Teaching to Inspire

An oft-overlooked aspect of community college teaching is that we, more than any other teachers, need to inspire some of our students to change their lives. We are not the “second chance” institution for these students, we are their last best chance. If they miss their chance with us, some will miss a chance at a decent life. This imposes a tremendous burden on us. Understanding this and willingly shouldering this burden is what separates great teachers from those who are good. And the time to think, to make significant improvements in our practice, is while we have time to think: summer. Consider working on these questions, preferably with a colleague.

Start with an approach grounded in Appreciative Inquiry.

✓ **When I am at my best as a teacher, what am I doing?** How am I acting? What do I say? What do I do? What am I not doing, not saying? Is it related to specific content, or a specific course or type of course? Perhaps a certain type of student? Is time a factor? Be as concrete and specific as possible.

✓ **When at my best and I am inspiring students, what are the demographics of the students I reach best?** Be as specific as possible about the type of students you believe you inspire the most? Are they young? Older? White? Hispanic? Afro-American? To reiterate, be as specific as possible.

✓ **When I am at my best, where am I doing this great work?** Am I in a classroom, and if so what is the configuration? Am I in my office, or in an informal setting? Am I online? Be very specific.

✓ **How can I create more of these best experiences, for me and my students?** As above, be as specific as possible. How can you reach more students, more different kinds of students?
Now switch to a reflective practice approach and finalize your thinking and ideas for the future with these questions.

✓ What have I learned about teaching and learning this year?

✓ What have I learned about myself and *why I teach* this year that can inform how I approach my students and my teaching?

✓ What have I learned about ways to inspire others this year?

✓ How will I *apply* what I have learned this year in my work with students, in class, online, and as an advisor or mentor?

✓ How has what I have learned and experienced *changed the paradigms I work within* as a community college teacher? How am I changing the very way I approach working with students?

Lastly, how will you maintain a commitment to continue to ask yourself these questions.

✓ **How will you reward yourself?** This is extremely hard work. You need to make certain to reward yourself, and not in a small way. Perhaps you can convince your college to send you to the Hawaii National Great Teachers Seminar in Kilauea National Park, or the Canadian National Great Teachers Seminar near Banff, or …

Good luck! Teaching to inspire is the hardest part of moving from good to great. Constant improvement is hard to sustain. Working closely with a colleague on the heart of great teaching is energizing and daunting. We know. We’ve worked together all year. Thanks for the opportunity!
The Top 10…

No. 1 – The All-Important First Day of Class
No. 2 – Ways to Make Your Teaching Life Easier
No. 3 – The Crucial Second and Third Classes
No. 4 – Ways to Show Students that You Respect Them
No. 5 – Promote Effective Student Study Skills
No. 6 – Components of a Well-Planned Class
No. 7 – Observe Your Teaching Tendencies
No. 8 – Ways to Keep Your Students Learning
No. 9 – Ways to Get Feedback on Teaching from Students
No. 10 – Using Short Writing to Assess Learning
No. 11 – Getting More (and Better) Student Questions
No. 12 – Mixing Things up Mid-Semester
No. 13 – Engaging Different Input Preferences
No. 14 – Helping Students Stay the Journey
No. 15 – Ways to End Your Course
No. 16 – Resources for Learning and Teaching
No. 17 – Create a Memorable AND Functional Syllabus
No. 18 – Ways to Build Your Students’ Self-Efficacy
No. 19 – Practical Study Tips to Share with Your Students
No. 20 – Laddering Thinking Skills
No. 21 – Learning Based Ways to End Lessons
No. 22 – Ways and Reasons to Be Vulnerable While Teaching
No. 23 – Using Student Groups
No. 24 – Components of a Complete Learning Experience
No. 25 – Ways to Use Visuals for Learning
No. 26 – Students’ Locus of Control
No. 27 – Help Students with Rigorous Writing Assignments
No. 28 – Ways to Shake Up Your Teaching
No. 29 – Teaching to Inspire

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