



# The Forum

Sharing Information on Teaching and Learning

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## Sharing Identities, Providing Access, and Creating Compassionate Human Communities

JOHN NELSON, EDITOR

*As long as we inhabit a universe made homogeneous by our refusal to admit otherness, we can maintain the illusion that we possess the truth about ourselves and the world. . . (Palmer, Parker. *The Courage to Teach*, p. 38).*

During our January 1999 annual Faculty Convocation, Parker Palmer asked us to consider two major ideas. First, he suggested that great teaching comes from the identity and integrity found in the teacher's self. Secondly, he stated that good teachers must "possess a capacity for connectedness." Connectedness, he maintained, allows teachers to "weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves" (Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, p. 11).

We as educators in the Maricopa Community College District daily face numerous challenges to connectedness. These challenges come not only from our classes and students, but also they come from potential barriers to equality in student education—clearly a significant obstacle to "connectedness."

The focus of this issue's *Labyrinth/Forum* explores the complex questions of providing an equal education in our democratic society. Since we cannot minimize the impact of the sheer number of students we serve, our size as the nation's largest system of its kind, and the age, interests, and racial/ethnic diversity of our student population, we as professional educators need to give careful thought to Palmer's ideas of connectedness and its relationship to the exigent issue of diversity.

Authors in this issue of the *Labyrinth/Forum* certainly demonstrate their own "courage to teach." They are providing both the leadership and commitment necessary to, as Palmer says, "admit otherness," and they are diligently striving to provide equality for Maricopa's diverse groups. Hopefully, after reading several or all of the articles in this edition, you may ask yourself the question: "Is reading about these ideas enough, or should I consider making my own contributions?"

Whether it is you, the reader, or one of our authors, in order for anyone to incorporate change in this area, a self-awareness is required. As indicated by Linda Treloar, one of the main problems in serving a diverse population is simply the willingness to acknowledge one's own personal biases and preconceptions. In her article, Linda challenges us to question our perceptions of the disabled's images given in the popular media and even in our language. She notes, "Our response to someone who moves, speaks, hears, sees, thinks or learns differently from the expected has powerful ramifications for that student's relationships with us..."

Acknowledging that barriers to equal education can and do exist is another part of self-awareness. Karen Schwalm urges us to answer the question: "Are there any statistically significant differences in age, ethnicity and gender that appear in conjunction with access to and general use of our computing facilities?" Although we would like to believe that the answer is "no," Karen cautions us that "... it is dangerous to make that assumption without corroborating data."

After considering our own awareness, we must be willing to listen to the variety of voices in our community. Kathy Farrish, our student author, relates the manner in which her humanities class offers opportunities to share her story and listen to the stories of her classmates; she pleads for more instructors to willingly provide an atmosphere where students' voices can be heard. Similar to Kathy's plea for listening and providing a place for understanding, Cori Wright echoes the need for "positive awareness of diverse cultures" in order to appreciate other groups. She further adds that these groups must also take responsibility and find their identity, set goals, and strive for peace.

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# Spotlight

## "We must not forget": Addressing the New C for Community as College Educators

NAOMI STORY, MCLI

Introducing the topic--changing demographics--as it relates to teaching and learning has been a surprising challenge for me. In light of recent events and experiences, my knowledge about our theme has expanded. I see the notion of diversity now as much more complex and difficult. The dimensions we are introducing in this issue have huge implications for all of us as teachers and learners.

During Spring Break, I attended the AAHE (American Association for Higher Education) National Conference in Washington DC. The day before my two workshops, I took free time to visit several monuments: Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Jefferson. Visiting these national monuments allowed me to contemplate the magnitude of our country--its history and its future. The walk from monument to monument and the words which were reflected in granite at each allowed me to reflect further on our theme, its influence on teaching and learning, and my impending deadline for submitting this introduction to John Nelson, our editor.

Since October, our Asian/Pacific Islander Association has been holding community forums on a tragic situation which involved a young Vietnamese student who committed suicide. New immigrants and refugees experience dramatic changes in their lives when they become Americans. As educators, many of us learned with this incident that teaching and learning interventions could not occur without addressing the complexities of intra-racial and interracial differences in immigrant and refugee populations. Underlying issues of our communication, lack of trust, and uncertain knowledge exacerbate and continue to promulgate frustration and slow progress in addressing the educational needs of these groups. So, do we just walk away and point our fingers at families or communities to take responsibility?

Facing this young man's tragedy is easier if we could just regard it as a one-time or unique crisis and go back to our safe and ordered institutions and departments. Then we could say it is someone else's problem to solve. Blame can also be attributed to the faceless or ambiguous others, but we who are more socially and morally responsible try to avoid

such blame; we could or would never perform such atrocities. For example, many of us were appalled by the recent modern-day lynching that occurred in Jasper, Texas. Even the town's jury and the majority of Texans explained the atrocity of such an incident by narrowing the cause to the character flaws of a specific group of men. Thus, even the town of Jasper and all Texans are absolved of responsibility. So, who sustained the culture or climate that bred such behavior?

Let's criticize the horrific behavior of police in New York and large urban cities for their overt abuse and mistreatment of African American and Latino alleged criminals because of their unwholesome climate. So, the unspoken assumption is that we, in our civic or moral responsibility or commitment and our environment, could never foster such evil or hate. Or, could we?

It is simpler to blame others so that we can continue to do our good work and sustain great learning environments. As educators, our responsibility has been to help shape ideas and behaviors of others. Isn't helping shape lives that are morally sound and responsibly one of the reasons we became educators? Or, isn't it part of our responsibility as educators to develop ethical thinking, which is also critical and creative?

On the other hand, we may not change by ignoring diversity's difficult dialogue by being too politically correct. Dr. Evelyn Hu-DeHart, once an Honor's Forum speaker at Maricopa, was the keynoter at the AAHE Diversity Breakfast on March 23, 1999. One of her propositions was that the term "diversity" has watered down the spirit of social responsibility that began in the early 1960's. She indicated that most institutional mission statements define "diversity" by embracing political correctness to the extreme. Diversity now is perceived as fairness for all, regardless of past injustices. The result, then, is that issues and needs of our students can be ignored.

How do we define our responsibility as educators in addressing the changing demographics? Can merely changing our lessons, our curriculum, or our programs address the needs of our diverse population?

Recently, our colleges were involved in a one-

day commitment to our community with the "Into the Streets" Day for service learning. How much impact has that one day made? Dr. Lee Shulman, Executive Director for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, asked me a compelling question as I drove him between meetings and chatted about our many college initiatives. He inquired, "Do we do the things we do to create meaningful learning, or do we also feel a civic responsibility to our diverse community?"

Many of our faculty and staff have worked hard for years in addressing student learning needs. We have some of the finest and most innovative faculty and student development staff who care deeply about our student populations. More often than not, stories are told of heroic Maricopans who have engaged in transforming students' lives so that they can succeed under challenging social and economic conditions. It has not always been easy to tackle the Maricopa "system" so that our faculty and staff can readily address student needs. Perhaps, our "system" is better than the university, but it is still a huge mountain to climb. In order to fly high, Maricopans are expected to rise to the occasion with their creativity and innovations.

My dear faculty friend, Bonnie Nelson from Glendale Community College, asked me a while ago, "Why, all of a sudden, are we focusing on learning?" She and many like her have been doing this for decades. She is absolutely right. However, as I responded to her, we need to change so that she and others can continue to do their good work without having to "butt heads and be frustrated with the system." The system needs to follow the lead of our faculty and staff to "focus on learning better."

Consequently, are we really prepared to receive the growing onslaught of student demographics with younger, diverse languages and cultural issues, special needs, and so on? Do we have enough stamina and knowledge of the changing population and its dynamics--social, economic, and cultural? Will we not ignore our civic responsibility to be part of the solution? Will we once more ask ourselves, "How can we do the heroic and majestic Maricopa call to service and commitment that

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# Spotlight

## Addressing Diversity: Growing Our Own Teachers in an Urban Setting

JACKIE JAAP, SMCC

As we approach the year 2000, the changing demographics in America poses an awesome challenge to our educational system. The proportion of minority students in our nation's schools is nearing forty percent, and continues to grow. Many of these students live in low-income neighborhoods and attend poorly funded schools. Furthermore, research shows that minority children from lower socioeconomic groups are disproportionately placed in lower academic tracks and experience less success in American public education than their suburban counterparts. Locally, ethnic minorities represent an even larger percentage of the student population. Some of the schools in the Roosevelt Elementary School District and Phoenix Union High School District report that 70-80 percent of their students are of Hispanic and African American descent. Also significant is the rise in the number of limited English proficient students, the high dropout rate of minority students, and the declining number of minority teachers.

As educators we have a clear challenge to find effective ways to serve the needs of this racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse student population. Education for multiculturalism requires system-wide changes that permeate all aspects of school life. It also requires that we train our future teachers to rise to the challenge and embrace the invitation to transform education in the United States so that it really does serve the needs of all children. To help meet these challenges, three faculty members—Yvonne Montiel, Peter Facciola, and Jackie Jaap—created the Dynamic Learning Teacher Training Program at South Mountain Community College.

Believing that schools and learning environments must reflect the cultures of the communities they serve, three years ago we turned Dynamic Learning, an established,

successful one-year learning community, into a “grow our own” four-semester teacher training program. Our goal is to recruit minority students from South Phoenix who, upon completion of their educational degrees from Arizona State University, will return to teach in our community. Central to the program is our vision of teachers needed to transform inner city schools—ones who have a solid, research-based agenda for educational reform and a passion for improving the lives of our children. We have based our program on the belief that multicultural education is for all students and is synonymous with innovation, reform, and effective teaching and learning. Although we have faced and continue to face many challenges, Dynamic Learning is proving to be an effective educational model for helping minority students achieve their dreams of becoming teachers.

One of our challenges is to create and maintain an effective, culturally responsive learning environment over the four semesters that students spend in our program. In our two morning cohorts of full-time freshmen and sophomores, over 60 percent of the students are Hispanic—Mexican American, Mexican, Peruvian, and Honduran. African Americans and Anglo-Americans comprise the other 40 percent. Our afternoon cohort of instructional aides is nearly 100 percent Hispanic. Research in multicultural education and educational reform in general indicates that mainstream values of independence and competition can actually impede learning, especially among black and Hispanic students whose cultures place a high value on cooperation and relationships. We therefore have grounded our program in a value system based on community and collaboration, and strive to create a supportive, challenging atmosphere which stresses mutual responsibility, shared decision making, extended dialogue, and team work.

It takes time, effort, and commitment to build this kind of learning community. Most of our students enter Dynamic Learning with mental models of teaching and learning that have been formed by their previous school experiences. Much of their learning has been passive and teacher directed. They have worked independently in a competitive environment and have experienced learning in fragmented, discrete courses in 45 to 50 minute class periods which allows little time for interaction with their peers or instructors.

To introduce a different model more in keeping with how people actually learn, we have intentionally structured our learning environment to allow sufficient time and opportunities for faculty and students to develop genuine connections with one another. For four semesters, our students, as a cohort, experience team-taught, integrated interdisciplinary blocks which meet for nine hours a week. Upon entry into the program, students are placed into heterogeneous groups where they learn about cooperation, team building, and tolerance of others' abilities and values as they work on collaborative projects, write and edit papers, critically analyze reading material, and plan for classroom presentations.

When the inevitable problems arise, ranging from racial comments to the frustration of native English speakers working with second language speakers, we know their problems must be addressed. They won't just go away when the semester ends because we will all be together the next semester—and the next. So we work on effective group communication and teamwork skills, emphasizing member roles, problem-solving procedures and conflict management. We also listen to each others' stories, which helps us to acknowledge that each student makes unique contributions to the learning community.

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<http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/labyforum/>

# Spotlight

A student from a small private school realizes she can learn from a high school dropout; a student who accepts his physical challenges with grace teaches us all that we can rise above our perceived limitations. Through our interactions, we are constantly encouraged to reflect on our own beliefs and to consider that our individual world views are not necessarily the norm. At the end of the four semesters students comment that they like the extended time period because, as they say, "There is an opportunity to explore issues in depth and to hear other perspectives. Over time you begin to grow, learn from your peers, and bond with others." Through their participation in the program, our future teachers build a foundation for creating appropriate multicultural learning environments when they have their own classrooms.

An additional challenge we have faced is that of developing a curriculum that reflects these same values of community and cooperation. Experts in the field of multicultural education suggest that an effective curriculum should: integrate disciplines, emphasize experiential learning, use the community as a laboratory, include field trips, and require individual and group research projects. With these principles in mind, we have organized our curriculum into integrated, thematic blocks, consisting of core classes in composition, humanities, communication, and education. In each of the blocks, we connect learning with our students' backgrounds and their goals of becoming teachers.

The field experience is central to the curriculum. Each semester, students spend one morning a week in the community schools, observing and participating in a variety of classrooms. They experience first hand the realities of teaching and begin to think strategically about learners—about their cultural differences, about the community context, and about ways to engage students at all levels with important substantive ideas. They present mini-lessons to the class, work in small groups, do one-on-one tutoring, and conduct literature circles. From these activities

they have identified and researched critical issues in education such as assessment policies, respect, and discipline. Also, current debates featured in local news (bilingual education, charter schools, and school funding) become very real to our students as they observe the disparities between schools in South Phoenix and schools in more affluent communities. At the end of the four semesters, students use their field experiences and research as the basis for developing their own educational philosophy. As they seek to understand the complexity of these issues, students move from a static, memorization-based system to a problem-solving, interactive system that enhances everyone's learning and thinking. This shift in focus is essential to preparing teachers who can create more successful schooling for urban children.

Another critical component of the Dynamic Learning Teacher Training Program is helping our students make the transition to Arizona State University. Almost one-half of the students in our first cohort were admitted into the Professional Teacher Preparation Program (PTPP) in the College of Education at ASU in the fall of 1998, having completed four semesters in Dynamic Learning. Others were admitted spring 1999 semester and still others have been admitted for the fall of 1999; within three years over 60% of our original cohort are in the PTPP, a high percentage, especially for minority students. Their transition to ASU has been greatly facilitated by our partnership with the College of Education. All of the courses that students take with us are guaranteed to transfer to ASU and meet the requirements for admission in the PTPP. We have built in other support strategies to assuage the fears of first generation college students facing a large university campus. Over the four semesters in Dynamic Learning, key administrators and professors from ASU visit our classes, and students visit the ASU campus, where they meet with advisers and shadow education majors for a day. We also provide help with the application process, which includes essays, transcripts, ACT scores, letters of recommendation, resumes, and the bilingual proficiency exam. Many of our students have told us they would still be at South Mountain without this extra support.

The success of the program makes the long work hours worthwhile. Our students at ASU report that they feel well prepared for their coursework; four are on the Dean's List. They also have remained very close as a group and rely on each other daily for academic and personal support. We have approximately 75 more students who are currently in various Dynamic Learning blocks, preparing to follow the first cohort. Over 60 percent of these students represent ethnic minorities, and our community schools are eager to hire them after they graduate.

Over two million new teachers will be needed in the United States in the next decade. Many of them will be responsible for educating the children of the urban poor. It is essential that these teachers have the best training possible. Until all schools show respect for the diverse styles and capacities of every student and nurture the highest aspects of the human spirit, we cannot claim to understand the true meaning of multicultural education.

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## What Students Wish Educators Understood About Disability

LINDA TRELOAR, SCC

Before reading further, stop to ask yourself this question: When I think of a person with a disability, I usually think of someone who ... What comes to mind? Quickly picture these images, thoughts, and feelings. If you're typical, disability probably evokes a mixture of feelings and thoughts influenced by centuries old beliefs involving stereotype, stigma, and devaluation (Gartner & Joe, 1987; Longmore, 1985). Most of us prefer to think that disability happens to "the other guy." Yet, nearly one out of every five persons in the United States, 54 million people, have a disability that impairs his/her ability to accomplish activities of daily living (National Organization on Disability/Louis Harris & Associates, 1998).

Disability is a common experience that we view as uncommon. Similar to culturally diverse populations based on race, ethnicity, and gender, many students hide their disabilities because of fear and prejudice—theirs and ours. Students bring a variety of physical, cognitive, emotional, sensory, and learning disabilities into the classroom; hidden and obvious, recognized and unrecognized. Few teachers in community colleges have any didactic or significant prior exposure to disability. Unfortunately, even faculty educated to teach students with disabilities may lack experiential preparedness. As a result, disabled persons may feel misunderstood in educational settings and be negatively affected by teacher perceptions about disability. Further, many faculty lack understanding of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as applied to community college settings. This article focuses on what students with disabilities wish educators understood about them; I write from experience as a parent of a child with disabilities, my conversations with educators, and research in disability studies.

Viewing each student as a person begins with self-awareness of personal biases and assumptions about disability. Historically,

our language and media images surrounding disability have evoked sympathy, pity, or horror. How do we view others? Do they have value and worth? Are they capable, equal, responsible for self, and able to make decisions? We see a person using a wheelchair and assume cognitive impairment in addition to physical disability. What do my perceptions and expectations mean for me as a teacher and for students, disabled or non-disabled? Our response to someone who moves, speaks, hears, sees, thinks or learns differently from the expected has powerful ramifications for that student's relationships with us and his/her peers. (See Table 1)

While we attempt to create classroom environments that honor the diversity of all persons, we remain largely unaware of disability bias in language (Blaska, 1993). Stereotypical language promotes exclusion, devaluation, and notions of incompetence. "Cripple, handicapped, or confined to a wheelchair" convey negative images of disability.

A person with a disability reflects "person-first" language that places emphasis on the person, rather than on the disability. Peter uses a wheelchair or is a wheelchair user. These differences in choice of language are often subtle and may appear insignificant. However, disability rights advocates emphasize the power of language to shape societal attitudes toward members of social and cultural groups that have been devalued. (See Table 2)

Don't assume that you understand disability. You may never understand—unless you become disabled yourself. College students with disabilities have learned to compensate for differences; ask how you can work with them. One young adult described difficulties related to physical disability as "challenges" rather than as "burdens" (Treloar, 1998). Cathy explained: "Sometimes they might

be like an obstacle course, but there is a way to get to the other end. Just have to do it a bit differently—not the conventional means. I have speed bumps, doors and windows, all those different types of metaphors." Disability promotes thinking "outside the box." Do we allow students the freedom to use different methods to learn? Believe that the student can achieve the desired results, but recognize that the path in reaching the goal may vary. (See Table 3)

Effective teachers must create learning environments that anticipate success and assist students to move toward this prize. This becomes increasingly important when students have cultural backgrounds or other differences which vary from the usual.

Jenny, user of a motorized wheelchair, repeatedly received both direct and indirect messages that she would never become a teacher. Her teachers' reasons focused on her physical limitations: She could not physically quell an altercation by students, were it to arise. Because Jenny could not use her hands to develop audio-visual materials for classroom assignments, she instructed others to prepare the requisite materials. Her physical inability to directly accomplish these assignments promoted the concern that using others as her hands was "cheating." What does this imply about our attitudes toward reasonable accommodations? Jenny, now a teacher, capitalizes on the limitations that drew concern of her teachers. Every student in her class is responsible for a task usually performed by the teacher. Each student's activity is essential for the whole: the teacher facilitates learning.

The principal who hired Jenny took a risk: He saw beyond the body that uses a motorized wheelchair. He focused on the teacher as a person; he chose to see what "could be," rather than "what isn't." Shouldn't that be our perspective when a student with disabilities enters our class?

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# Spotlight

In another example, Mr. Brown noted that Ben, a student with very thick eyeglasses, would place his hand around his ear in a cupping motion and turn his body whenever another person began to speak. Ben looked puzzled and apparently had difficulty in understanding the class activity. Finally, he sat with arms folded across his chest, no longer trying to keep up with the teacher's instructions in the dimly lit computer lab. After class, he lingered in the lab. Mr. Brown asked: "Are you having trouble with the computer?" Ben responded: "No, I don't think that's the problem. I can't hear you, and I'm legally blind." Ben self-identified his disability and requested help. Mr. Brown said: "OK. We can make accommodations, but you need to initiate contact with the Disability Resource Center (DRC)." He accompanied Ben to the DRC where staff began an individual assessment. Appropriate documentation (this may be at student expense) that established existence of Ben's disabilities and the need for accommodation were readily obtained. Reasonable accommodations for Ben included use of software that enlarged the print size on the computer monitor screen. Instead of using a "roving" teaching style, Mr. Brown restricted his movements so that Ben could read his lips. Mr. Brown enlarged the font print size on exams and other written materials. In addition, Ben told his peers that he had visual and auditory disabilities. Whoever sat next to Ben would repeat the comments of other students in the room so that Ben didn't miss out on important classroom interaction.

Mr. Brown's interactions with Ben illustrate several important points. People with disabilities are the same, but different from non-disabled persons. While Mr. Brown recognized that Ben was just like any other student, his disabilities created a need for instructional modifications. When students self-identify and request accommodation for disability, faculty must refer students to the DRC for an individualized assessment and valid documentation of disability. Failure to do this could promote charges of discrimination according to the ADA (U.S. Department of Justice, 1996) when faculty members choose to respond differently to a student's need for accommodation.

## Summary

Disability, hidden or obvious, changes the packaging of our bodies. People with disabilities are the same, but different from non-disabled persons. Educators who build community in their classrooms begin with a view of each student as a person having value and worth. Effective teachers don't assume they understand disability: they ask the other person to describe his/her world. Disability challenges all of us to capitalize on the differences of each student, anticipating success in learning.

*Note: The author is a nursing faculty at Scottsdale Community College. The author received her Ph.D. in Disability Studies and Health Care Ethics at The Union Institute Graduate School.*

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## Table 1 Myths Surrounding People with Disabilities

Physically disabled	=	mentally disabled
Wheelchair	=	hard of hearing, blind, or stupid
Learning disabled	=	ignorant or mentally disabled
People with disabilities want to be pitied		
You can always tell if a person has a disability by looking at them		
People with mental disabilities don't know when you make fun of them		

## Table 2 Sensitivity to Language

Preferred Usage	Instead of This:
Boy who is blind	The blind boy
Adult with epilepsy	The epileptic
People with disabilities	Handicapped people
Children without disabilities	Normal children
Afflicted by cerebral palsy	Has cerebral palsy

## Table 3 Do's and Don'ts with Persons Affected by Disability

Do	Don't
Treat them as people; see them as able; accept their differences	Assume anything; treat them as unable to do anything; focus on differences
Accept them for who they are	Pity them, patronize
Let them do what they can; trust their judgement in what they can do	Force your help on them; treat like a baby
Approach them; offer help, but ask first	Ignore them; be over-helpful; avoid them; act like you don't hear them
Have fun	Be afraid to joke or talk with them



# Spotlight

## Celebrating Diversity: A Student's Perspective

KATHY FARRISH, CGCC STUDENT

Once, after telling an acquaintance about being from the bordertown of Nogales, Arizona, and my upbringing in this predominately Spanish speaking community, I was given a very surprising compliment. I was told that I was very "cultured." This was a word not often thrown around in my circle and certainly not a word often used to describe me. Between my MTV obsession and my measly attempts at controlling the profanity that seems to fly out of my mouth, I would hardly describe myself as "cultured." But much to my surprise, ever since coming to the Phoenix area to attend Chandler-Gilbert Community College, I have encountered many who seem slightly envious of my "diverse" background.

What they don't realize is that I have had no more of a diverse upbringing than any other student. Like many of the kids that I've met from the greater Phoenix area who have spent their lives learning about American history, reading the great American classics, and speaking the American language, I have been raised with a single culture: the Mexican culture. Although English was spoken by the teachers in our classrooms, the predominant language of the town was Spanish.

The diversity that I have learned this year has come from being in a Composition/Humanities, and Technology Learning Community class with other students who have been encouraged to share their own stories. This allows each of us to learn about the many cultures we represent. As we have sat together reading literature that has varied from *The House on Mango Street*, by Sandra Cisneros, to excerpts from Amy Tan's, *The Joy Luck Club*, we were all hit by the revelation that just as these different pieces of literature reflect different cultures, we did as well. We realized that we all came from different backgrounds; we all had a different city or state to call home, whether it be Chandler or Gilbert, Arizona or New York. The literature started the wheels turning in our heads, and

suddenly we found correlations between the stories we read and the stories we had actually lived. We shared these stories with each other in our written vignettes. We allowed the different lives that we had led as children to emerge and help us to better understand each other as adults.

The problem in too many classes is that teachers will look outside their classrooms for diversity, never realizing that the diversity is already there, rarely turning to the students to offer their perspectives. Unless every one of the students is from the same town, the same culture, and the same family, the diversity is probably sitting in desks, wearing baggy pants, donning pierced bodyparts, with the tired look that comes from juggling teachers, kids, bosses, and parents, on top of the rent and the boyfriend. But teachers must create an atmosphere that makes it comfortable for each student to share their different voices.

My Learning Community is the perfect example. Patrick, a Native American student from Window Rock, shares stories of his people's traditions and spirituality. He sits with Maria, a Mexican-American student, and together they comment on the struggle growing up in a bilingual family who speaks only English. They share the frustration of not understanding family jokes because the punchline is always told in their native tongue. Patrick tells of the educational struggle on the reservation. This allows us to share in his pride for being the first person in his family to attend college.

Each of us is encouraged to allow our voices to come through in our writing. Mike, an African and Asian-American student, had given our teacher the chance to hear his voice, not only through his writing, but also in the performance of one his rap songs. He had asked her to listen to one of his songs one day after class, and she decided that it would be valuable for the rest of the class to hear. The next day he performed that

"rhyme" for the class. By inviting us into the head of someone who is the product of New York "street life."

"Walking against the wind  
under the mist of the street life,  
my feet graze the gravel  
as I watch the thunder strike,  
traveling all around  
on these nature made plates,  
overlapping each other  
for when the earth makes its quake,  
military standing  
with this coppertone complexion,  
reading people's lies  
with telepathic perception,  
tying ya' brain up with mental  
vasectomies,  
I generate malicious thoughts  
like eggs in ovaries,  
I'll make ya' have a dogfight  
within ya' own cockpit,  
high-resolution lyrics  
will blind and burst both of ya' optics...."

After his performance, the entire class sat amazed by his talent as a writer and a rapper. Also, we were amazed at the fact that he was given the chance to display this talent. Most teachers would simply dismiss the writing style of a rapper as vulgar nonsense, unable to recognize the complexity of the words, rhythm, and rhyme combined in such a powerful musical form.

My voice was heard when I was given the chance to share the stories of my family. I wrote about being raised by a committee of aunts, grandmothers, godmothers and the *comadres* that lived in my neighborhood, who would dish out pearls of wisdom between sips of margaritas and rounds of karaoke. "Do this, mija," "do that, mija." Advice was thrown at me like darts, everyone hoping to say the words that hit the bullseye; the words that would stay with me, guiding me forever. I remember taking the essay

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# Spotlight

home to my mother and seeing the smile on her face. I know that the unique way she has raised me is a source of pride.

After living the majority of my life feeling like just one of the crowd, I am given the chance to be different and to have my voice validated. During discussions regarding the political aspects of bordertowns, I was able to give my opinions on immigration and foreign policy issues, opinions that were educated, not only in a textbook sense, but with the realistic point of view that comes from seeing the situation first hand. We are *all* given the chance to pull out the stories

that make up our respective backgrounds and add them to the collage of diversity that makes up our learning community.

This is the magic of our class. We are not only given the chance to show our differences, but celebrate them.

Teachers need to tap into the diversity that sits before them by involving students in the dynamic of the class. It will make for an environment where the students are engaged and willing to contribute. The students will feel connected to the curriculum as well as to each other. In short, it will make our \$38

per credit hour worth more than just a semester full of book work and multiple choice tests.

My mother always said that if school was supposed to be entertaining, all the teachers would dress like Mickey Mouse and there would be a ferris wheel. However, it wouldn't hurt if teachers created a place that attracts students, a place where everyone gets to be part of the ride and the voices of many cultures flow freely. From a student's perspective, that's where I want to be. ▲

## Renewing Our Commitment to Understanding and Faith

CORI WRIGHT, SMCC

On December 31, 1969, I wept because the decade of change and transformation in the United States was ending. Martin, Jack, Malcolm, and Bobby were dead, and our hope for liberal leadership perished with them. Many of the college freshmen were apathetic and "me-oriented." I feared that the triumphs of the '60's would be eradicated by the conservative forces who wanted to return to the simple life of the '50's. To African Americans, that simple life equated to de facto and Jim Crow segregation, lack of money for a college education, limited job opportunities, disrespect of our abilities, legal injustices, political "benign neglect," and the end to "Black is beautiful."

We, the children of civil rights, redirected our energies to counseling, social work, teaching, and mentoring a new generation. A young Maulana Karenga captured the essence of the Black liberation movement, outlined a pathway for community strength and development, and Nguzo Saba (The 7 Principles) was born. Although most only speak of it during Kwanzaa every December, it has become a standard for cultural celebration and community progress for African Americans.

But progress does not come without challenges. Although the civil rights

movement seems barely more than a memory of an historical period of struggle, it produced a new challenge for future generations of Americans in defining and embracing cultural diversity. Children of civil rights must now focus attention on accepting and nurturing a broad diverse community of many colors, cultures, religions, and languages without disregarding traditional American values. Holding the government accountable for "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for ALL" was the true goal of the civil rights movement. Now that the marching and protesting had gotten the attention of the American people, how could we avoid regression and a climate of intolerance? It seems the new goal for a cultural diversity movement would be positive awareness of diverse cultures, their histories, traditions, and beliefs. How we expose and educate without intimidation or threat is a challenge in itself. It's nearly impossible to force people to learn and appreciate something against their will. It takes commitment on the part of parents, schools, churches, the media, and civic leaders to educate the public about various ethnic and cultural groups.

In attendance at Arizona's Juneteenth celebration, the audience is largely African American. The Japanese and Chinese

cultural festivals find few African Americans present. Although our neighborhoods are integrated, the vast majority of us still know little about other cultural groups. No one has really picked up the banner and begun to promote a more unified America. Instead we've become more intolerant and disinterested because embracing another culture is often equated with dismissing one's own.

Now facing the 21st century, the nation continues to wrestle with the idea of ethnic and cultural diversity. It seems the paths of our Caucasian brothers and sisters didn't always parallel our own. School children are often less tolerant of cultural and physical differences than they were in 1969. The corporate world that reluctantly accepted affirmative action is now scrambling to make their executives more tolerant of a rapidly changing workforce of diverse races and colors. It took the Internet revolution and a shrinking world economy to force American educational institutions to require global and cultural awareness long after 1969. It took the NFL and the Super Bowl to change the attitudes of Arizona voters about a paid state holiday for a man that fought for a more loving and tolerant America.

**continued on page 12...**

## Learning Through Community

ANN BRANDT-WILLIAMS AND NANCY SIEFER, GCC

It is almost a cliché to say that our students have changed; they bring to our classrooms a complex range of ethnicity, culture, age, ability, interests, and expectations. Even our so-called traditional students are not traditional. Our students want their education to “count,” i.e., take only what’s required and what satisfies general education or transfer requirements. They have less time to connect to each other, to their teachers, and to the subject matter. Yet, in spite of their desire for instant education, they do want and need structures that help them to integrate information and create linkages between themselves and others on campus and to participate in activities that validate their past experiences and future aspirations.

Students do not live in a vacuum, yet we frequently treat them as isolated individuals in the classroom. In many classes, students are no more than a check on the attendance sheet or a grade on the roster at the end of the semester. Our students often leave their identity and stories at the door, and because what teachers do inside and outside the classroom has not substantially changed, students remain outsiders to the college community with little opportunity to share, extend, and reframe their stories. In addition, most students have been educated in the traditional teach/test method. This usually requires more skill in rote memorization than in synthesis and application. Indeed, our current teaching methods may encourage students to be lazy learners, e.g., “Just tell me what I need to know to pass the test!” Students have been so focused on the microcosm of testing for learning that we as instructors have inadvertently aided the atomization of knowledge. Through participation in an interdisciplinary or integrated learning experience, students can become part of a larger community that involves active, collaborative activities that help them relate to their individual communities of family, friends, and coworkers.

Learning communities link courses around common questions or interdisciplinary themes. They represent a purposeful restructuring of content and learning experiences to sustain conversations and intellectual connections between students, between students and faculty, and between faculty and their disciplines. Learning communities invite an array of pedagogical approaches, from lecture to service learning, where all participants, faculty as well as students, are learners in a multidisciplinary, collaborative community.

Learning communities models range from linking a project or an activity between two courses to a fully integrated community with two or more disciplines melded together to follow a theme or topic. For example, linking the writing assignments of a freshman composition class with a biology or a psychology course offers students the opportunity to write focused papers utilizing both instructors as resources. These linked activities may or may not involve the same cohort of students. Fully integrated learning communities, on the other hand, are team taught, fuse course competencies, and have the same cohort of students. For the next academic year, GCC will offer the “Power of Words” which link communication, English, and Powerpoint, “The Mathematics of Design” (links art and math), and “Politics and the Internet” (links political science and computer science).

Many faculty, the authors included, have been educated in a particular discipline, and we become uncomfortable when asked to “think outside our box,” or how our discipline really reflects a larger theme. We feel compelled to cover a textbook full of terms and concepts or deliver content versus learning how and which themes and questions may be more relevant to student (and our) understanding. Participation in a

learning community asks instructors to move beyond their safety zones into uncharted territory and to become learners along with their students.

The authors have spent the last year participating in a learning community, and we have realized that the first step is to change ourselves as instructors by how we view student learning as it relates to our combined disciplines of developmental psychology and introduction to language. The rich overlap of our content allows us to view our separate disciplines as a whole and ask questions of each other that we had not considered before. Although we have a general syllabus for the course, we print out a learning guide every two weeks, which permits the students time and opportunity to include their topics and issues. We take notes, participate in discussions, and search out answers to questions that are too complex to be adequately addressed through our individual, isolated subjects and without the help of our students. We cannot ask students to change or be more inclusive if we do not make changes ourselves.

Using a community to learn also means redefining a community. Just as faculty need to come together to connect separate disciplines around common issues, so does the greater community of the college campus. Presidents, deans, and department chairs as well as counselors, advisors, and marketing and registration personnel are key participants because learning communities challenge the current calendar, FTSE (rewarding seat time, not learning), credits, loading, and scheduling formulas used in most institutions of higher learning. Advisors and counselors, for example, are not separate roles or activities; they are part of teaching and learning and often integral parts of many learning communities. Support and student services should not be stand-

continued...

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alone entities but linked to academic instruction to serve a community of learners. Learning drives how long and how often a community meets, not the deadline date of the next schedule of classes. Learning is not a matter of reassigned time; it is instructional design that includes time to plan and participate in communities. Campus research and development departments can provide the statistics that tease out natural cohorts of students or the classes that students tend to take together — “natural” learning communities. At GCC, for example, many students take Philosophy 101 and English 101 or Communication 230 and Sociology 101 in the same semester.

Why participate in a learning community? From a faculty perspective, there can be no greater development or renewal than learning from one another, a learning that enhances personal as well as professional life, not to mention the daily fun and excitement of teaching with a colleague. Rather than hoping our students see connections between our courses, learning communities promote that connection. From the first day, students are part of a community that cares if they show up, who they are, and if they’re ready to

participate. Learning is a shared rather than isolated experience. Learning communities break down the artificial barriers between departments and units, between academic services and support services and restructures them into an organization where everyone participates in teaching and learning.

Learning communities extend beyond the classroom and beyond individual campuses. We need to redefine community as including the entire district. Faculty, for example, should be encouraged to form communities with colleagues from other campuses or participate for a semester or year in a learning community at another campus. Learning communities, as K. Patricia Cross points out, are not fads; they work because they make “college a more holistic, integrated learning experience. . .” (Cross 4).

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## Developing Instruction that Promotes Diverse Perspectives: A Conversation with Dr. Jane McGrath

NAOMI STORY, MCLI

*Note: The audio version of this interview is available in Real Audio format from the Labyrinth/Forum web site.*

Recently, I spoke with Dr. Jane McGrath about a new reading textbook she has just published, *Understanding Diverse Viewpoints: A Thematic Reader*. Her book is quite unusual in that it not only includes diverse reading pieces and themes by different writers from unique backgrounds, but it also provides approaches and activities to promote critical thinking. When I asked Jane to write an article about her book, she graciously said, “No” because she felt it might be received as a promotion of her text. However, she consented to an interview about developing diverse and critical reading skills as well as the challenges of creating the context for diversity in her text.

This interview gives us perspectives and ideas as we consider curriculum enhancements that stimulate diverse thinking. Jane illustrates how students tend to read and analyze readings. Also, her words demonstrate the faculty’s challenge to engage students in deepening or expanding

their thinking. This insight is important so that we provide unique learning context and environments that allow students to take responsibility and engage in critical analysis about the issues and assumptions of diversity. It also provides insights about methods which shape instruction and learning based on a particular need including input from colleagues who can give different perspectives. And, finally on a personal level, Jane gives an introspective look on herself as a learner and teacher.

**NS: Tell me, how did you arrive at this idea for your book?**

JM: Teaching reading always included the problem of students feeling that if they read it [the concept] in the newspaper, it was true....And, so, if they had read something in the morning, that was the way it was. Or, if they heard something on television, this was fact. There was no, or very little, idea that there might

be more than one viewpoint. And, so it was very difficult to ask students to be critical readers by analyzing evidence. They didn’t see any need for it.

**NS: Why do you think they do not question?**

JM: I am not sure. I think that to a large extent that it is easy and, maybe, they are very trusting. They can’t imagine that someone would say something or write something that’s not particularly true. “Could it get into print if it is not true?”

**NS: I would say a lot of us who are not students also do this. I can see why novice readers or students would do so more readily.**

JM: Yes, and then the problem became more difficult because, in high school, they had written what they called a “research paper”—which was very good—but, often what they did was take only two



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sides to an issue. Students learned that only one side was right so the other side had to be wrong.

**NS: So there is a duality or polarization of ideas versus various shades of gray.**

JM: Exactly; the concept of, “Oh, some of what this person says might be valid,” as well as “What some of what this other person says might also be valid,” and, “Oh, there might be a third person who would have even [still] different valid information,” is hard to teach. It became a real challenge as a teacher to have students looking for different opinions without immediately adopting one and saying, “Well, this one is right, and all of the others are wrong.” Or, “I believe this; therefore, I can’t believe anything else.”

I used to teach this process by photocopying articles and bringing in the newspaper...the assignment would be 10 extra credits for all the people who could find the different viewpoint. But this is difficult to do in the spur of the moment.

**NS: For students?**

JM: Yes.

**NS: For just our students?**

JM: No, I’ve talked with instructors across the country, and I find that they have exactly the same problems. I find that my students are not unique. So, as I started to think of what I wanted to do for the book. I really wanted to produce a book that would simply encourage students to look at a variety of viewpoints on topics.

**NS: How did you decide on the themes?**

JM: Over a six-month period, my editors at Harcourt Brace and I asked instructors: “What kinds of readings are your students doing when you give extra credit assignments? What kinds of things do you think students would be

interested in?” We talked to instructors at Maricopa too.

**NS: Do you think there is a possibility that some of these themes are current and cover topics that people are discussing today versus topics that may come in the future?**

JM: Oh, definitely. The shelf life of a textbook these days is about three years. The topics that are in my textbook, I have no doubt that the majority of them will be changed in two years...because politically correct language may or may not still be a big item.

**NS: You can still use the readings as a jumping off point. How would you say that faculty could use a text like this...how can they enhance or use a text like this that really enhances learning?**

JM: I think that using a text such as this, or even using the text as a model to create their own unit particular to the topic that fits into their discipline would be a wonderful way to get students to read more. ...one of the things that this book asks a student to do, which is probably unique from most textbooks, is the ending exercises. For each theme, there is an exercise, that asks students to defend a variety of points of view rather than to choose one and defend it. For example, at the end of the theme on grades, rather than saying, “I think that ‘A’s’ are given way too frequently and the grading system needs to be changed,” they have to defend both points of view that ‘A’s’ are too easy to get these days and the point of view that says they are not. I quote John Stuart Mills, “If you cannot defend your opponents point of view then you do not know enough to support your own.”

**NS: The text is not just for a reading course. What other areas or combinations could it be used?**

JM: Yes, the text was really designed for what used to be called, if you were from South Carolina, “The Freshman Year Experience Program.” When you have groups of students who are learning together and want materials to help them work in groups with discussion topics. It gives them common learning materials so they share ideas and learn from one another. And, of course that concept has now grown and expanded into learning communities, and to even block courses in which instructors are putting together freshman composition and sociology or any other number of combinations.

**NS: What have you learned about the process of writing a text like this or the challenges of meeting diverse populations?**

JM: I think that one of my biggest “aha’s” that I found early in the process was when I read an article which I included in the book by Philip Roth who asks, “Are we training our students to be too critical?” ...It never occurred to me that our emphasis was training students to find what is wrong with a piece. The concept really hit me; hopefully, I am not only training students to find what is wrong with a piece. We do have a responsibility to be even more diverse. What I want to do is help students not to look for the bad and not to try to show up the author because this behavior transfers into real life. So, I had to be really careful as I worded questions and activities so that I wasn’t asking students to find fault and I wasn’t asking them to look for just bad things. ▲



## Renewing Our Commitment (continued from page 8)

We have a long way to go to win back the brotherhood of '69, but we need not weep on December 31, 1999. On the contrary, as a new millenium begins, we can identify who we really are and determine a direction for our lives and our nation, set goals, and strive for peace. For African Americans that means living the principles of Nguzo Saba: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility,

cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and especially faith. As the poet Langston Hughes wrote, our "wife ain't been no crystal stair" but our faith has allowed us to survive and progress as a people.

In the honor and tradition of our forefathers in faith, I wish you Peace!



## Sharing Identities...(continued from page 1)

Self-awareness and listening are essential to the process of making connections for any group, but they are not enough. Effective teaching and use of technology in serving a diverse population requires a commitment to action! Certainly, *commitment* is the main object our authors have pointedly demonstrated. Our *Labyrinth/Forum* authors' articles tackle the problems of classroom settings, enhanced facilities, equal access, and they convey the multitude of efforts which are being implemented to insure equality. Ken Roberts, Jack Clevenger, Jackie Jaap, Mary Jane Onnen, Angela Ambrosia, Jane McGrath and, again, Karen Schwalm have given us carefully detailed accounts of their continuing programs to provide opportunities for student success.

I began my introductory passage by reminding you of Palmer's theory of teachers helping students discover connections. Although I would not use his rather idealistic metaphor to affirm that our students now "weave a world of their own," I see educators who are making a difference. They are making a difference through their self-awareness and willingness to listen as well as their commitment to the process of providing an equal education in our democratic society.

Most importantly, these are leaders who, as Jon Lea Fimbres-Hetzel so eloquently states, are "finding respectful ways to maintain our human communities through compassion and integrity." Jack Clevenger of MCC nicely concludes these thoughts by his confident assertion that we are doing this "... because it is the right thing to do."



## "We must not forget..." (continued from page 2)

are innovative and meaningful? And, how will our systems support us and not be institutional barriers?"

The same day of my visit to the monuments in Washington DC, I also spent a little over four hours at the Holocaust Museum. If you have had the opportunity to experience this museum, you know about its powerful learning experience. The most engaging room for me was a large circular room at the end of the tour. It was placed there for people to contemplate their learning experience. It reminded me of the emotion of meaningful learning I had experienced after being in my first play-- I just sat and reflected alone in the theatre auditorium. The direct value of learning was clear and personal. How can we create these experiences...these environments WITH our students...each and every student who comes from a different and significant background?

Equity and equality issues continue to exist. Can we as educators truly address the changing demographics if we can no longer have the critical and honest discourse on addressing differences? And, do we take the safe course by generalizing curriculum and pedagogies such that we as educators make little difference, especially to diverse people who see education as the only avenue to be productive citizens?

The open room at the Holocaust Museum affirmed the reason we must come together and sustain open learning environments. We can foster the difficult dialogue of

diversity which is not muted with political correctness so that we can address our changing demographics. Once we do this, we can surface and achieve a dynamic vision and clear goals. I hope that this issue of the *Forum/Labyrinth* will begin the discourse into the next millennium so that together we as Maricopans once again can step forth as teachers, learners, and leaders in community college education.

Lastly, I am very pleased to announce "*Assidere*," a new section on assessment which will be part of *The Forum*. We cannot discuss issues on teaching and learning without also addressing assessment. Our colleges have been focusing on student learning assessment, not just to fulfill their North Central Accreditation requirements, but also to address the quality and direction of their educational programs and services. Dr. Maria Harper-Marinick of the MCLI will be helping us shape this dialogue on assessment and evaluation.

As always, we hope you consider the *Forum* and the *Labyrinth* as your venue to promote and sustain new insights and directions about teaching, learning, technology, and assessment among colleagues. Please feel free to participate actively in our discourse community as an organization that continuously learns.



# Assidēre

## Sharing Information on Assessment

Alice asked, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cheshire Cat.

--Louis Carroll

*Alice in Wonderland*

students, that cause students to master subject matter, to hone their critical thinking, to develop personally and intellectually." This process encompasses "inquiry, pedagogy, educational theory, learning styles and preferences, as well as personal growth and development." To this insightful definition of teaching and learning, we should add another element: a feedback loop.

Learning is not complete until students receive feedback on their progress as learners. Teaching is not complete until educators receive feedback on their effectiveness as facilitators of learning. Imagine yourself as a student in a cooking class. You are asked to create a cake by following a step-by-step recipe. You are also told that there will be no time to actually see the final product--the experience of working with your peers and learning to follow directions is your reward. Would you be satisfied? Probably not. If you are like most people, you would appreciate the experience, but you would also want to smell the cake as it bakes; see what it looks like; and most of all, taste it. You would want to make a connection between the process you followed and the end result. As the American philosopher John Dewey said, "You do not learn simply from experience; you learn from processing the experience."

Some people would say that the practice of measuring students' knowledge or abilities as a result of learning experiences is not new. I agree. The notion that "testing follows teaching" is usually taken for granted. Throughout the years, many teachers have relied on testing as a way of collecting data on each individual for purposes of advancement. In fact, very few educators would argue the importance of helping students determine whether or not they have acquired new knowledge or have enhanced existing abilities.

The teaching and learning process has been described by the American Council on Education (ACE) as a "panoply of interactions between students and teachers, and among

What has changed, though, are our assumptions about assessment. It is no longer just about testing, grading, and reporting. It is not about putting "teaching" in hiatus to evaluate students. **Assessment is the systematic, on-going, iterative process of monitoring learning in order to determine what we are doing well and what we must improve.** Assessment can't be treated as a separate component of the teaching and learning cycle. Deciding what to teach and what to assess are not two separate issues. They are both part of the same goal: facilitating students' on-going learning.

It is unfortunate that assessment became analogous to judgment and, in the mind of many students, criticism and punishment. The term *assessment* comes from the Latin *assidere*, which means "to sit by." It implies the process by which people get together to evaluate the educational experience and the ways to make it more meaningful. Well-designed assessment can make a difference in the way we do things because knowing how well we are doing contributes to further improvement. "Learning increases, even in its serendipitous aspects, when learners have a sense of what they are setting out to learn, a statement of explicit standards they must meet and a way of seeing what they have learned" (Loacker, Cromwell, and O'Brien, 1986).

Can we describe *the* ideal assessment? No. Assessment can be done in a variety of ways, for many purposes, and for different populations. It can occur at the classroom level, the program level, or the college level. It can take the form of a multiple-choice test or a portfolio. What we can say, though, is that there are good and inappropriate practices, and that assessment can, and should, be designed to gather the data that would be most meaningful to the student, faculty, department, or institution. For some that means helping students identify their strong and weak points in order to enhance their educational development; for others, it means evaluating program effectiveness to demonstrate accountability to the community at large.

The dialogue on what to assess, why, and how is far from over. Many questions remain and a great deal of work needs to be done in our endeavors to use the results of assessment for impacting the way we conduct our business: promoting learning.

One of our priorities at the MCLI is to provide leadership and expertise to the Maricopa communities as they strive to enhance learning through assessment and evaluation. We offer consultation to faculty and administrators, and we make available in-house and on-line resources. In that spirit, we initiate this new feature of our

*assidere: to sit by (ad=near to; sedere=to sit)*

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<http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/labyforum/>

publication, *Assidēre. Sharing Information on Assessment*. We hope this medium will serve as a professional forum for the exchange of ideas and the analysis of issues related to the multiple facets of assessment. We also intend to showcase successful practices in the implementation of assessment plans by our colleges.

This first issue of *Assidēre. Sharing Information on Assessment* includes *the Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning* developed by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE). This displays thoughts about the relation of assessment to cultural diversity. Our first showcase of good practice is EMCC's Student Academic Achievement Plan (SAAP).

### Assessment And Diversity

Assessment should be effective and fair for all. Models of assessment plans cannot be generalized to each and every student population, especially in the community college setting where today's student body is more diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, and cultural and linguistic background.

Educators should care, not only about how our diverse student population and pluralistic society are reflected on the disciplines we teach and how we teach them, but also on assessment. Quality teaching benefits all students, not just minorities. Quality assessment works the same way. Well-designed assessment tools and processes determine achievement of specified learning outcomes, regardless of the student's ethnicity, cultural background, and learning style.

The diverse characteristics of our students, however, should not be ignored when designing assessment processes and selecting assessment tools. These tools should be free of stereotypes, allow for outcomes in a variety of modes, and solicit varied and creative student performances.

The greater number and richer opportunities we give our students to demonstrate academic achievement, the more effective we will be as a learning institution. Let's not forget the goals of assessment are not to punish but to promote student cognitive and personal development, to strengthen institutional programs, and to contribute to the institutional mission's success.

### Principles Of Good Practice For Assessing Student Learning

The following guidelines were developed by a group of assessment practitioners under the auspices of the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) Assessment Forum:

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and performance over time.

3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
8. Assessment most likely leads to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

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*assidere: to sit by (ad=near to; sedere=to sit)*

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