

Inspiration to Change Your World Through Successful Teaching

Vol.19 No.2

In This Issue:

- Tell It Like It Is, p. 1
- How to Control Email Before It Controls You, pp. 1 & 5
- Good Teaching Is World Changing pp. 1-2
- Will They Drop? p. 3
- Testing 101—What Master Teachers Know and You Should Too, pp. 4-6
- Five Testing Blunders You Must Avoid, p. 5
- How to “KCASSE” Your Class, p. 6
- Success Through Action, p.7



How to Control E-mail Before It Controls You

Lynette G. Esposito
 Adjunct Professor
 Burlington County College, N.J.

To teach for success, set up e-mail guidelines to ensure that communication is clear, concise, and misunderstandings are resolved professionally and courteously.

What about Privacy?

One of the issues often discussed is grades. Student privacy is a major issue and e-mails

continued on page 3

Good Teaching Is World Changing

Jack H. Shrawder
 Publisher, Teaching For Success
 South Lake Tahoe, CA

An unabashed and possibly audacious title,” you say? I certainly hope it is. Because after 40-some years of working, I still crave important, meaningful, daring, and even, yes, world changing work.

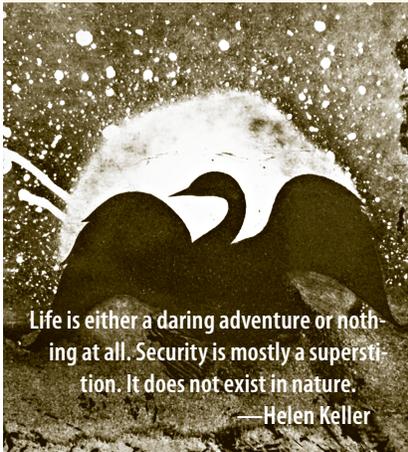
When you teach, you have the opportunity to change your world. The importance of good teaching may get lost in

continued on page 2

What Master Teachers Do

Teaching should be such that what is offered is perceived as a valuable gift and not as a hard duty.

—Albert Einstein



Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all. Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature.

—Helen Keller

“Phoenix”, copperplate etching, Penny Shrawder

Tell It Like It Is

How often have, you heard, “Dude this isn’t “rocket science”?

If the speaker of this zonked-out characterization is commenting on his need for reassurance that a complex subject or activity is really very simple, I retort, “No, it’s really complex; it’s like teaching rocket science.”

As a former aviation technology instructor, I do know something about teaching rocket science; thus, I feel entitled to contradict such uninformed comments.

The more I write about, study, and practice good teaching, the more astonishingly complex I find the job to be.

Teaching encompasses a huge range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes. To teach, I use knowledge and practices derived from the fields of art, music, logic, rhetoric, education, psychology, cognitive, and general sciences, communications, and information technology, just to name a few.

Finally, add to the requirement list a need for extensive content expertise in the subject area, and I can safely assert: teaching really is “rocket science”. And it’s especially true, as you propel your students’ thinking to greater and greater academic heights.



TFS Publisher,
 Jack H. Shrawder

continued from page 1, World Changing

the rush of the semester's activities, and the commonness of teaching and learning.

My plan for changing my world for the better is to publish



The highest level teaching outcome is first and foremost the transfer of enthusiasm.

and promulgate Teaching For Success. This effort is my answer to the question, "What have you done that's worthwhile lately?" Improving teaching and learning is an exciting adventure for me and hopefully for you, too.

Why? Because after a long period of value soul-searching, reading, and life analysis, I find that nothing compares to teaching for excitement, variety, challenge, experimentation, and positive effect on individuals and indeed the state of our world.

For me, it comes down to this: I can't teach without learning, and I can't learn without teaching. Both activities are electrically synergistic, and positively charged, freeing, and fulfilling.

What's Your "Why"?

So why do you teach? What is it about teaching and learning that energizes you? If you teach for success, you'll know.

Adopting a Teaching For Success philosophy and attitude means loving teaching, and loving learning, loving thinking, and riding the wave of energy that acting from love produces.

Is it All about Technique?

Coming from the world of high technology, I was taught that successful teaching requires only a comprehensive understanding of learning techniques, instructional

designs, objectives, cognitive theories, and bell-curve statistics. But I was wrong; These things are necessary, but certainly not sufficient for success. Passion, enthusiasm, and heart are essential ingredients too.

Keeping the Light Burning

If you have ever taken a class from a retired-on-the-job instructor, you know what I mean.

Good teaching originates from the heart and soul of a person who teaches to enhance the world by enthusiastically passing on a love for the subject being studied.

When the light of teaching goes out, it kills the learning experience for entire classes of students.

Retention and satisfaction levels plummet, and valuable time and effort is wasted.

Good teaching is first

and foremost the transfer of enthusiasm. Growing your students' enthusiasm is a big part of the job, especially if you want to describe yourself as a great teacher.

I've made a point over the years of interviewing, reading books, and viewing movies about highly successful teachers to learn why they achieve so much more with their students than the norm.

Beyond the Expected

What is the commonality among these educational super stars? **They love teaching.** They go beyond the expected, invent new approaches, care for students by investing extra time and expend a level of effort that goes far and beyond what the average, run-of-the-mill teacher will do.

If you desire to be excellent, connect often with your deepest values and the reasons that you teach. Share your love of teaching to others and you'll start to feel an energy surge. Soon your passion for teaching will be soaring, and you'll find teaching can change your world.



My Secondary Home

In my backyard three trees, redwoods with armored bark and tiny sculpted cones, dainty lace needles on circular branches,

drip spouts to catch drops and slide them down to the roots below.

I've seen such trees upended by winds,

and marveled at the root ball, so small, compared to spiraling limbs unnumbered, lost in mist and suddenly cast down. I am sheltered by my trees, a secondary home.

—Connee Davis

Teaching For Success® ISSN 1084-0427

Six issues per year by Pentronics Publishing, PO Box 8379, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96158-1379. Sold as annual membership subscriptions with site license: for one campus \$497 per year, for two or

more campuses: \$895 per year. Pentronics Publishing E-mail: jack@teachingforsuccess.com; Phone: 800-757-1183. Publisher, Jack H. Shrawder. Note: Photos, unless specifically identified, are of models.

continued from page 1, E-mail

can afford a private way for a student to contact the instructor and discuss dissatisfaction or disappointment with grades or rectification of a grading error.

On the positive side, e-mails resolve issues before they escalate while offering the benefit of privacy to both the student and the professor.

On the downside, however, e-mails can become inflammatory and communicate emotions the writer did not intend. Remember that e-mails messages are often perceived as more harsh or negative than they are intended to be.

Prevention is the Cure

The solution is to set ground rules and publish them in a handout, website, or your syllabus. State how you want to be addressed in e-mails and your normal response time.

Often students are impatient, and may have the idea that you are at your computer 24-7. When they do not hear from you immediately, they may feel they have been slighted or ignored.

An Almost-Disaster

Imagine this happening to you: A student of mine was disappointed with his final grade over the Christmas vacation. He began e-mailing me and making demands that his grade be changed ASAP or he would report me.

I realized he was upset, but because he could e-mail me, he did not have to use the same courtesy and respect that would occur with a face-to-face chat.

His e-mails became so aggressive that I considered giving them to campus security, but in the end I kept my cool to avoid escalation to the administration.

Using a formal tone, I said I enjoyed having him in my class, referred him to the syllabus requirements, and explained

how the grades were calculated. His e-mailed response was still aggressive and unpleasant. But in response, I complimented him on some class projects he handled well and kept the formal tone consistent in my e-mails.

These exchanges went back and forth a number of times for over a week, but his grade remained unchanged. To date there has been no further discussion.

Remember, email exchanges become a written record of interactions, and they should be saved and accessed if the need arises. It is a good idea to print a hard copy and put it with your class records, because otherwise, as time goes on, e-mail records may be deleted.

Bottom Line

It is very important to maintain a polite demeanor that can be interpreted as professional, accurate, and correct when dealing with a student.

Will They Drop?

Do you know the top reasons that influence a student's decision to hang tough or drop a course?

Do you know what you can do to boost the number of students that complete your class?

At last, there is lively, up-to-the-minute free information on this topic.

A new study just released with supporting video clips is worth at least a few minutes of your time.

Retention is every instructor's responsibility, not only for the continued good health of the college or university, but for the sake of the individual student.

Students often pay a heavy price for their education,



To ensure this is the case with your e-mails to students, you need to compose them with an eye to how they will read if an administrator looks them over.

A practical technique to help clarify e-mail communications for students is to have a class policy on how e-mails are handled and what problems can be resolved through e-mails.

Examples can be given on the syllabus or on other handouts. Distribute a guideline of e-mail etiquette and rules.

References

Many reference web sites address e-mail etiquette, demonstrating just how widespread are concerns for proper electronic communications etiquette.

Two excellent sources for more information on email exchanges are:

1. mleddy.blogspot.com/2005/01/how-to-e-mail-professor.html
2. library.yale.edu/training/netiquette

especially in terms of financial drain or debt shouldering, but they also must sacrifice in terms of time spent away from family, spouses, or supporting careers.

Why Bother?

Why bother with retention issues? Your job may depend on it, for one. For the answer, download and breeze through a four-page Survey Highlights PDF produced by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement by going to: <http://www.ccsse.org/retention/retention.cfm>

In addition, you'll find links to six video interview clips that are well worth watching.

In a nutshell, students highly value an instructor's personal interest in their learning and much prefer an engaging learning experience.

Testing 101— What Master Teachers Know and You Should Too

Jack H. Shrawder
Publisher TFS

Are you tired of being in the dark about testing and evaluation? I was.

Do you agree that grades are extremely important and should represent as accurately as possible



Your students success depends on your fair and accurate testing and evaluations.

a true measure of learning achievement? If so, then we are singing from the same sheet.

Perhaps you've had a similar experience: As a new instructor, I was handed a key to the classroom, and shown the

department files that contained tests left by the previous instructor.

Little did I know at the time how poor these tests were. Having no knowledge of how to evaluate tests and test questions, my students suffered. Today, after more study and teaching experience, I know much more and can save you time and mistakes by sharing what I've learned.

If you are serious about teaching and desire to really understand how to better evaluate and grade learning, then spending a few minutes now and again in the quest to understand testing basics is a good investment of your time.

Learn Terms and Take Control

Testing theory and practice has its own special terms that may need some explanation.

If you are new to testing and test terminology, you'll find it helpful to become comfortable with the following terms, especially for use when

conversing with fellow faculty, administrators, or for easy reading of reference materials.

If you have not yet learned the basics of testing and evaluation for learning, your students are getting short changed.

Below are testing and evaluation terms that are crucial to understanding how to properly and accurately test and evaluate learning:

- Evaluation
- Formative evaluation
- Summative evaluation
- Diagnostic evaluation
- Test
- Measurement
- Performance
- Standard
- Reliability
- Validity
- Norm-referenced
- Criterion-referenced
- Objective-referenced
- Objective question
- Subjective question
- Sample

Here's how to use these terms appropriately. When you feel comfortable with their meaning, you will test students more intelligently, and gain respect as a competent instructor among your fellow instructors, administrators, and students.

Evaluation—Being Systematic

This is the granddaddy, overarching term that means using a systematic process to make sound value judgments.

Formative Evaluation—During

This type of evaluation is used to create a progress report during a course of learning.

Quizzes, midterm exams, chapter take-home tests, journal reviews, and portfolio critiques could all be used in a formative evaluation.

Summative Evaluation—The End

One subdivision deserves another. An evaluation that sums up the outcomes of a learning process at the completion of the learning is a summative evaluation. A final exam is usually part of a summative evaluation.

Diagnostic Evaluation—What's Wrong?

This type of evaluation is used to pinpoint learning problems or uncover gaps in knowledge or skills that are preventing the student from progressing.

Test—A Learning Thermometer

Tests are actually instruments that should measure as precisely as possible the outcomes of learning.

Measurement—By the Numbers

When you measure something, you get the results in numbers and units; for example, a piece of string with a length of 9 inches. Similarly, when you measure learning, you use an instrument that provides a numerical result.

Performance—Getting Results

Performance is about results and outcomes. Performance tests should reveal to learners answers to the questions:

- How well did I learn this?
- How soon can I advance?
- How much better do I know it now than when I started?

These are good performance questions.

Standard—Jump! How High and How Long?

A most important testing concept.

continued on page 5

continued from page 4, Testing 101

When you think about standards in testing you are pondering the question, “How well must my students perform and what will be the measuring stick?”

When you create a test without setting or choosing a standard, the results are meaningless. Some good standards are:

A percentage correct, or a number of items or actions to be completed in a specified amount of time.

A measure of how accurately work is accomplished compared to a fixed model or list of tasks, perhaps specified in a textbook.

Comparisons to others taking the same test in the same class or another course section.

Reliability—Repeatable Results Over Time

This term describes how well a test would produce the same results if given to other groups of students at different times and places.

A reliable test would yield approximately the same range of scores and share similar mean scores whenever it's given. When you create your own tests, expect that their reliability will be low.

Validity—Intent is Measured

This term is crucial to understand. Valid tests measure what they are designed to measure. Unless your tests are carefully designed, they will have low validity and fail to measure the knowledge and skills you intend.

If your tests lack validity, expect arguments and challenges over correct answers and what the question is really asking.

When invalid tests are used to make important grading and competency decisions, tragic errors can result. Valid tests are a must.

Norm-referenced; Grading on the Curve

A norm-referenced test measures the performance standing of an individual in reference to the performance of a group. When you grade on the curve you are norm-referencing the test.

Criterion or objective-referenced—Mastery Learning

This type of test measures the performance of a student against a defined set of learning tasks or list of learning objectives. Mastery learning uses criterion-referenced tests to evaluate whether a student has mastered an acceptable number of learning objectives.

Objective Question—Easy to Score; Hard to Write

Objective questions are those that can be scored without a detailed analysis of the answer.



Five Testing Blunders You Must Avoid

1. Believing that you have to test students on items that you have not taught and provided learning practice to force a typical bell-curve grading result.
2. Selecting too many questions for the time allowed to make sure students can't finish in time.
3. Hastily writing an essay test because making this kind of test seems easier than creating multiple-choice or short answer tests.
4. Creating a multiple-choice question test with all questions having, “none of the above” or “all of the above” added as choice.
5. Depending on a slew of untested true-false questions to quickly assess learning.

Multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, true-false, matching, and one-word short answer are all examples of objective test questions.

Subjective Question—Easy to Write; Hard to Score

Objective questions are those that are scored by a detailed analysis and repetitive scoring process; whereas, essay test questions are subjective questions. The answers to subjective questions are subject to the examiner's opinion on the correctness of the response.

Sampling—How Many Students; How many “?”

The concept of a representative sample is fundamental to testing. There is simply not enough time to verify that a student can display and apply all knowledge and skills learned. When you test, you sample what the student has learned. The larger the sample, the more faith you and your students can place in the accuracy and fairness of the test.

Need More Details or “How Tos”

You're in luck. Teaching For Success has developed an entire On-Target Digital Collection of Quick Studies, monographs, papers, and more on how to teach better and avoid embarrassing mistakes.

A newly revised TFS Quick Study, “Ensure Quality Testing” takes you step-by-step through constructing both subjective and objective test questions and tests.

Stop by <http://TeachingForSuccess.com> to and purchase your individual or institutional copy of this Quick Study or other TFS resources designed to make teaching easier and more rewarding for you and your students. Good luck; and good teaching.

How to “KCASSE” Your Class

Jack H. Shrawder,
Publisher, TFS

Question: What is the most influential, yet elegantly simple instructional design construct ever created?

Hint: It’s not, thank goodness, that famously awful vo-tech/armed services edict of old, “Tell them what you are going to tell them; tell them; and finally, tell them what you told them.

But seriously, at TFS, in answer to that question, we would boom out confidently: That would be Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Cognitive Domain.

It’s so useful, it could be called the screwdriver of teaching design tools.

With the advent of Bloom’s taxonomies, instructors were given a very practical tool to use to plan, deliver, and assess learning. Three behavioral hierarchies were eventually developed:



“KCASSEd” classes with synchronized tests help students better prepare with higher thinking skills for business and academic careers.

of us, it’s the cognitive or thinking behavior ladder that takes center stage.

If You Teach, Memorize KCASSE

Let me make a “KCAASE” (case) for that choice. What is the first step to learning a new subject? If you said, “terms and definitions,” you’d be spot-on, and that’s what Bloom says too. To commit more easily all six levels to memory, use the mnemonic “KCAASE.”

From basic to complex, each level can be summarized as follows:

- **Knowledge**—Memorize, recognize, or recall idea or facts.
- **Comprehension**—Translate, interpret, and extrapolate; explain concepts in your own words; use formulas appropriately.

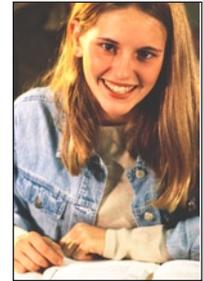


Bloom’s six-rung ladder of hierarchical cognitive learning is a practical instructional design tool.

cognitive, motor skill, and affective (feelings).

While motor skill and affective behaviors are useful learning schemes, for example in teaching safety attitudes, the majority

- **Application**—Apply what you have learned to solve new problems.
- **Analysis**—Break a subject down into its parts, and identify the relationship between the parts.
- **Synthesis**—Combine parts in new ways; create new patterns that build new knowledge.
- **Evaluation**—It’s all about value; learn to make value judgments about the validity of an argument or the appropriateness of a course of action.



Using Bloom’s hierarchy will help you create a class that builds thinking skills and appears refreshingly well organized to your students.

OK, I Memorized It, Now What?

Now, Bloom’s hierarchy can help you:

- Structure and organize a more effective class session.
- Create a course sequence that builds learner skills and knowledge in a step-by-step fashion.
- Provide instruction and practice at all six levels.
- Assign a higher dynamic range of learning projects and homework practice.

What’s more, this terrific taxonomy is very useful in planning, selecting, and evaluating review and test questions.

However, in my experience, the most powerful use of Bloom’s learning ladder is to analyze how much time you spend teaching and testing on the factual-application level rungs, one through three, as opposed to the advanced thinking rungs, four through six.

Without Bloom there is a tendency to teach in the safe and easier-to-deal-with lower echelons. However, for students to be competitive in today’s world, they must be able to comfortably work and think at the highest levels. The table below is a TFS survey form. Use this form to check where you place your presenting and assessing emphasis.



Level	Presenting %	Assessing %
Knowledge	0 50	0 50
Comprehension	0 50	0 50
Application	0 50	0 50
Analysis	0 50	0 50
Synthesis	0 50	0 50
Evaluation	0 50	0 50

Success Through Action

Steps to get the most from the ideas in this issue...



How to Control E-mail Before It Controls You, p. 1.

- Set class communication ground rules and publish them in a handout, website, or your syllabus. State how you want to be addressed in e-mails and your normal response time.
- Don't forget to include instant text messaging in your discussions and policy statements.
- Write clearly, concisely and check for unintended messages.
- Discuss how to be effective with electronic messaging with your class.
- Remember that e-mail messages are often perceived as more harsh or negative than they are intended to be.
- Think twice; edit twice; send once.
- When messages start to reflect escalating negative emotions, and the importance of being clearly understood increases; get on the phone, or better yet schedule some face time to get things clarified.

Good Teaching Is World Changing, p. 1.

- Fight burn out by remembering why you teach.
- Take your feelings about the value of teaching to a higher level; in fact, take your attitudes to the "world changing" level.
- Why not consider teaching to be of world changing importance and you are part of the effort for positive change.
- Consider the leadership potential inherent in every teaching situation on.
- Read *The Radical Leap*, by Steve Farber, and enjoy his personal lesson in "Extreme Leadership."
- Recommit to achieving excellence in teaching and learning.

Will They Drop? p. 4.

- The most influential factor for retention is you; list three ways you use your sway more effectively.
- The midterm portion of any class is the most dangerous time for dropping; but you can make a difference by listening to students, observing and responding to behaviors that portend dropping out.
- Expressing interest in students especially those who struggle sends a powerful signal that you care about them and want them to succeed all the way through.
- Encourage your students to write a personal academic goal statement at the beginning of your class and suggest they rewrite or at least reread it before each class.
- Keep your teaching attitude positive and visualize your class succeeding in astonishing ways.

Testing 101— What Master Teachers Know and You Should Too, p. 4.

- Learn evaluation and testing terms and take positive control of testing, evaluation and grading.
- Consider purchasing or asking your institution to purchase a copy of the Teaching For Success, Quick Study, "Ensure Quality Testing", available from <http://teachingforsuccess.com>.
- Use the information in "How to "KCASSE" Your Class", page 6 to analyze the thinking levels that your exams, quizzes and even practice problems focus on.
- Analyze each test you give for length, question type, difficulty, and clarity.
- If you give a departmental test that is also used with many sections of the same course, compare your classes results: what questions did your students miss the most and why?
- Know why students miss certain questions; is it a teaching, learning, or test question problem?