though unconventional, the use of evidence presented from extant literature is relevant to all higher education stakeholders, including, but not limited to, professional tutors, peer tutors, tutorial administrators, college mentors, coaches, supplemental instructors, and faculty members.

*Keywords:* service learning, tutoring, supplemental learning, strategies, peer tutors, training strategy

### Service Learning and Tutoring: An Exploratory Discussion

The charge for any educator is to develop instructional strategies connecting classroom instruction to real life application of concepts taught. Effective educators can achieve this ideal through various instructional strategies linking classroom instruction to the students' application of that instruction. Service learning is a superlative strategy to enhance tutoring programs while increasing student engagement; it also connects education, field experience, personal reflection, community commitment, and public service (Bettencourt, 2015; Darby & Newman, 2014; Marshall et al., 2015; Petracchi et al., 2014; Ricke, 2018). Service learning has the potential to fill specific needs of the community in which the service learning takes place, thus providing advantageous outcomes to all stakeholders (Fehr, Minty, Racey, Bettger, & Newton, 2014; Marshall et al.,

2015; Petracchi et al., 2014). Finally, service learning binds academics and community mindedness, which encourages critical thinking skills, development of learned knowledge, and knowledge retention (Fehr et al., 2014).

Tutors assist students with tying information learned in the classroom to application of that material outside of the classroom. Essentially, students receive the learning objectives, process the information, and then synthesize it in their minds. This confirms that the material passed from educator to student becomes learned knowledge. Additionally, learners often need some sort of practical application of the material for it to solidify and become *applicable* knowledge. For this reason, it is logical to connect service learning with tutoring in general, and peer tutoring specifically.

### Mutual Benefits of Service Learning

Schools expect educators, their stakeholders, and learners to have equivalently substantive benefits and gains from service learning initiatives. Students should achieve standards, gain strategies and skills related to the information taught in the classroom, *and* provide the service required in the service learning initiative. Concurrently, the educator needs to illustrate how application of the knowledge correlates with the service learning, thus illustrating the connection to the learning (Kessinger, 2015). Ultimately, the learning objectives achieved through the coursework must be evident in the service learning initiative to ensure academic success and provide mutual benefits to all stakeholders.

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## Reciprocity

Since a primary objective of the service learning initiative is to fill a community need, it is essential that the community receive some benefit from the service learning initiative (Kronick & Cunningham, 2013; Lieberman, 2014). Typically, this need comes in the form of personnel support that would be financially beneficial to the community. For example, an animal science program at a community college may provide students to assist with an annual adoption day at a local shelter where the students serve as volunteers for the event, thus saving the organizers money on hiring personnel for that event. Institutions that include service learning initiatives as part of their overall culture tend to have the most productive outcomes and highest participation rates (Bettencourt, 2015; Bialka & Havlik, 2016; Fullerton et al., 2015; Kessinger, 2015). This is because the most effective service learning initiatives have ongoing and persistent participation rates throughout the student body, not just within specific departments or divisions. In these service learning cultures, students naturally engage in the process because it is the norm; it becomes a part of their sense of belonging to the greater institutional identity.

## Knowledge Retention

Service learning is a form of experiential learning that immerses learners in a functionally equivalent or authentic professional work environment directly relating to their future use of the knowledge they are gaining. As a result, it is almost self-evident that service learning initiatives would result in improved knowledge retention. Such service learning initiatives not only provide students with the opportunity to directly apply methodologies learned in the classroom environment to real-world scenarios and activities, but they also notably increase knowledge retention (Hildenbrand & Schultz, 2015; Mironesco, 2014).

Unfortunately, service learning is lacking in some traditional educational environments, particularly with the increased use of online learning platforms (Mironesco, 2014). Yet the increased use of online learning may also increase innovative educators' abilities to provide service learning opportunities (Helms et al., 2015). The 2015 study of Helms, et al. illustrated that online service learning projects can be just as effective in connecting learned infor-

mation to practical application, though the methods of assessment need more structured guidance than traditional classroom counterparts (Helms et al., 2015). The long-term potential for learner growth through service learning, even in online learning environments, exists.

## Diversity Awareness

Creating opportunities to expose students to various cultures is an objective goal in most degree programs or educational curricula. Employers desire employees who are not only representative of the community but are also empathetic to and involved with diverse people. Students who become involved within the greater community of the educational institution may integrate into a local employer's cultural milieu more efficiently. An effective way to learn about other cultures is immersion in the relevant culture(s) (Jones & Bond, 2019; Miranda-Wolff, 2019). Therefore, effective service learning initiatives should improve community relationships between various organizations and institutions within the greater educational community (Liu & Lin, 2014; Marshal et al., 2015). These initiatives should also widen the participants' worldview and provide opportunities to increase cultural and social understanding and awareness. When possible, it is advantageous if they provide the individuals involved with options for posteducational opportunities within the community itself (Liu & Lin, 2014; Marshal et al., 2015; Michael et al., 2018). Service learning initiatives assist in making these cultural and social exposures and immersions possible, thereby enhancing understanding and acceptance.

## Applicability to Tutoring

Service learning initiatives must provide an immediate or direct application of the skills and knowledge covered in the classroom to be successful and worthy of engagement by its participants (Darby & Newman, 2014; Kronick & Cunningham, 2013; Hildenbrand & Schultz, 2015; Oswald, 2016). Tutoring programs, particularly those programs with a peer tutoring component—wherein a peer serves as a tutor to a fellow classmate—provide such an opportunity. By incorporating a direct application of relevant skills to all participating students through

tutoring programs that implement service learning strategies, participating disciplines also interact with diverse departments and communities positively and effectively (Darby & Newman, 2014; Fullerton et al., 2015; Maynes et al., 2013; Moore & Mendez, 2014).

### Continuity and Sustainability

As is true for any educational program, continuity and repeatability are vital. As financial responsibilities are critical, the implementation of self-sustaining service learning initiatives are more attractive to administrators and other stakeholders (Darby & Newman, 2014; Lieberman, 2014). Further, programs with the ability to repeat results of learning objective achievement and service to community are more capable of evolving and expanding to better connect with and meet the needs of the community, institution, program, and individual participants (Lieberman, 2014; Nixon & Salazar, 2015).

### Tutoring *Is* Service Learning

To that end, tutoring *is* service learning. Tutors work alongside educators to assist students in bridging gaps between the information taught in the classroom and applying that material beyond the classroom (Daingerfield, 2020; Herrmann, 2014; Marx et al., 2016; National Tutoring Association, 2016; O'Brien et al., 2014; Oswald, 2016; Vick et al., 2015). The andragogical relationship between tutor and tutee, wherein they become partners and self-regulated learners in the learning process, is a perfect example of service learning, particularly when applied to educational programs (Hussain, 2013; National Tutoring

Association, 2016). For example, persons majoring in math who participate as peer tutors are providing a service while learning themselves (Hussain, 2013). Furthermore, students see the impact of tutorial programs on their academic endeavors and subsequently are more inclined to participate in tutoring in the future (Backer, Keer, & Valcke, 2015; Marx et al., 2016; Winans-Solis, 2014; Zimmerelli, 2015). Finally, tutorial programs, by design, allow for flexible opportunities to incorporate service learning initiatives.

### Conclusion

The goal for any educator is to emphasize the importance of continual learning. As students reach graduation, they should leave their respective programs with their heads held high because not only have they earned a degree, but they are also prepared and excited to continually challenge themselves through the learning process by giving back to the community supporting their journey. Students, faculty, and tutors especially need to be regularly reminded that *learning never ends*. Successful students are lifelong learners who engage within their community civically because they have learned to love the process of learning. The ability of service learning initiatives in developing connections between what a tutor learns in training, what a tutee learns in tutoring, and what they *both* apply in the community is innovative and effective, with widespread, lasting, and positive benefits.

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## Media Literacy Is Essential for Public School Curriculum

Andrea DeGette



### Media Literacy Is Essential for Public School Curriculum

My current position is teaching videography through the Career and College Promise Program at Alamance Community College. I have been teaching filmmaking in public classrooms since 1987. Nothing could have prepared me for our current media landscape. Students now have “the whole world in their hands.” The internet and innovations in technology allow digital media into every area of a student’s life. Looking up information at the library is part of our past, as are all outdated modes of communication. As adults, we must face and address this reality if we are to shepherd our students into their future as capable citizens.

#### What Is Media Literacy?

Media literacy is a series of concepts and questions that strive to deconstruct our media culture. It provides a means of understanding our digital landscape and is, by definition, nonpartisan. (For a list of core concepts and questions that define media literacy, please see the Center for Media Literacy’s “[MediaLit Kit](#).”) This education brings literacy into the 21st century. Media literacy provides the foundation for making sense of the complex audio/video composite that drives educational tools, social media, and most building blocks of our society. While methods and structures for teaching traditional literacy skills have been employed for centuries, media literacy is a recent discipline and must become a fixture in education if students are to have the ability to

deconstruct and work within our new mediacentric culture.

#### Media Literacy through Filmmaking

Videography students are forerunners in the push to bring multimodal tools and student created materials into the lexicon of a media literacy foundation, and this push is gaining force with each new advance in technology. Film, video, photography, audio, and animation are among the media formats my students use to create fiction, documentary, and experimental work. While the subject matter modern students choose to portray has not changed, their projects illustrate our changing media culture in fundamental ways. In early student projects, for example, the instant playback feature inherent to video formats was as astonishing as it was helpful. Today student productions are reflections of new technologies but also of changes in the ways students are able to see and express themselves. Videography brings student ideas into a visual platform that can be shared virtually. Students create work that reflects their personal experiences as well as a shared cultural reality.

Media literacy through filmmaking builds knowledge and skills as each new invention enters our world. Media creation, though just a facet of the wider media literacy curriculum, creates producers instead of mere consumers of digital media. This creator approach can be utilized in any subject or discipline. Lessons which utilize media production can be included in regular course design, and media literacy programs can be created and implemented in many creative contexts.

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## Widening the Scope of Media Literacy Education

As our media landscape evolves along with new technologies, student work reflects these changes. This evolution can be likened to the movement from still to moving pictures. Inside the moving picture is the still image. Inside the student work from 2022 is the work from 1987. Young people have the same human impulses and issues, but changes in our digital world cannot be quantified. Just as the still photo is inherent in the moving picture, the student working with media can be characterized similarly. The seed is inside. Our media literacy programs contain the history of our changes in technology, but they also include the same human desires and dilemmas that existed the day that moving pictures were invented.

Students have shown resilience as their world has both shrunk to the size of a cell phone and expanded to a global reach. This conundrum brings all the obvious contradictions, and along with those contradictions comes the inability for students to differentiate documentary from fiction and many other issues. Media literacy curriculum steps are designed to shore up those contradictions and attend to this dearth of skills in an effort to help students navigate our digital world.

I have witnessed the transformation from hands-on analogue to digital through my years teaching student media production, and this work has a place in the continuum of our wider media landscape. Media literacy through filmmaking is material to current media literacy practices, and this instruction brings context and clarity to lessons from a variety of subjects. The inclusion of film or video into lessons builds essential media literacy skills through the practice of creating content. Media literacy disciplines are crucial to comprehending the elements working in our media landscape to create meaning beyond the written word.

Literacy, which includes media literacy, must evolve to stay relevant as part of our public school curriculum. In addition to resources that are becoming widely available, our digital media classes, especially those in videography, are essential to developing and disseminating best practices for this important discipline. With a strong foundation in media literacy, our students will be able to take the best of what our digital world has to offer and will create content as empowered and media literate citizens.

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## Micro-Credentials and Faculty Professional Development: Stories from the Field

J. Tyrel Winebarger and C. Caleb Marsh



### Abstract

Professional development is always a relevant topic in academic research and professional circles. Even though it can present a strain on faculty, it truly is the primary mechanism for maintaining professional currency. Over the last 10 years and with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, micro-credentials (MC) have surfaced as a potential solution to many of the problems time-based professional development activities create, while providing faculty the autonomy to choose a focus for their PD that is both self-directed and competency-based. The authors of parts one and two of this opinion piece explore their work with MCs as a form of meeting PD requirements and offer advice to potential adopters on the utility of MCs for community college faculty.

*Keywords:* micro-credentials (MC), faculty professional development (PD), self-directed learning (SDL)

### Micro-Credentials and Faculty Professional Development: Stories from the Field

Over the last 20 years, institutions have placed an incumbent, but necessary, burden on their faculty to maintain currency as educators through documented professional development (PD) activities (Watts & Hammons, 2002). These activities typically fall within one of two categories: conference attendance and credential attainment. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the traditional mechanisms by which faculty could engage with these activities, forcing many educators and administrators to explore new, often uncomfortable,

changes. Professional conferences have been transitioned to a hybrid or entirely virtual format. Further, given the complications involved with inviting guest speakers to visit during a pandemic, colleges have struggled to provide access to on-site training and have needed to find new, creative ways to implement PD practices (Eddy et al., 2021). In light of the difficult PD landscape facing faculty, staff, and administrators, we believe these challenges have created an opportunity to take advantage of a system seemingly built for the pandemic era: micro-credentials (MC).

For the uninitiated, micro-credentials are accessible chunks of training content that require the participant to show competency in a particular subject, with an assessor who scores tangible evidence of that competency. Authors of MCs include nonprofit institutions, grant funded agencies, and corporations that specialize in educational research. Although not part of mainstream PD at the community college level, we believe that current events are providing a fantastic opportunity to supplant time-based, mandatory PD with competency-based alternatives that allow faculty to self-direct their path through a curriculum that best fits the needs of their classroom and their students.

### My Micro-Credential Journey, Part One (Tyrel Winebarger)

Anecdotally, it seems to be human nature that we are tempted by any opportunity to “phone it in,” even when we know and understand why it is important to put forth our best effort toward an endeavor. I have experienced this in my professional

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career at conferences that, in spite of providing fantastic opportunities to learn, grow, and improve my abilities in the classroom, also provide the opportunity to simply sit back, listen, enjoy the free food, and not take anything meaningful back to my classroom or to my colleagues. Self-directed learning in the form of micro-credentials removes this temptation entirely and, although I don't get to travel to faraway places, evidence suggests that teacher-directed PD will make the most impact in my instruction (Knight, 2011). Being able to choose my PD topics allows me to use my experiences with students to inform my training in the most effective way, along with providing evidence to my administrators that I have actually gained a skill that can be implemented in my job. Furthermore, self-directed PD is more conducive for successful engagement with professional learning communities within my institution, a critical strategy when attempting to improve the teaching quality across a local community (Stewart, 2014).

This past February, I completed a micro-credential titled Understanding Types of Poverty, with the goal of exploring different forms of poverty and identifying the most prevalent types of poverty amongst students in my classroom. Analysis of the available data suggests that the high cost of living in my area is an extreme burden on students who support themselves, and this type of poverty is known as *relative poverty*. Compared to surrounding areas, my students are more likely to work longer hours, face more detrimental levels of stress, and be less likely to persevere through the challenges of their education due to their financial situation.

This exercise helped to inform me of the challenges that students face outside of the normal classroom experience, and it created an impetus to implement changes in my classes to help alleviate financial burdens. As part of the evidence of my understanding, I was required to discuss my findings with colleagues and administrators, which culminated in an initiative to adopt open-source textbooks and software. For many years, I have felt that vendors of school resources like these have been predatory in their pursuit of profits by overcharging students for limited access to a generic product, so I was elated by the opportunity to abandon these textbook and software publishers in favor of cheaper, but equally effective, alternatives.

As a result of completing this MC, I was award-

ed a certificate of completion that I can now share with my administrators as evidence of competency. This was by far the best experience I have had with professional development, and I plan to continue honing my skills through self-directed, competency-based micro-credentials.

## **My Micro-Credential Journey, Part Two (Caleb Marsh)**

The leadership career trajectory can make anyone feel overwhelmed, and my experience was no different. I recently took a position as a director for a center for academic excellence charged with, among other things, leadership of the center and overseeing all academic coaching efforts. Although I had experienced aspects of both in my career, it proved challenging. Recognizing this, I chose to apply my required 30 hours of professional development in areas related to coaching in the digital age and managing change. Below are some thoughts regarding the role of MCs in this journey and my motivations to engage with this form of professional development.

I first found a micro-credential facilitated by the NC State Friday Institute titled Coaching in the Digital Age. The ultimate goal of this MC was to provide evidence of competency in the form of a coaching action plan that addressed how I would use my new skills in coaching others. The content ranged from coaching capacities, the difference between setting goals and setting big hairy audacious goals (BHAG), coaching conversations, self-reflection, the TPAK (technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge) model, partnering with faculty, and digital citizenship. I found this information to be critical to my work over the coming months and was able to use the final coaching action plan as a blueprint for my coaching practice.

My second MC was offered through Digital Promise and was titled Change Management. This MC did not require as much of a commitment of time, but it was just as fulfilling. Through this MC, I learned about the Knoster model for change management and studied the Kubler-Ross model for managing change. This MC allowed me to step back from any potential organizational change and to carefully plot a pathway to successful implementation while anticipating reactions from those experiencing the change. I showed competency for this

MC by submitting evidence of my application of this knowledge to a situation I was currently navigating.

In all, I have completed seven MCs in the last two academic years. My experience with this form of professional development has made me a better coach and leader. Although the time commitment was challenging, it was manageable within my schedule since I had the ability to work at my own pace. I would emphatically recommend both MCs as a great way to direct one's own learning while maintaining currency as a working professional.

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### Authors' Note

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**A Review of *Teaching What Matters: Activating Happiness, Kindness, and Altruism***

Faye V. Stall



**Abstract**

This book review of *Teaching What Matters: Activating Happiness, Kindness, and Altruism* by Steve Banno Jr. (2022) proposes that this book is a practical and applicable read for educators, particularly those who work with high school students and want detailed lesson plans on how to engage learners in thinking and reflecting on happiness and human goodness (character education). It provides a detailed road map of how to address social emotional learning in students. As the author points out in the intro and chapter 1, “An educator should connect one’s intellect with their heart” and “People should be mindful of how they live at every stage of their lives” (Banno, 2022, pp. XIX & 1).

*Keywords:* altruism, happiness, flourishing, human goodness, character education

**A Review of *Teaching What Matters: Activating Happiness, Kindness, and Altruism* by Steve Banno Jr.**

If you are looking for a way to make happiness, kindness, and altruism real and applicable for students, then this book is going to provide you with resources, information, and very detailed lesson plans on how to facilitate students’ work on their inner selves in relevant and connected ways. Students are pushed to reflect and grow their inner selves as they look at what is going on externally in their world. The author is very passionate about this topic and provides multimodal resources that can be used, such as videos, readings, and engaging hands-on activities. The author provides a wide variety of examples (both personal anecdotes

and examples from others), experiments, studies, and research, which he discusses at the beginning of each chapter and after each lesson in a series of questions answered about the topic for each lesson. What is clear from reading his commentary after each lesson is that the author has done his homework; he has used these lessons in his teaching at a high school. Having taught this class for over fifteen years, he entitled the course as follows: *The Love Course: Exploring the Art of Living*.

**Summary of Representative Chapters**

Please see the appendix for a comprehensive list of each section and a summary of its contents.

**Chapter 1**

This chapter is broken into seven sections by bold headings. Each section discusses many factors that influence happiness, living a good life, maintaining a healthy well-being, and being content. Living a good life is tied to life choices centered around good health and making good personal ties with others. The author reminds the reader that a good life doesn’t just happen on its own. In one section, he advocates the need for social emotional learning and provides documented examples to illustrate that education affects students inside and outside of the classroom. He defines what he means by flourishing or thriving in life. He states, "Flourishing is often found in some combination of finding meaning..., fulfillment..., purpose, and serenity both internally and externally. This leads to authentic happiness" (Banno, 2022, p. 7).

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## Chapter 2

This chapter focuses on success. Playbook lessons are preceded by one of five precepts and continue with sequencing lessons that begin with lesson objectives, lead-in or guiding questions, and steps to accomplish what is in each lesson. The lessons consist of conversation, journal writing, and other activities for students to complete in multimodal ways.

## Chapter 3

This chapter deals with the emotions and focuses on students' working on their inside (emotional) selves, optimism, and an attitude of gratitude. This chapter continues with the playbook lessons.

## Chapter 4

This chapter focuses on time and students' attitudes about time. The author views the central issue regarding time as time poverty versus time affluence.

## Chapter 5

The focus of this chapter is others and other-centered behavior. As Banno (2022) notes, "Helping students cultivate their own moral, ethical reasoning, and decision making is the ultimate application of education" (p. 109).

### My Perceptions and Evaluation

The author provides a step-by-step guide of detailed lesson plans to assist educators to facilitate activities and conversations that lead students to improve themselves internally. In particular, he focuses on how each one can have and keep happiness and be kind for the rest of their lives. As a subject matter instructor, I think it would be difficult to incorporate some or most of the lessons in a class that was not designed for its intended purpose since the author specifically used these lessons as a new course that was created at the high school in which he taught. For someone who does not have a psychology background, I would be hesitant to try some, if not most, of the lessons as I am not comfortable with facilitating the concepts, which are not in my areas of expertise.

Four recommendations appear on the back of the book. One of those by Beth Kurland (2022),

clinical psychologist and author, expounds on my point of being able to teach this class in another subject matter course:

Steve A. Banno has written a groundbreaking book for educators that will surely transform the lives of their students. In *Teaching What Matters* he skillfully and comprehensively integrates what we know from positive psychology about how to live a happy and meaningful life and translates it into a ready-made course that may be the most impactful course one ever teaches. Through his careful weaving together of evidence-based research and thoughtful activities and reflection that invite students into hands-on experiences, the course laid out in this book inspires the best in students and empowers them to discover for themselves what it means to live an authentic, valued, and meaningful life.

Another recommendation on the back of the book by Amanda J. O'Hare (2022), director of neuroscience and assistant professor of psychological science at Weber State University, states how the lessons are geared toward K-12 students:

...Steve Banno Jr. provides a blueprint for educators and those who work with youth on how to teach the 'soft skills' of success in life: happiness and altruism. This book expertly intertwines the science of happiness, educational research, personal experience, and suggested lessons to provide a strong argument for teaching happiness in primary and secondary schools.

However, I do think the social emotional needs of students must be addressed in education. This book provides a detailed and thorough resource for those who are responsible for the character education of their students and want applicable, relevant lessons in their character education programs. This book is highly recommended for those who teach such content.

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## Appendix

**Figure 1**

*List of Each Section and Summary of Contents*

Section of Book	Main Point(s)
Preface	Banno discusses a common theme that he noticed listening to student speeches at graduation. The overriding factor was that students were not happy. The author includes data about teen attitudes toward school and explains he used to teach history courses in the high school environment. The author explains that having joy and being kind does not end. It is an ongoing goal that is never completed.
Disclaimer	The author stresses that this book is not meant to replace seeking assistance for psychological treatment.
Acknowledgements	Banno acknowledges friends, colleagues, supervisors, students, and family members, all of whom were involved in writing and publishing this book.
Introduction	The author notes that being happy has always been a concept explored in history. He has found that students want to improve internally while doing something to help externally.
Book Overview	This section provides the reader with a breakdown of what to expect in each chapter. This is followed by what the author calls “guiding principles” for teaching well-being in the classroom along with precepts (Banno, 2022, p. xx).
Chapter 1, “An Invitation to Teach What Matters”	This chapter is broken into sections by bold headings.
Chapter 2, “Redefining Success”	This chapter focuses on success and precepts 1-4.
Chapter 3, “Happiness As an Inside Job”	This chapter deals with the emotions and focuses on students working on their inside (emotional) selves, optimism, and an attitude of gratitude as well as precepts 5-6.
Chapter 4, “It’s About Time”	This chapter focuses on time, students’ attitudes about time, and precepts 7-10.
Chapter 5, “The Heart of Altruism”	The focus of this chapter is others and other-centered behavior as well as precepts 11-14.
Bibliography	Sources referenced throughout the book are provided.
Notes	Notes are divided by introduction and chapters.

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### Author’s Note

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**A Review of the *Boundless Classroom: Designing Pedagogical Instruction for Any Learning Environment***

Elena M. Fleggas



**Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges to the realm of education when school closures across the nation led educators to figure out the best ways to teach students from behind a computer screen. In their brilliant book, *The Boundless Classroom: Designing Pedagogical Instruction for Any Learning Environment*, authors Nathan Lang-Raad and James Witty (2022) explore various effective pedagogical approaches, keeping challenges of the online learning environment in mind. The authors conclude that effective academic feedback is one of the most supportive pedagogical tools all educators should find a way to implement in their courses; therefore, this review focuses on the authors' recommendations for how effective academic feedback should be constructed and how it should be most successfully implemented in in-person and online environments across the disciplines.

*Keywords:* effective pedagogy, online, hybrid, in-person, learning, challenges, feedback, academic

**A Review of *The Boundless Classroom: Designing Pedagogical Instruction for Any Learning Environment*  
by Nathan Lang-Raad and James Witty**

The pandemic led many educators to ask themselves questions such as the following: What is my goal as a professor? What *should be* my goal as a professor? How have either of these realities changed since the pandemic? What am I doing as an educator to be a better resource for my students and create as many effective resources for them as possible? The pandemic inspired educators to find creative pedagogical approaches to ensure that, in an online

learning environment, students can foster a beneficial, effective sense of community among one another, which includes opportunities to reflect on and critique one another's work. Meaningful connections and reflections between students and their peers, and even between students and their instructors, can be extremely difficult to establish when face-to-face learning is impossible—and, as the pandemic made clear, even typical, traditional face-to-face learning methods often need improvement in this regard. Not only is the new “standard” of learning vastly different than it was prepandemic, but school closures across the nation revealed old approaches to teaching needed to be reevaluated. The pandemic was both a blessing and a curse within the realm of education, leaving teachers to develop and refine “continually for all settings, [which] is a critical teaching skill” (Lang-Raad & Witty, 2022, p. 270).

In their book, *The Boundless Classroom: Designing Pedagogical Instruction for Any Learning Environment*, educators Nathan Lang-Raad and James Witty (2022) explore answers to the questions at the start of this review, reshaping their responses in the wake of the pandemic. The authors proceed to research and implement effective teaching strategies for in-person, hybrid, and fully online courses, mainly by way of experimenting with the *blended model*, or a combination of in-person and distance learning, also known as the hybrid model. Admirably, these authors ensured “both in-person and online students receive[d] equitable instruction” (Lang-Raad & Witty, 2022, p. 24), and that even in an online environment, students did not feel disadvantaged due to their lack of face-to-face contact with their instructor. They still received a worthwhile college education—one that provides college students what they crave most—

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autonomy and agency” (Lang-Raad & Witty, 2022, p. 25).

To ensure students receive this sense of self-guidance and agency, educators must maximize academic feedback in order to best help students succeed (Lang-Raad & Witty, 2022, p. 268). They must make sure to acknowledge each student’s personal needs for improvement and be aware that the road to success in any college course will look different for everyone. Maximizing academic feedback means not simply telling students how to improve their writing, but instead requiring them to answer a series of quality, personalized, and comprehensible inquiry-based questions, which leave them understanding what needs to be improved.

This series of personalized questions should be delivered in timely cycles, and set an example for students on giving constructive, productive feedback to one another during collaborative activities like peer review. For example, in a composition course, an instructor may assign multiple activities pertaining to a major essay. In my freshman composition courses, students write each paragraph of a major paper one at a time, and these paragraphs are due every other class period before the essay due date. Each paragraph is turned in twice prior to turning in the paper, so students prove they have read and implemented feedback by the second, revised draft of each section.

Scaffolded feedback like this charts out a route to success, promptly and specifically clarifying which parts of the writing do not meet the assignment’s criteria or could meet it better. Next, a series of questions is provided to students to catalyze the process of improving their writing. Successful academic feedback requires students to develop their idiosyncratic route to academic success themselves. Certainly, effective academic feedback ensures students fully understand the learning outcome of an assignment, but it also makes sure a student understands where he or she is in relationship to the learning outcome (i.e., what needs to be done for the student to succeed and better master the learning outcome at hand). To accomplish this, successful feedback permits students to answer these following key questions, all while making sure that the feedback clarifies any misunderstandings students have about an assignment in a timely manner:

- “What am I trying to achieve?”
- “How much progress have I made so far?”
- What should I do next?” (Lang-Raad & Witty,

2022, p. 271).

These questions help develop “safe, supportive, and collaborative classroom cultures [in person and at a distance] conducive to cyclical, ongoing feedback structures” (Lang-Raad & Witty, 2022, p. 272) and ultimately promote student success in any educational setting. Plainly put, instructors must confirm students know where they are in regard to the learning outcome of an assignment and where they still need to go to better accomplish this goal. Furthermore, educators must articulate these areas of improvement to students in an effective, timely, and respectful way.

Effective academic feedback avoids ambiguous, biased comments or simple praise, as these hollow approaches do not constitute effective, productive, or successful academic feedback. Additionally, instructors should provide students feedback which first addresses each student by name and goes on to ensure that students are required to “actively [use] feedback as opposed to passively receiving feedback and never taking action to improve their learning” (Lang-Raad & Witty, 2022, p. 273), all while tailoring feedback upon each student’s level of comprehension and mastery of the subject. Next, feedback should be “offered within a culture of trust, respect, and support” (Lang-Raad & Witty, 2022, p. 273), emphasizing that mistakes are just part of the educational process instead of instilling a sense of shame or fear of failure in students.

While it may have arguably been an even stronger text overall had the authors provided more examples to educators of how to implement effective academic feedback across the disciplines, there are enough basic details about the process to permit instructors to tailor these same questions to their own course needs and pedagogical approaches. Most importantly, in my opinion, is the reality that these authors so strongly and effectively chart out how to help students succeed in the everchanging world of the pandemic and postpandemic periods. Online, seated, and hybrid environments each come with their own sets of challenges, but effective academic feedback can easily and readily be provided to students in any learning environment if instructors and students alike are willing to do the work and put in the effort.

Overall, this is a wonderful textbook for its price, and it is one that I have marked up religiously and will be revisiting throughout the rest of my career as a professor. I have already charted out a plan

of how to successfully implement effective academic feedback in all of my courses for each major and minor assignment. I challenge you to do the same as you reevaluate how to best help students learn in any setting.

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