



Teaching at USMA

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Center for Teaching Excellence

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<http://www-internal.dean.usma.edu/centers/cte>

Last month we addressed the issue of getting student engaged in reading the course textbook. In addition to various techniques for engaging students in reading the text, it's important to consider how instructors can inadvertently undermine their teaching efforts. As a result, we pointed out last month many students arrive at college believing that the textbook is irrelevant to learning, and some very common classroom practices can affirm the students' belief.

Getting Students to Read the Textbook:

How Instructors Can Subvert Their Own Goal

◆ Do you use the textbook in class?

It is not uncommon for an instructor to present the essence of the lesson through a series of PowerPoint slides. Often those slides include the same pictures and diagrams that are in the course textbook. From the student's perspective, the lesson is now synthesized by these slides, making the reading of the text irrelevant (in the students' view).

In the "olden days" when it was more difficult to put the textbook's graphs and pictures on overhead transparencies, it was not uncommon for an instructor to direct students to open their textbooks in class to discuss a graphic related to the lesson.

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Master Teacher Program Certificates to be Awarded

On 17 May at our academic luncheon, the Dean will award certificates to the 26 USMA faculty members who have completed the Master Teacher Program (listed below). We hope you will plan to attend to support your colleagues. Each of these individuals has not only participated in a series of seminars over the past two years but has conducted a classroom research project. Many of these projects provide important information for enhancing the learning environment at USMA (see page 4 for some examples), and beginning next semester, the CTE will be sharing the information from these projects in our newsletter.

Those who will be receiving certificates are:

D/BS&L

LTC Banks

MAJ Efaw

MAJ Caruso

MAJ Hajjar

MAJ Morrison

D/History

MAJ Parise (née Glass)

D/Law

LTC Ryan

LTC Newton

LTC Wallace

D/C&LS

COL Dooley

LTC Placke

Dr. Kowalski

MAJ Burpo

CPT Nannini

D/Math

MAJ McInvale

MAJ White

DMI

MAJ Bailey, USMC

D/EE&CS

LTC Barlow

Ms. Schwartz

DPE

MAJ Lambert

MAJ Liba

D/G&EnE

LTC McDonald

MAJ LaBranche

MAJ Read

MAJ Starke

D/SE

LTC Powell



NOMINATIONS TO COL RON WELCH OF D/C&ME WHO IS THIS YEAR'S WINNER OF THE ASEE MIDDLE ATLANTIC SECTION DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD.

REMINDER: APGAR AWARD NOMINATIONS ARE DUE AT THE CTE BY 1700 ON MONDAY, 10 MAY.

See page 3 for more information about our 17 May academic luncheon.

Getting Students to Read the Textbook: *How Instructors Can Subvert Their Own Goal*

(Continued from page 1)

The problem is not only with the use of PowerPoint. In discussing a concept or idea in class, do you point the students to the textbook if they seem unaware of important information (either because they have not read the text or they can't recall it), or do you simply provide that information? In the latter situation, the student learns to rely on the instructor for the "poop," and there is little incentive to engage with the textbook.

◆ Is listening to your lecture the cadets' reading strategy?

When students seem unprepared, it is tempting to make sure the course content is "covered" by telling the students what they should have learned from reading the textbook. Such practices are bound to ensure that any student who has read the assigned material in preparation for class will cease doing so once that student recognizes that the instructor is repeating the information from the textbook. As noted last month, a brief assignment on the reading can not only get the students engaged with the textbook but can also help an inexperienced instructor get into the lesson without just asking for responses to question on the reading. Here's another example of such a strategy (reported by a faculty member at a civilian school).

I require my students to take "reading notes" that are described in my course syllabus and awarded a significant number of points. The notes must include a summary paragraph of what the student learned from the reading and questions, comments, and/or observations about the reading. They can be hand written or typed, but they must be brought to class for the next lesson. I collect notes from four or five students (at random) at every class session, and to receive credit the students must have their notes to hand in when their name is called. The student response has been amazing. Not only are they regularly prepared for class, but their writing skills have improved as well.

This instructor uses an electronic "randomizer"* to select the students who must hand in their notes, but the same thing can be done with pulling names or assigned numbers from a bowl.

This type of assignment not only gets the students to engage with the textbook, but provides a mechanism for getting beyond the basic information while also beginning at the level of the students by beginning the class discussion with the questions and/or observations of the students whose notes have been collected.

*The randomizer can be found at:
http://zircon.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/mlx/warehouse/00901-01000/00917/prize_patrol.swf

◆ Do you link the textbook to the lesson?

It is a common practice to "quiz" students to motivate them to read, but in many cases the quizzes are worth so few points that they are not a sufficient motivator. Then, if the instructor covers the lesson objectives with no further reference to the textbook (see preceding bullet), the students' belief that everything they need to know can be learned without the textbook is reinforced.

It's possible to use the "quiz" concept to affirm the value of the textbook. One USMA instructor (since retired) made a practice of giving out the quiz in the preceding lesson, telling the cadets that they'd get the identical quiz in class next time, and they'd find all the information needed in the assigned reading. The "advance quiz" questions served as a form of scaffolding to help the cadets identify the key points in the reading.

Another instructor at a civilian college reports a different use of the quiz to promote engagement with the textbook. Early in the semester, she gives a quiz in the form of true/false statements based on the assigned reading. She explains to her students that the quiz is open book because for every statement they mark "true," they must identify the page in the text where that information can be found. Any statement that is false must be re-written to make it true, and, again, the page number in the text must be cited. She carefully designs and times this quiz to ensure that students who have done the reading can do it easily, but those who are opening the text for the first time are at a distinct disadvantage.

In both cases, briefly reviewing the quiz answers in class highlights the objective information in the lesson and helps the instructor move on to the higher order activities, such as application, analysis, comparing, and evaluating. Students who have prepared for class have the opportunity during the brief quiz to actively process and rehearse text information and are thus better able to engage in higher order activities during class.

Note that the hidden danger when instructors resign themselves to students not preparing for class is that the class time is spent on "passing the poop"—i.e., conveying the basic information, and the real business of higher education, true problem solving and critical thinking, is slighted◆

Education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge. This an art very difficult to impart. We must beware of what I will call "inert ideas," that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized or tested or thrown into fresh combinations.

Alfred North Whitehead, *Aims of Education and other Essays*, NY: MacMillan, 1924.

Join BG Kaufman and your faculty colleagues for our first annual academic luncheon

“Celebrating Teaching”

On Monday, 17 May 2004 at noon at the West Point Club

\$10 for a delicious buffet luncheon and the following:



Guest Speaker : Dr. Kay Gillespie

Kay Gillespie is Professor Emerita at Colorado State University, where she worked for 25 years and began her involvement with faculty and instructional development in the mid 70s. She and her husband Frank are the Executive Directors of the POD Network, the North American association serving persons working in the field of faculty and instructional development. She is also the associate editor of the journal of *Innovative Higher Education*. Kay and Frank were at USMA in 1996-97, when Frank served as Visiting Professor in the Center for Teaching Excellence.

Dr. Gillespie will speak on *Classroom Research and You – Why? How? And Then What?*

She describes her talk as follows:

During this presentation, we will look at the benefits of engaging in classroom research and ways of conducting it, inclusive of practical strategies and examples. Finally, we will take these efforts a step further and consider the possibilities of disseminating our results to the higher education community at large.

Presentation of Certificates to First Graduates of USMA’s Master Teacher Program

See listing on page 1, and come to support your faculty colleagues in their accomplishment!

Door prizes Your numbered e-ticket to the luncheon gives you an opportunity to be a lucky winner of one of our door prizes.

Tickets can be purchased at anytime directly from the CTE or in your own department from your advisory committee member (listed on page 4). Cash or checks (made out to West Point Chapter Phi Kappa Phi).

Uniform for the military is Class B.

All tickets must be purchased NLT Wednesday, 12 May. No tickets at the door.

CLASSROOM RESEARCH IN THE MASTER TEACHER PROGRAM

The capstone experience in the Master Teacher Program is an individual or group “classroom research” project that is designed to culminate in journal publication.

Here is how educator Pat Cross, who developed the concept, explained it in a talk at USMA in 1997:

When I use the term ‘Classroom Research,’ I am using ‘research’ in the simple dictionary definition of the term to mean, ‘careful, systematic, and patient study.’ Classroom Research is the careful, systematic, and patient study of students in the process of learning, and more specifically of how students are responding to our efforts to teach them. The task for Classroom Research is not so much to study learning in general, as to study learning in particular as it takes place -- or fails to -- for your students, in your classroom, and in your subject matter, with your particular teaching skills and preferences.

Our Master Teacher Program graduates have been engaged in various projects during the past academic year. Here are some samples:

MAJ David F. LaBranche

Use of Scaffolding to Develop Students’ Ability to Read Texts

LTC David Barlow

Achieving Success in EE360: Motivating Problem-Solving Practice

Dr. Eileen Kowalski & Ms. Susan Schwartz

Integrating Chemistry and Information Technology

MAJ Kevin Lambert

Types of Quizzes that Support Student Learning

LTC James Placke and CPT Chris Nannini

Does Homework Performance Correlate to Overall Course Performance?

MAJ Bill Caruso

Student Participation as a Measure of Achievement

MAJ John Burpo

Learning Transfer in the Life Sciences Program

MAJ Jamie Efaw

Laptops, Learning, and Learning Styles

Beginning in the fall, we will feature in this newsletter, summaries (methodology & results) of projects that may be helpful to USMA faculty members in our instructional mission at USMA..

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COL Naessens	D/Physics
Prof. Welton	D/Law
Ms. Swik	Library

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CTE?

NOW IS THE TIME WHEN WE BEGIN PLANNING FOR NEXT YEAR, AND WE WELCOME SUGGESTIONS. IF YOU HAVE ANY...
 INFORMATION YOU’D LIKE TO SEE IN OUR NEWSLETTER
 TOPICS YOU’D LIKE TO DISCUSS IN THE “BROWN BAG” FORMAT
 WORKSHOPS OR SEMINARS YOU’D LIKE US TO OFFER
 SOMETHING YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO THAT WE’RE NOT CURRENTLY DOING

PLEASE DON’T HESITATE TO SEND YOUR IDEAS TO ANITA GANDOLFO AT THE CTE VIA E-MAIL.

