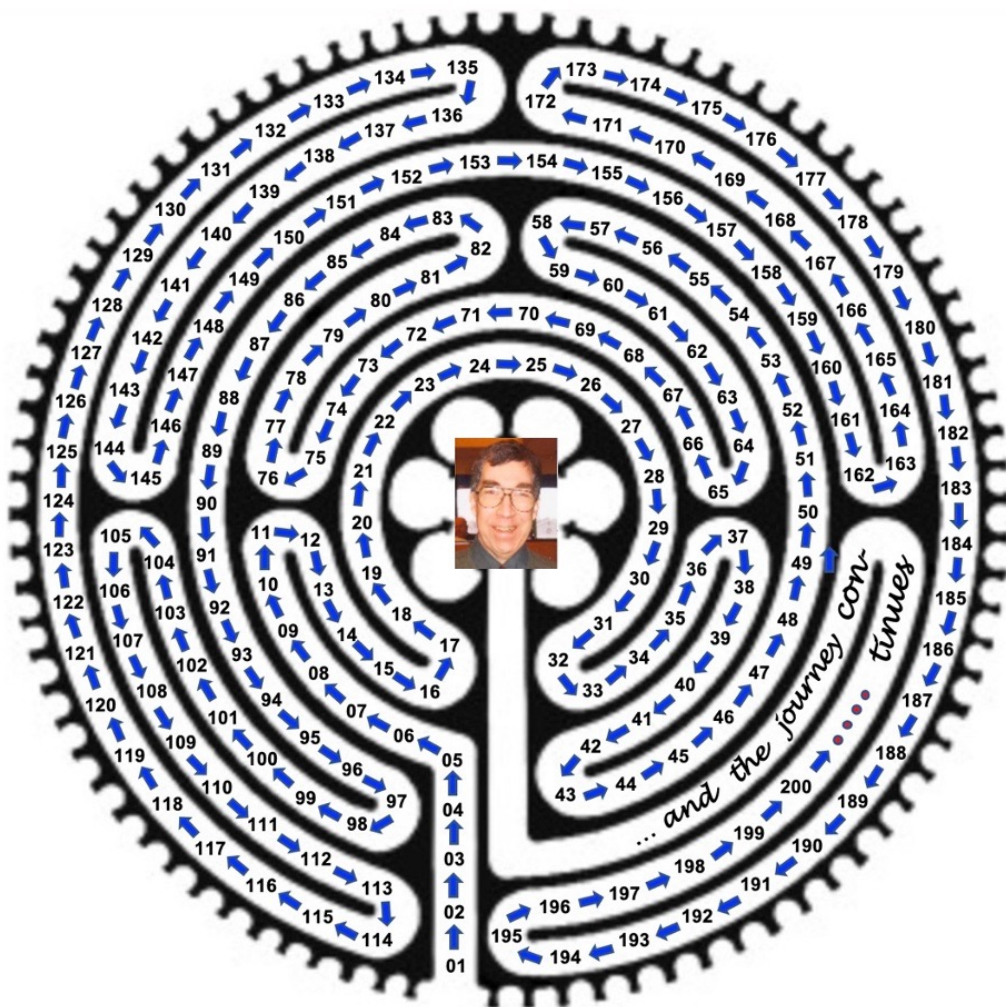


On the Path of the Perfecting Teacher

Walking the Labyrinth
Steps 201 - 250

Current Update: 01/14/26

Ernest L. Pancsofar



In my opinion, the values of the "Perfecting" Teacher are captured within the acrostic organizer below. There is no such person as a perfect teacher. However, by following the elements for being a perfecting teacher, we are always in the process of reflecting and improving our relationship with our students.

Mindfulness Practitioner
A Continual **L E**arner
A Seeker **R** of Evidence-Based Practices
Self Re **F**lective
Engaging
Creative
Thoughtful
Employs **I**nclusive Practices
Ki Nd
Encoura **G**ing

Cul Turally Responsive
Values Formative **E** Assessment
P Arent Friendly
Collaborates With Peers
Lives A **H**ealthy Lifestyle
Asks Good Qu **E**stions
Neve **R** Satisfied With What Is

On The Path To Becoming a “Perfecting” Teacher

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On The Path To Becoming a “Perfecting” Teacher

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Step 201

Profile in Song Titles

As part of a novel way to describe ourselves to others, I once suggested that students look through their playlists to identify ten song titles that help to describe some of their traits / characteristics to others. Here is the list I developed:

1. *Diamonds in the Rough* – John Prine
2. *River of Dreams* – Billy Joel
3. *Blowin' in the Wind* – Bob Dylan
4. *Stand By Me* – Ben E. King
5. *You Got a Friend in Me* – Randy Newman
6. *I Can See Clearly* – Johnny Nash
7. *With a Little Help From My Friends* – Joe Cocker
8. *Heart of Gold* – Neil Young
9. *Courage* – Bob Blue
10. *Both Sides Now* – Judy Collins

Step 202

Your Work is Superb!

Below are my comments upon reviewing the products of one student's out-of-class engagement activities. I could have written these comments for many other students in my courses, as well.

Your work is superb! Whenever I review the products from a student with your creativity and skills, I know that you could excel in whatever style of assessment I required in this class. However, because I allow students to demonstrate their competence from a wide menu of options, I am enriched by the quality of your output. These products reinforce my value that creative teachers will be the best supporters of inclusion out there. You are going to be an extremely creative teacher!

Step 203

Reflections Reviewing Student Assignments

I see my coffee table in my living room
Where piles of student work does before me loom.
Hours and hours of reading lie before me now;
I'll find much inspiration that will show me how
Each person took some seeds that I did sow
And with their imaginations essentially did grow
Resources they will surely some day use
And hopefully plan to spread the news
That creativity is a vital skill.
It can't be captured in a pill
But practiced and practiced and practiced some more.
Each product you make will help to ensure
That your teaching has energy, freshness and wit
When you meet your challenges, you will not quit,
But take a deep breath and think in your mind,
I just need to invent a one-of-a-kind
Resource for my students some days
As you continue to teach in creative ways.

Step 204

Ramblings 1

Teaching is more about what is happening to you as a person than what the student learns as a result of your instruction. Someone else could be in your shoes and be just as efficient a teacher for that student. Instead, teaching is a craft that allows us to learn about ourselves as creative problem solvers, collaborators with colleagues and how we grow in our depth and breadth of skills to handle challenges of greater proportion.

I view teaching as a great opportunity to improve upon the various drafts of my strategies to bring out the strengths within the students with whom I have contact. Every time I struggle to figure out how to help a student overcome a particular challenge, I am also repositioning myself to work from a better perspective for the next student whose challenge may be equally perplexing. We are continually fine-tuning our detective skills at discovering what combination of supports and services will match best to the challenges each student brings to our attention.

I hope that your participation in this course helps you evolve into a person whose life is enriched and enhanced through the vocation of teaching.

Step 205

Welcome News

Many students do not realize the hours and hours of preparation that go into each class session. This preparation occurs in solitude with my inner voice being the only feedback I typically receive about more creative ways to present the content. However, on occasion, I will receive feedback such as what I present below, which makes it all worthwhile!

My overall thoughts about taking this course in the manner in which it was constructed:

At last, a professor who practices what he preaches. Actually, he doesn't preach and that's part of what is so wonderful. He certainly has a gift for communication and provides information and strategies to be a good communicator in a non-threatening manner.

I appreciated the format of the class and am impressed by how engaging the professor made an online course. My only regret is that I didn't have more time to explore all of the resources provided.

Frequent feedback was greatly appreciated. It kept me on track and motivated me. It was also done in a supportive and productive manner.

The clearly organized Blackboard setup with expectations and procedures helped me work efficiently. The flexibility of deadlines allowed me to take this class. I had childcare conflicts and work commitments that precluded me from getting to campus and dedicating time during the first half of the class but had more time during the second half and was able to attend to the class.

The content was directly related to my work and life in general. I feel better informed and equipped to work with the unique students who come in and out of my classroom and I feel a renewed sense of empowerment and hope that I can help my students achieve their goals.

I found learning about the referral process, 504s and IEPs, autism, strategies for supporting students, graphic organizers, and twice exceptional students to be especially helpful but thought all of the material covered was useful.

The text was a great resource. I appreciated the supplementary materials just as much as they related the content to real life. I think this course was perfect as is and I would love to see a conference or workshop offered in addition. I know that I would attend and would urge my colleagues to as well. The information is useful for all involved in education and the professor's positive and productive attitude inspires and motivates. Just the shot in the arm that I needed.

*Thanks, Dr. Pancsofar.
Karen G.*

Step 206

Thoughts Listening to a Parent Describe Her Experiences on Behalf of her Child with a Disability

During one class session, I invited a parent of a child with a disability to talk about their role as an advocate and share their wisdom with teacher candidates and other students preparing for professional roles in the public schools. Please find below my notes from this session.

1. Parents have a history of frustrations, wrong turns, misdiagnoses, broken promises and unfulfilled expectations.
2. By the time we see their son/daughter, there has been a history of others before us who have come in and out of their son/daughter's life.
3. Other parents and families who have a son/daughter who functions in a similar manner and/or who has a similar label often provide support and hope for their own child.
4. Parents receive information from multiple sources, some of which is in agreement with the professional literature and some of which runs counter to the current suggestions for support/treatment/education.
5. Highly educated parents who seek advocates among well-known lawyers typically obtain different services than parents who are not highly educated or who don't have the means to secure the private services of well-known lawyers.
6. In my understanding, ABA (applied behavior analysis) is not a marketing name of one separate package owned by anyone, but rather an approach first articulated in 1968 in the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*. The main principles lie in the application of currently recommended interventions with the frequent use of assessment in which to make decisions based on that data.
7. Consistency, perseverance, volunteers, resources, timing, and follow-up all appeared to be significant factors in this parent's success with the "recovering" of his son.
8. The willingness to be politically active by running for and being elected to the school board is admirable and noteworthy.
9. Documentation and keeping notes is an essential part of verifying progress, keeping abreast of action taken and holding accountable the different members of the PPT.
10. It is extremely hard to pinpoint just what parts of a prescribed regimen of strategies are, in fact, responsible for subsequent changes in a student's behavior. Are all the ingredients in the "package" necessary for future success? This is a hard question to answer.

Step 207

Magpie Murders Quotes

I read the *Magpie Murders*, a mystery, who done it, book for pleasure. Then, I started from the beginning to read it again - - - only more slowly and to focus on the literary skill with which Anthony Horowitz constructs the unusual plots to this book. Below are my quotes that caught my attention without giving away anything from the story line for any reader who may want to read this excellently written book.

There's something quite comforting about a mess, especially when there's no one else there to complain.

But, I'm not sure it actually matters what we read. Our lives continue along the straight lines that have been set out for us. Fiction merely allows us a glimpse of the alternative. Maybe that's one of the reasons we enjoy it.

... plumbing in the house was at least fifty years old and complained loudly every time it was pressed into service, ...

... putting a steel lid on all her emotions so that only a cold veneer of politeness showed through.

He never used the tube train, disliking the presence of so many people in close proximity; so many dreams, fears, resentments jumbled together in the darkness. He found it overpowering.

Rumours and malicious gossip are like bindweed. They cannot be cut back, even with the sword of truth.

Clarissa sipped her sherry. It clung to her lip as if reluctant to enter her mouth.

The index and third fingers of his right hand were permanently stained - like old piano keys.

... was keen to be on his way. He was holding his bicycle as if it were an animal, straining at the leash.

How it is the small lies and evasions which nobody sees or detects but which can come together and smother you like the fumes in a house fire.

But he was a man without a shadow - or perhaps a shadow without a man. He was both as prominent and as unremarkable as the weathervane on the steeple of St. Botolph's.

... had a strange, slightly unsavoury quality; a sense of some secret that he was refusing to share.

He was in his late fifties but looked much older, worn out by a struggle that he had actually lost a long time ago.

Step 208

OLGA TOKARCZUK

I just finished my reading of *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* by Olga Tokarczuk: Nobel Prize winner in literature. Below I have extracted sample quotes that resonated with me as I read through this exceptional book.

The best conversations are with **O** urself. At least there's no risk of a misunderstanding.

Tough. As it says in **B** **L** ake: "Opposition is true friendship."

And the flowers in his **G** arden are neat and tidy.

Standing straight and slender, **A** s if they'd been to the gym.

Everything will pass. The wise man knows **T** his from the start, and has no regrets.

The prison is not **O** utside, but inside each of us.

One has to tell people what to thin **K** There's no

altern **A** tive. Otherwise, someone else will do it.

It's a feature of flashlights that they' **R** e only visible in the daytime.

Sometimes I think that only the si **C** k are truly healthy.

"Mrs. Duszeńko ..." "Dus **Z** ejko," I corrected him.

(Weather Channel) ... division ... three gro **U** ps: skiers, allergy sufferers and drivers ...

Everyone **K** nows the profit to be reaped from the useful,
but nobody knows the benefits to be gained
from the useless.

Step 209

Living in the Moment

Because I have lived many years and bring that longevity to my challenges, I recognize that "living in the moment" is all that really matters. There is so much we cannot control, but we can determine how this current "minute" or "second" will go. There, it's already gone! I took a sip of coffee and appreciated the flavor a little longer than I usually do. I am taking more time responding to your feedback than I typically do. Later will take care of itself. I need to practice this more, especially when there is a current, external crisis continuing to brew and influence my mobility out of the house. We will ALL face limitations in our movements and actions as we age – some will just get a taste of those limitations sooner than others – whether those challenges be physical, emotional, intellectual or a combination of all three. Being there for loved ones is what is important.

Step 210

Building a Healthier Me

In one course I have an assignment titled – Building a Healthier Me. As part of the orientation to this assignment I share the following essay about how having a 10-step program may be just as important as the Ingredients in one's 10 Step Program. See if you agree.

From the Dusty Files of Your Instructor

Why Ernie Will Succeed On His Current Weight Loss Program

The principal reason that I will succeed in reaching my goal of losing 25 pounds by June 30, 1990, is that I have a ten-step plan. It doesn't matter what the actual steps are in this plan as long as there is a reasonable assumption that each step is a helpful strategy toward weight loss. The key is that for each step you complete, you increase your odds by 10% that you will, indeed, succeed in losing the 1 - 2 lbs. that have been targeted for that week. Time will tell if this program is effective, but I am explaining my steps below in the hopes that it may help others toward their own personalized program. The ten steps do not have to be completed in any particular order, nor do you need to do any of the ten steps of my program. Write your own, but you must have ten of them! Your own ten step program may have just as high a probability of succeeding as my ten-step program. Then, you can make a lot of money by publishing your ten steps. Someone will buy it if you place copies next to *The National Enquire* at the supermarket check-out. An appropriate headline might be "A Never- Before-Published Ten Step Program That Worked For Me" and put a before and after photo of yourself under the headline.

A note of disclaimer written on 2/1/20: *Hi, it's me again – 30 years later. I did lose some weight following my 10-step program: more like 15 pounds, but they found their way back! I am embarking on a new set of ingredients in my Top 10 List TBD.*

Step 1: Don't Drink Coffee.

I learned the benefits of this step a couple of months ago when I had the flu (or more aptly stated, "The flu had me."). My stomach was rather queasy and I could not tolerate anything acidic in my stomach. This flu lasted about four days during which I didn't drink coffee. After I regained my health, I suddenly resolved not to drink coffee again for the duration of following my 10-step plan. I don't know if caffeine contributes to the appetite drive or actually reduces that drive, but I've decided to include it as step one because there is a 50-50 chance that it contributes to 10% of my ability to remain on my current weight loss program.

Step 210
Building a Healthier Me
Why Ernie Will Succeed
On His Current Weight Loss Program
(continued)

Step 2: Eat Tofu.

I like the flavor of tofu and, particularly, steamed with vegetables or stir fried. Tofu is an excellent source of protein and is low in calories. For those who have not tried this delicacy, begin with a piece of Pancsofar's fine tofu pie and you will be hooked on this ingredient.

Step 3: Exercise.

I began this step by getting up early and turning on the television and watching exercise programs while making and eating breakfast. This is a good start! But watching exercise programs is not enough! I began the corporate walk. The corporate walk (only in good weather, however) consists of a briskly paced walk along streets where corporate people work. You have to discuss business or at least talk about someone at work in order for it to qualify as a corporate walk. In addition, take the stairs unless you are carrying a heavy load. The excess weight that I now carry does not qualify as a heavy load. This is excellent advice since our office is only in a three-story building. If you work in an office on the twelfth floor, take the elevator to the tenth floor and walk the remaining two floors. Also, park in a space that is a good way away from your building. Use your own judgment for how far a "good way" is.

Step 4: Don't Go Grocery Shopping on an Empty Stomach.

You are less likely to buy junk food if you do your grocery shopping on a full stomach. In addition, only buy what is on your list and not what catches your eye. Limit purchases to what is on the menu for the upcoming week.

Step 5: Only Eat at Designated Meal Times.

This is a key step but again is only worth 10% of the total success to this program. Cutting out snacks is a key to the Pancsofar 10-step program. An apple or fruit here and there is permissible but avoid snacking at night or at work. Rely, instead, on seltzer water with a mixture of fruit juice.

Step 6: Brush Your Teeth After Each Meal.

This step is important because it removes the taste of food from your mouth at times that you are apt to be tempted to violate some of the steps of the program. As a side effect, this also helps prevent tooth decay. I prefer aqua fresh toothpaste, but it is not felt that the exact brand name of the toothpaste makes an appreciable difference to the 10% weighting.

Step 210
Building a Healthier Me
Why Ernie Will Succeed
On His Current Weight Loss Program
(continued)

Step 7: Only Weigh Yourself Once Per Week

Since this weight loss program results in a gradual reduction, it is important not to get discouraged by not seeing weight reduction each day. Weighing should occur once per week. The weighing should occur in the afternoon, with clothes on, but without shoes. Cheating is not advised.

Step 8: Bring Lunches to Work

There will be no more L-2s from the Chinese Restaurant on this 10-step program! Lunch should consist mainly of leftovers from the night before or from meals prepared in advance during the weekend. If forced to eat out under peer pressure, eat sensibly noting that your ability to lose weight that week has been lessened by 10%.

Step 9: Put a Chart Up in the Office To Mark Progress on One or More Steps of The Program.

This step is important as a visual reminder of how well this ten-step program is going. For example, I might use the +1 and -1 system. For each day that I eat only at meals (fruit snack is permissible) I'll award myself +1 points. If I do not adhere to this step, I get -1. I can keep a running total and designate a reinforcer for each 10 points earned under this system. Or, I could keep a list on which 25 pounds are marked off in one-pound segments. If a certain number of pounds has been kept off for one week, I can clip off those segments pertaining to the amount of pounds lost toward my goal of 25 pounds.

Step 10: Put Your Fork Down After Every Bite

This step takes practice to do without drawing unnecessary attention. It allows you to chew your food longer, talk to people at the table, and extend the length of time that the meal takes place. You will have a more satisfying and less hurried meal by following this step.

Will this 10-step program work for you? Probably not. Remember, the key is following an individualized set of 10 steps that you develop that you think contributes to a healthier lifestyle. Now, Go For It! I will accept whatever donation you find worthy to provide pending the outcome of your own, individualized 10-Step Program.

Step 211

A Note to My Students on 3/23/20

Our lives have been disrupted by a virus we cannot see.
Our friends are at a distance finding a new way to be - - -

Connected - Isolated
Comforted - Frustrated

Reflective - Selective
Reactive – Protective

Words take on more meaning than they did before.
We don't quite know what else will be in store.

Life goes on; we know that adage well.
Take time to think about our values and dwell - - -

On stopping and listening to each of our inner voices;
Wondering what it means as we make our many choices.

This too will pass but not without much sacrifice.
"We are in it together." is often the advice - - -

Given to us by our leaders as we each do our special part.
Please stay healthy and safe and reach out to others with your heart.

Step 212

INFJ

When my wife and I completed the Myers-Briggs Assessment, we were surprised to discover that our initials to indicate our personality traits were the same: INFJ. Here is my response:

I = introversion; N = Intuitive; F = Feeling; J = judging.

Thanks for spend**I**Ng the morning with me today. **F**irst, I en**J**oyed
d**I**scussi**N**g personality traits **F**or bringing clarity **J**ust when we needed
It most. We ca**N** **F**requently **J**oin in
d**I**scussio**N**s o**F** **J**oint
benef**I**t a**N**d **F**orge ahead from **J**anuary to
December **I**n k**N**owing **F**irsthand the **J**oys we
br**I**Ng to each other. Who know **F**or sure what **J**udicious
not**I**o**N**s we will **F**eel by **J**umping at the chance to engage
I**N** discussions o**F** our **J**ubilant personality traits.

Step 213

The Language of Covid19

I was intrigued by the different words that appear in the media that are now connected to the virus pandemic we are in the midst of. I contrasted the use of specific terms prior to this outbreak and what those terms tend to mean now.

Once - Corona was a brand of beer;

Now - it's a virus lurking near.

Once - flattening the curve could be a baseball toss;

Now - it's a graph to minimize society's loss.

Once - epicenter referred to major earthquakes;

Now - NYC - this designation takes.

Once - early bird special was a certain dinner reservation;

Now - it's for the elderly shopping in a special time designation.

Once - face masks were for hockey goalies' needs;

Now - they provide protection to stop this hideous disease.

Once - social distance meant to visit relatives afar.

Now - it's space between people - about 2 yards.

Step 214

Wondering About Being a Teacher

I wrote the following feedback to a student studying to be a history teacher who wondered about what she might be getting into – given the era of high anxiety and uncertainty that currently exists in our schools.

To make History come alive, we must make students come alive. This was a significant statement from the article about teaching history to which you linked in your first set of comments. I think it is acceptable and quite normal to question wanting to be an educator given today's times and anxieties. To me, being a teacher is an outlet for my creativity, writing, values and need for a sounding board on my points of view. Viewing teaching as a transformative experience means that we are changed by the act of teaching. We are a different person because of choosing this profession than if we went down another path. Your comments cause me to take a brief pause and reflect on my own career path. Paradoxically, as the steps on my own path are nearing an end, your path is just beginning! I'm glad our paths crossed.

Step 215

John Prine Died Today

John Prine died today - complications from the Covid19 virus -
A gentle man, poet & song writer. He sang for all of us.
I remember Billy the Bum
On his very first album.
I'm saddened that I never saw one of his shows,
But part of me surely knows
That listening to him sing on my daily walks -
Songs of life – were always full of paradox.
He was a genius with words
Mixed among his guitar chords.
I'll miss his folksy sound
And in this singer I have found
Everyday messages
Amid his lyrical passages.
John Prine died today.
I'm sad as I go about my way
In my daily routine
And get caught in between
A new "normal" way to be.
His music helped me to see
The common daily events in life,
Even as we endure this strife
That filters in and out our day -
John Prine had a lot to say.

Step 216

John Prine Lyrics That Resonate With Me

The Late John Garfield Blues

*An old man sleeps with his conscience at night.
Young kids sleep with their dreams.
While the mentally ill sit perfectly still
And live through life's in-betweens.*

Quiet Man

*Oodles of light what a beautiful sight;
Both of God's eyes are shining tonight.
Rays and beams of incredible dreams
And I am a quiet man.*

Step 216

John Prine Lyrics That Resonate With Me (continued)

Billy the Bum

*Now some folks they wait
And some folks they pray
For Jesus to rise up again,
But none of these folks
In their holy cloaks
Ever took Billy on as a friend.
For pity's a crime
And it ain't worth a dime
To a person who's really in need.
Just treat 'em the same
As you would your own name
Next time that your heart starts to bleed.*

Hello in There

*You know that old trees just grow stronger,
And old rivers grow wilder every day.
Old people just grow lonesome
Waiting for someone to say, "Hello in there, hello."
So, if you're walking down the street sometime
And spot some hollow ancient eyes,
Please don't just pass 'em by and stare
As if you didn't care, say, "Hello in there, hello."*

Everybody

*Everybody needs somebody that they can talk to;
Someone to open up their ears
And let that trouble through.
Now you don't have to sympathize
Or care what they may do,
But everybody needs somebody that they can talk to.*

Humidity Built the Snowman

*The scientific nature of the ordinary man
Is to go on out and do the best you can.*

Step 216

John Prine Lyrics That Resonate With Me

(continued)

Glory of True Love

*You can climb the highest mountain;
Touch the moon and stars above
But Old Faithful's just a fountain
Compared to the glory of true love.*

Far From Me

*Well, a question ain't really a question,
If you know the answer too.*

Step 217

One Piece at a Time

I have a jigsaw puzzle spread out on a table;
It's a map of the United States and I am able
To separate the pieces and make some sense
Of where they go. It does take some patience
But here is the unique feature I share in this rhyme:
I only put one piece in the puzzle - one sitting at a time.
When preparing my notes or reviewing an assignment,
I take a break and put one puzzle piece in its alignment
To its proper place in the grand scheme of things;
Then, I return to my work to see what the next assignment brings.
You may think it odd, but to me it's just fine;
A quick break is all I need to quiet my mind
Until 10 - 15 minutes have gone by
And I return to my puzzle - you can ask why?
What's the purpose of this slow, inefficient practice
Of assembling a puzzle? But, as God is my witness,
I return to this activity so I can better direct
My energies anew and reflect.
I need no applause!
I just need a brief, mindful pause.

Step 218

PANDEMIC DIVERSIONS

P A N D E M I C

J I g-saw Puzzle

V irtual Meetings

Luth E r

B Rokenwood

Miss Fi S her Murder Mysteries

M I ndful Pauses

Je O pardy

The Ma N dalorian

Walk S - Treadmill

Step 219

Equality - Fairness - Best (Feedback to a Student)

Your comments on the topic of equality / fairness / best / etc. was intriguing to review. To me, having the conversation about what is fair / just / best is worth having and, perhaps, that is the perspective that matters most: having the important players involved in the conversation. We can't predict what circumstances a student will be in next week, month, year, etc. Look at Sam Berns. His prognosis was that he would not live to see 20 years of age. With that knowledge, what is the purpose of his education? Yes, he had the privilege of being born into a family with two medical doctors as parents. However, this did not affect his life expectancy. In my opinion, we need to go with a consensus of people who are on a student's team, including the student, in making decisions about what direction our efforts should be in NOW. We look at a profile of who the student is, what skills and competencies each student has and how to nurture each student's talents, gifts and competencies within a framework that is called the school's curriculum. In my "best world" scenario, each student would have an Individualized Learning Plan, which is organic and changes based on each student's circumstances / interests / projected path of learning. This goal may never occur, but how do we, within our current restrictions and multiple paradoxes, develop a learning map for each student that maximizes each student's strengths, interests, passions and competencies? The discussion of how to do this is an important part of the solution. Thank you for reflecting on this issue and influencing me to record my own thoughts today.

Step 220

Thank You for Making It Through

Thank you for making it through - well almost - this memorable semester.
This will be a time you will not soon forget and long remember.
Perhaps, the details will become a little hazy with time.
When that happens, please take out and reread these lines of rhyme.
Whose lives did you touch with your words of kindness and love?
What actions did you take and how did you rise above
The isolation from your friends and still keep in touch?
How did you feel when you awoke amid such
Terrible news that greeted you each day?
There were bright spots, too, about the way
Neighbors helped neighbors and the ones on the front lines -
In hospitals and trauma centers where there were all kinds
Of emergencies and acts of heroism and where kindness prevailed
Amid the chaos of lives lost and others regained - while some failed
To see the serious nature of this infection
As each day the death toll projection
Eclipsed the previous day's total.
Love prevails - we are inseparable
From our family, friends, students and teachers;
Bakers, store workers, grocers and preachers.
You are stronger today than you were a month ago;
Pause and reflect amid all you feel and know.

Step 221

ISSUES

The Every Student Succeed Act could have/should have been called the **I**ndividualized **S**tudent **S**uccess and **U**nified **E**ducational **S**upports act (ISSUES-ACT). The question becomes – What are the main ISSUES for each student in this school? What data do we need to collect about each student's ISSUES? Each student's progress is measured from that student's baseline because each student's ISSUES are different from another student's ISSUES. When we let politicians and non-educators define success, the data are likely to be skewed in the expected direction of how the assessors are defining success; i.e., lower in-school suspensions / higher standard test scores.

Step 222

ROUGH AND ROWDY WAYS

I decided to look up a sample of various reviews from media outlets addressing the most recent album by Bob Dylan: *Rough and Rowdy Ways*. Then, I took sample words from those reviews to compose a poem reflecting on this recent work.

pulp-noi **R** masterpiece [LA Times]
often frequently c **O** nspirational [NY Times]
one of the most timely alb **U** ms ever [Rolling Stone]
keepin **G** an eye on heaven's door [Boston Globe]
enthraling, misc **H** evious – and very male [The Guardian]
-
m **A** sterful, reflective [MN Star Tribune]
breathes, expa **N** ds and contracts [NPR]
masterful (and cru **D** e) collage ... [Slate]
-
one long magnificent **R** iddle [The Telegraph]
Bob Dylan c **O** nfronts his mortality [USA Today]
pessimistic Americana **W** ith hallucinatory fervor [The Atlantic]
reflective, meditative befu **D** dling, funny and awe inspiring [ABC News]
sa **Y** ing what he wants while he still can [WSJ]
-
If it **W** ere a painting, I'd call it a masterpiece [BBC]
a menacing and pl **A** yful return [The Irish Times]
he's making up for lost rh **Y** me [Variety]
soul **S** earching masterpiece [Ernie Pancsofar]

I contain multitudes reverberates in my mind
As I think of how Dylan captures the mysteries that I find
In a collage of memories reflective in his rhymes.
His masterful collection is speaking to our times
And each one's mortality for what could be in store
When each of us go knocking up on heaven's door.
Befuddling, mysterious and even some soul searching
I think this master's songs are greatly awe inspiring.

Step 223

Quote by Charlie Daniels

Charlie Daniels died on July 6, 2020, and a quote of his resonates with the theme of this Path to be a “Perfecting” Teacher:

From the Hartford Courant on July 7, 2020: *He (Daniels) said in 1998 that he kept touring so much because “I have never played those notes perfectly. I’ve never sung every song perfectly. I’m in competition to be better tonight than I was last night and to be better tomorrow than tonight.”*

Step 224

Changes

As I reviewed a student's work one morning, some thoughts entered my head that took the following form:

Once, I tried to set the world on fire;
Now, I need a spark just to feel inspired.

Once I sought to go that extra mile;
Now, I’ll settle for a little smile.

Once, I wondered how famous I could be;
Now, humbleness is a trait I seek for me.

Once, I would be traveling near and far;
Now, I go to Big Y in my family car.

Once, I wondered if success meant great wealth;
Now, I realize success is measured in health.

Once, outside I could run and jog;
Now, inside I walk and it’s more like a slog.

Once, I could work 14 hours straight;
Now, in my schedule a nap I do make.

Once I listened to Dylan on records and tapes;
Now, I listen to Dylan on playlists for my escapes.

Once, I wrote articles and books and more;
Now, I write these words to think and explore

About changes that happen each and every day;
About changes that happen as I go about my way;
About changes that happen in what I will say;
About changes that happen that I’ll be OK
About changes that happen ...

Step 225

JOHN ROBERT LEWIS

Every once in a while, great American heroes pass from this world to the next and we must find our own way of honoring their presence. One such hero is John Lewis and here are some universal truths I extracted from some of his quotes.

The reward for playing	J	azz is playing jazz.
Get in good trouble, necessary tr	O	uble,
You must be	H	eadlights and not taillights.
Be hopeful. Be optimistic.	N	ever lose that sense of hope.
You have to be pe	R	sistent.
I believe in nonvi	O	lence as a way of life, as a way of being.
We may not have chosen the time,	B	ut the time has chosen us.
... the cause of justic	E	... is the struggle of a lifetime.
We come to Selma to be	R	enewed. We come to be inspired.
Sometimes you have to get in	T	he way. You have to make some noise.
The vote is the most powerfu	L	nonviolent tool we have.
The means by which we struggl	E	must be consistent with the ends we seek.
Now is the time to get in the	W	ay. We will be silent no more.
No human being	I	s illegal.
You have to go with your gut	S	ometimes, and how you feel.

Step 226

Approaching 69

I'll be 68 for just a few more days.
I wonder what my horoscope says
About how I should plan my way
And what to do – I just may
Loaf around and soak up some rays
Or sit on the couch and watch the Blue Jays.
I think I'm stuck in a rhyme as I lay
In bed and think about my next pay
Check which arrives on Thursday when I stay
Home to ponder and perhaps to pray
For many more years yet to weigh
My contributions in life - - - Hooray!

Step 227

Creative Feedback to Student Opinion Survey

As is my practice, I share the anonymous feedback to the participants in the recently completed course as well as share this feedback with the incoming group of students in the next semester. I do this in my aim to be transparent in my self-reflections as a major part of how I practice mindfulness and improvement on the path of the “perfecting” teacher.

First, I will start with the objective data:

- 13 students completed the student opinion survey.
- Over 90% of responses to each item on the survey was in the “strongly agree” and/or “agree” columns.
- All 13 students added comments to the section titled: Please give specific feedback as to what in this course was most helpful and/or relevant to you. Please explain why.
- 9 students added comments to the section titled: Please indicate any changes that you think should be made in this course.
- All student responses were anonymous.
- The instructor reviewed the results of this opinion survey three weeks after grades were submitted to the registrar.

Step 227

Creative Feedback to Student Opinion Survey

(continued)

Now for the creative part of interpreting the data.

I started with a word bank of 16 nouns / adjectives / verbs that evolved from my review of the student opinion data:

Gratitude	Thanks
Honor	Respect
Encouragement	Creativity
Honesty	Growth
Improvement	Curiosity (Amazement)
What's Next (Horizon)	Reflection
Thoughtful (ness)	Humbleness
Values	Wonder

Next – I composed an acrostic using a series of letters that would equal the same number of words I composed above: 16. I searched for what that central theme could be. Since one of my recreational activities during this course was working on various NY Times crossword puzzles, I decided to use CROSSWORD PUZZLES as the central theme. To do so, I needed to locate synonyms for “What’s Next” and “Curiosity” to account for the two “Zs” in the acrostic. I also needed a word with an “s” so I expanded “thoughtful” into “thoughtfulness.”

C reativity	
Encou R agement	Im P rovement
H O nor	Val U es
Thank S	Hori Z on
Re S pect	Ama Z ement
Gro W th	Ref L ection
H O nesty	Humbl E ness
G R atitude	Thoughtfulnes S
Won D er	

Step 227

Creative Feedback to Student Opinion Survey

(continued)

Next – I wanted to express my appreciation and comments via a poem that would include all the elements from the acrostic organizer I composed.

Upon Reflecting on a Recent Student Opinion Survey

My teaching allows me to expand my outlet for **creativity**,
As I receive **encouragement** from students at this university.
It is an **honor** that I deeply appreciate
And I give **thanks** and hope to reciprocate
My show of **respect** for the quality of work from students in this course
As we each advance in our personal **growth** and become a source
Of **honesty** when we provide our feedback to our peers
Mixed with the **gratitude** that comes with the years
Of continued **wonder** at the meaning of it all.
Improvement must be the constant call
In how we advance our set of **values** in everything we do
Both today and over the **horizon** and before we are through
We will never cease to be in **amazement** at each student's abilities.
When, in self-**reflection**, we will never cease
To practice **humbleness** for all we have still to know
As in **thoughtfulness** and love we will continue to grow.

The image of a crossword puzzle is a powerful one for me. There have been times when I will work on a specific puzzle, on and off, for months, while other times, I will finish one in 15 minutes. Clues and patterns of letters in the puzzle cause me to think differently about the clues that are offered. There are some extremely creative individuals who take pride in the subtle wording of clues. For example, in a recent puzzle, the clue was "Bounty work?" I thought about the movie Mutiny on the Bounty or bounty as in bounty hunter. But, as I put different letters in the puzzle, a pattern emerged and the word "absorption" appeared to fit. The clue was referring to the paper towel "Bounty!" You may not agree yet, depending on where you are at in your career, but "solution seeking" for the challenges our students bring to the table involves hunting for patterns that may or may not fit the ecology of the current situation. But, if you stick with it and have creative people on your team, it is amazing what strategies can emerge.

Step 228

I've Got My Eye on 69

I had a cataract removed from my left eye
Yesterday and spent my birthday with my
Eye swollen and feeling quite ostracized.
I didn't expect to be in bed and lie
Down in such discomfort when I
Should be celebrating birthday 69, but, with a sigh,
I squint my eye shut as I magnify
My computer to read my e-mails and wonder why
This unexpected discomfort happened when I turned sixty ni-ne!

Step 229

The Semester Begins Anew

The semester begins anew.
I wonder what things will brew
In the days ahead – I wish I knew.
There are many resources in my queue.
I need to look at my courses and view
The time commitments and when things are due.
It takes a lot of energy to keep on top of things – Phew!

Step 230

Closer to Fine

My left eye is closer to fine,
Although I still see a blurry line
When I review work at 5:49,
But the doctor said it's a good sign
That the swelling is receding and not to pine
And get the blues. It should be quite benign
And when for supper I choose to dine
With the lights on low, it seems sublime.
This too will pass and get better with time.
I had to stretch a little to make all my lines rhyme!

Step 231

CCSU Family

Sent over the University Listserv: Please find attached my mini-poster of what the CCSU FAMILY means to me amid the tumultuous beginning of the school year with frustration levels heightened and the "send" button pushed one time too often. I have worked in many jobs over my career and the peers with whom I interact in the School of Education and Professional Studies and, in particular, the department in which I work, embodied the elements of this image.

Considerate

Collaborative

Sacrificing

H Umble

Re **F**lective

C Aring

Mindful

Support **I**ve of one another

Loving

Happ **Y** to Serve Others

Step 232

Ol' Blue Eyes

As I reviewed one student's reflection for one of my courses, I was influenced to write the follow feedback:

The option to choose our labels or not is not as cut and dry as it may at first appear. Someone had to convince a group of professionals that certain traits, if seen often enough in an individual, would put a label on that individual. As an example, the DSM-V (diagnostic statistical manual) did away with the category of Asperger syndrome with a vote of its executive board. Many parents refuse to allow their children to be tested for special education via the learning disability route, because they don't want their child to have the stigma of a label. I have asthma but do not refer to myself as an asthmatic. We can choose to own the label given to us by others or we can refer to ourselves by the words and terms that we want others to know us by. Yes, having Down syndrome means the individual has an extra 21st chromosome and certain physical characteristics they share in common with others who also have an extra 21st chromosome. . However, if teachers keep referring to that student as a Down's child as a major label, that individual is limited by the expectations others have put on students with that label. I have blue eyes via a hereditary process. However, I am not referred to as the "blue eyed" professor.

When I lecture, under almost all circumstances, I write a new lecture for the occasion. It helps me think. It helps me make demands of myself that I would not otherwise make. Marilynne Robinson

Creativity itself doesn't care at all about results – the only thing it craves is the process. Learn to love the process and let whatever happens next happen, without fussing too much about it. Elizabeth Gilbert

We were born astonished. We should never grow out of our astonishment. Andrea Gibson

Step 233

To Be Creative or Not to Be ... Creative – What a Question!

One student commented about whether a teacher ought to be creative when working with students in special education or use more linear strategies with a carefully planned sequence of scripted lessons.

You bring thoughtful insights to the role of creativity in how teachers interact with students in special education. You are right in the sense that many curricular programs have quite linear steps to follow that have been researched and validated to increase the likelihood of success for students. However, I often wonder why there are so many non-responders to this curriculum. The answer, I believe, lies in that fact that students are much more than their label. There were probably no students in the original research for that curriculum who had exactly the same backgrounds as the students in your class. It may be necessary to tweak the curriculum to include more out-of-school interests for a student or to break down a large concept into smaller, more manageable steps. Creativity, to me, rests in the spirit and approach to problem solving while a member of a team when a student's misbehavior or learning challenges don't conform to the tried and true methods of teaching. Often, publishing companies offer teachers a script to follow. I wonder, at times, whether you need a professional with a master's degree to follow a written script without any changes based on the unique ecology each student brings to the classroom. We need all types of thinkers on the teams of individuals with disabilities and it may be critical to recognize when to turn our creativity muscle on and off.

You must keep collecting threads – threads of meaning, threads of hope, threads of purpose, truth and will – along with all the knowledge, skills that every weaver needs. You must keep on weaving – stopping only to repair your broken loom – lacing threads of warmth and light against the coldest night, a cloak in which to wrap whoever comes to you in need, the world with all its suffering, those near at hand, yourself.

Parker Palmer except from his commentary on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of JFK

Step 234

I Am a Curator

I often think of a different word to describe my role instead of using “instructor.” Some of the words that come to mind are facilitator of learning, a guide to personalized investigation, a source of reflection of student insights, provider of current strategies, summarizer of important content in my discipline, etc. Then one student used the word “curator.” I immediately liked that choice of what I do in my courses. I curate resources for student investigation. I then looked for elements of that role and developed the following acrostic visual:

C hoices
F **U** ture Utility
Sha **R** ed by Students
Reson **A** te
The **T** est of Time
Kn **O** wledge
Relevant **R** esearch

I seek to offer **choices** in what students can review
For **future utility** in all that they pursue
And present work **shared by students** whose work I admire
And **resonate** with my own values and inspire
Me to assemble resources that meet **the test of time**
To add **knowledge** to form a new paradigm
With **relevant research** I keep in my files
In my office amid my piles and piles.

Step 235

We Gain Insights From Each Other

One of the reasons why I provide a diversity of resources in the three sections of this introductory course in special education stems from the diversity of disciplines from which students enroll in this course. In this current semester, the breakdown of students with their majors follows:

Technology Education – 8

Special Education – 7

Art – 5

Mathematics – 5

Unknown – 5

History – 3

Counseling – 2

Marriage and Family Therapy – 2

Sciences – 2

Elementary Education – 1

Information Design – 1

Music – 1

Physical Education – 1

As a community of students investigating the content from this course, what can we learn from each other? What are the generic competencies that can be taken from this course that transcend all disciplines? It is not the memorization of facts and the testing of what you don't know that is of most importance to me, as the curator of resources in this course. Rather, it is the set of values and attitude toward continually expanding our range of strategies to provide a more inclusive environment for students who have diverse learning challenges. Are we ready for students who represent some of the disabilities mentioned in our opening sessions: traumatic brain injury, autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, Progeria, and the list goes on? We don't need to be experts in the attributes and characteristics of students with varying disabilities. We do need to be ready to provide instructional supports as a member of a grade level team and be willing to expand our skills to provide strategies of increasing intensity based on data collected on the path of learning for each student in our future classrooms. You are up to this challenge. I can sense that by the way you reflect on the resources I have been providing in these opening sessions. The profession you are entering should be challenging, but the rewards are immense when you witness the progress by students on whom others may have given up.

Step 236

The One Best Thing in This Course

As you look back over the semester that has gone by
I want to ask you about the **One Best Thing** and why
It stands out as something you will remember
When this semester ends in mid-December
And someone asks you about what you did learn.
This is something you will tell them about Professor Ern-
ie and what he did share for one of his resources
As you venture forth into more of your courses.
This is what will stick in your mind:
The One Best Thing was one of a kind!

- One of the things I enjoyed most was the field experience aspect. One of the woodshop classes in the school I was in has a student with a visual impairment next semester. He is not blind, but has such bad vision, glasses offer minimal help. They decided to measure the lighting in the room to accommodate him. To see the class concepts in action really opened my eyes to how real these situations are.
- Throughout this course, there were many valuable takeaways. For me, the largest one was the differentiation in each assignment. This allowed students to make connections and express themselves in different ways. Another topic that stood out to me is the disability path. I chose ADHD. Previously, I didn't know much about it and I learned enough to even write a 6-minute speech on it for my public speaking class. After I gave that speech, one of my peers, who mentioned that he had ADHD, told me that my info and speech was spot on and very accurate.
- I think the disability path was a starting point. Both with the investigation and the technical aspect of using my computer ... more with the PowerPoint representations. That was just the beginning of the homework challenges for me, but I enjoyed it. I did use a theme in most of the assignments of my work experiences because I was looking for answers. You provided those and I'm grateful. I'll use much of what you taught in this class! Thank you!
- I found a lot of use from the disability path assignment which I did on blindness / low vision. I know a bit about this disability, but I had no connection to it for teaching strategies and I learned about alternate accommodations and materials that can be used to help students with blindness / low vision. Also, it was great to visit Tommy Edison's videos about his experiences growing up blind, thinking from a teaching perspective.

Step 236

The One Best Thing in This Course

(continued)

- I can't pick any one project or book/text, but in many I was led to (or you showed) people who overcame so many disabilities to do or learn about what they are interested in! Truly amazing people! I most enjoyed the Final. It was fun to try and tie the aircraft to different things covered in the class. Thank you – great class!
- I liked the way you didn't push your values on us and treated us as equals. I wasn't convinced on the ??? lost at the beginning but now I'd try it. I liked way ... treated us and I also liked the analogy assignment at the end where we connect 5 things from SPED to our content area.
- I found the accommodations project the most helpful during the course. It was the most relevant and applicable to me. I also liked seeing real world application of the themes we explored during SPED. It also showed me that anything is possible as long as the right accommodations / modifications are made.
- I personally really liked the icebreakers that showed that everyone thinks differently and approaches problems differently. This whole class really opened my mind to a lot of amazing people and skills for teaching and I really appreciated the lectures.
- Another thing I found useful was Disability Pathway. I learned a lot and enjoyed the student choice. I have dyslexia and learned more about it. I also enjoyed the multiple, real-world connections. It helped me connect book content to real world scenarios.
- My biggest takeaway from this class is differentiation. The class forced me to try and realize that not everyone sees things from my perspective. I have started offering many more opportunities for my students to show what they have learned.
- The best takeaway I had from this course came from doing the differentiated note-taking activities and realizing now changing how I reviewed and took notes on each chapter helped me approach each lesson differently. It helped segment each chapter in my mind easier so I could remember the main themes of each chapter. It also helped me realize that having students do more creatively-oriented exercises can help cement lessons better.

Step 236

The One Berst Thing in This Course

(continued)

- My favorite part of this class is the icebreakers. I really liked these because they allow for a lot of individual thinking and creativity. Also, they provide a good idea of what is going to be discussed in class and gets me interested. I also liked the disability investigation about the disability I investigated that I did not know about before. It also helped to break stigmas that I thought were true about dyslexia.
- One thing I found great is the accommodations pathways. I learned that “where there is a will, there is a way.” I discovered the Foot/Mouth painting association!

Step 237

Words of Wisdom

As I review student assignments, I think differently about my values and my feedback reflects those values in a way I might otherwise have expressed.

- *It takes time to be the type of teacher ALL students need in the classroom. It takes baby steps in modifying one's lesson plans in an UDL (Universal Design for Learning) fashion. It takes a lifetime. When I teach my courses here at CCSU, the current version of how I organize and deliver content has steadily improved over 20 years. Teachers must make a commitment to be on the road of the "perfecting" teacher every day of every week of every year they teach.*
- *ALL students are the responsibility of ALL teachers and staff at a school. No longer should we hear "those students" when a teacher refers to a student in special education. ALL students are OUR students.*
- *I think the best ways to be patient with students include: having a set routine with clear expectations; developing a levels of intensity of instruction knowing what assistance to provide next based on each student's previous learning history; let students make mistakes on their way to learning content without worry of penalties; group projects at times when a peer can provide assistance in a way a teacher cannot; provide choices or options for what to do next; i.e., think-tac-toe for assignments. If none of these work, take two aspirin and leave the student's area for 5 minutes, take a deep breath and try again. [Tylenol may work as well as aspirin!]*
- *My creativity occurs in brief spurts of time when I seem to be focused on a theme and the muse visits me, much to my surprise and satisfaction.*

Step 238

A Reflection in 13 Parts

One summer, as I taught a course, I introduced each session with a summary of the session before in a verse style format. This reflective log of events provides a journal like experience of the ingredients of the course and observations of how the content interweaves with the theme of more inclusive practices in the public schools.

Session One

I think a lot about the words I say
When I get home at the end of the day.
Will they understand what I mean
Or, am I getting a little extreme?
I speak my mind and to a degree
I don't expect everyone to agree with me.
It's taken me 30 years to think like this.
Sometimes I'm right - Sometimes I'm amiss.
I can speak my mind
And please do so in kind.
The answer lies in the talking
Amid the chatter and the walking.
Your path has different turns and bends
And no one knows where it's all going to end.
No one's right - No one's wrong.
We all can sing a different song
If respect and dignity are key
In the words you say to me.
It's an honor to teach this class.
It's an awesome yet enjoyable task
To help you teach a student who learns
Differently from others yet earns
The right to be with their peers in school.
This should not be the exception, but the rule.

Step 238

A Reflection in 13 Parts

(continued)

Session Two

Tonight is Wednesday and Session 2
I talked about “Choices” and we met Bob Blue.
Bob is a mentor - teacher extraordinaire;
With him there is music always in the air.
He talks about love and respect for the child,
Whether the child is quiet or even a bit wild.
Bob is gentle in both manner and mood.
(Also, some students brought in plenty of food.)
The assignments are becoming a bit more clear
With more explanations to lessen the fear
About being overwhelmed to get things done.
We may even have a little bit of fun.
Everyone’s work will be read with care
And already I’ve seen excellent writing with flare.
I feel quite tired at the end of the day
As I work on Session 3 and what I will say.

Session Three

Inclusion was the topic for session 3
With a base in the law from which to see
How students can be with their peers.
Why has it taken close to 30 years?
Jonathan Kozol writes in his book
About finding answers where we don’t look.
The wisest answers we ever can find
Come from questions of the spontaneous kind.
In the news is a picture of a little boy
Whose hair will bring about much joy
For one whom he will never know
Who wears his hair as a wig to show
That kindness happens with gestures of hope
For children who may find it hard to cope.
Partial disclosure is a good teaching plan
To give students credit for what they can
Show you when they have an additional clue
That they are smarter than they thought they knew.

Step 238

A Reflection in 13 Parts

(continued)

Session Four

There are a lot of thoughts going on in my head
At 4:48 when I get out of bed
As I continue on my journey
I began with a book called "Who Is Ernie?"
As a profile of pages that talk about me:
A non-confidential file for all to see
And decide what I will share
To those who read it - to those who care.
Richard LaVoie showed us how
To see the image of a cow.
He said the image was there to see
If we only perceived what it could be.
Rosemary brought us stories to read
From pages she said that we all should heed
About the lessons other parents have learned
As they fought their fights and victories earned.
I mentioned my thoughts for the first exam due
Of connecting to some of the works of Bob Blue.
Also, to build upon what you already know best
About students with disabilities on this first test.

Session Five

It seems to me that in lesson five
The words from the text came alive.
A label means nothing without a face.
A child's a child and not a case.
The highs and lows of manic depression
Have left on us a lasting impression.
Each story was told with sensitivity
As we learned from each one's past history.
It reminds me to stop, sit and think
About students who may be near to the brink.
What can I do? What actions are right?
No easy answers come into my sight.
Some students are torn in the midst of disease:
Living in darkness - then soaring on a breeze.
I don't know if answers are always there,
But I do know I must continue to teach with care

Step 238

A Reflection in 13 Parts

(continued)

Session Six

This is the end of week number two.
I thoroughly enjoy everything that we do.
This class of students has many talents
To share as we maintain our precarious balance
In the early days of the month of June
With hundreds of priorities due too soon.
I enjoy reading papers and writing my notes.
It gives me a feeling of confidence and hope
That each of you will pause and reflect
And each of you will always select
To be open to greater diversity
As you leave this university
And step into a room of your own
And take on a challenge to show how you've grown
Into a teacher creative and true
Just like our mentor - Mr. Bob Blue.
After reading some papers I often see
A mirror reflecting back to me
Of values and thoughts I also hold dear;
Held also by others with thoughts put so clear.
To be by himself meant freedom to Fred
After 40 years living in drudgery and dread.
Humor, friendships, work and fun
Seem to be part of his usual run
Of activities in which he feels more in control
Where he sits down and when he can stroll
The streets of Willimantic, a not-so-big city.
People don't look at him with sadness and pity,
But as a person whom they often meet
Walking along as they go down Main Street.
Institutions bring destitution,
Isolation and Incarceration;
Loneliness and sadness;
Helplessness and madness.
Treat with respect
And try to effect
Positive supports for folks like Fred
To live lives of quality - enough now is said.

Step 238

A Reflection in 13 Parts

(continued)

Session Seven

Time to start another week
And new lessons for to seek
On a day that's muggy and hot
When my energy level is all but shot.
It's very hard to stay awake.
Go give (you know who) a little shake!
Jason explored some icebreaker tasks
To line up in two rows to begin with he asks.
Team one, of course, was second to none
As they followed the request to have some fun.
We brought out our objects to show, of which
I introduced to all my winged, golden snitch
And exchanged it for a compass from Al
Who said, "Don't follow me - Go follow Hal!"
Developing a community of learners was the key
By sharing something of importance for all to see.
Some people brought a similar item of fare
When they introduced their favorite pen to share.
We listened to Diane read a story so bold
Of Christy Brown's story, *My Left Foot*. He told
Of growing up with quite a large family
And finding his place in society
As a poet and writer and painter of art
And as a person whose heart has been torn apart
By others who don't think he has feelings to share
As he sees those around him join families to care
For one another - in love and connection.
Christy is lost in a world of rejection.
Attitude is such an important word
For everybody to have heard.
It means more than what you know.
It means your values begin to show.
Honoring differences - looking beyond the label;
To know that many of your students are able
To function well in a regular class
With their peers who don't have to harass
Nor bully them and call them names
But treat each other about the same.

Step 238

A Reflection in 13 Parts

(continued)

Session Eight

Mark O'Brien took center stage.
He got polio at a pretty early age.
Poet, writer, thinker and friend -
He played these roles right up to the end.
Everyone's disabled to a degree
So treat those who are as you expect to be.
He had many lessons for us to learn
If we listen well enough we can discern
That quality of life is where it's at;
In your own apartment you can have a cat.
We met Raymond, whose brother did find
A person who functioned with a different kind
Of actions, words and deeds;
Judge Wapner at 8:00 if you please.
He had his set routines each day
Like Who's On First he would often say.
I shared some notes about autism's mystery;
A little bit of its rocky history.
Bettelheim in the 50s once blamed
Refrigerator Moms were who he named.
We all have quirks and repetitive acts
Some twirl their hair - others recite unusual facts.
Make rejection work for you
Brought some humor from out of the blue.
Speaking of blue, I read your connections
To Bob Blue and his incredible reflections
About how to best help everyone
Think they're Number #1 under the sun.
A modification check list to be used by a teacher
To connect to Mary; we might begin to reach her
And provide some changes in tests and time
So students make sense of what doesn't rhyme.
ATTITUDE provided by a gentleman named Chuck,
Who says our outlook is better than luck
As we go about our work each day
That we may have important things to say
About students who function a little bit strange
Can still think of themselves in the normal range.

Step 238

A Reflection in 13 Parts

(continued)

Session Nine

Now, it's time to take a test
And you have choices - pick the best
Questions that number ten.
Be sure to come back next week again.
Kerry talked about a curious condition:
Selective Mutism and its definitions
And she responded to a parent's plea with grace
About involving this boy in her classroom space.
We watched a video about two teenage kids
Who met when both were on the skids.
They joined forces and felt as one
And worked together to get things done.
"Mighty" was the name of the clip;
These boys seemed to be joined at the hip.
We highlighted some of what's in the news;
Things we agree with and some opposing views.
Funny, shocking, interesting and sad;
Some of the stories made us real mad.
Many readers stated when they wrote to me
That this assignment really helped them to see
That often in news we overlook
People whose labels are in our book
Who live in our society
And become part of the community.

*... interdependence, a way in which each person is
important to every other person for collective
existence and thriving.*

Norma Wong

Step 238

A Reflection in 13 Parts

(continued)

Session Ten

SPED 501 enters week number four
As Claudia and Noel took the floor.
Gifted and talented was their discussion
And they sadly noted when it comes to instruction
For students who learn differently than most
Either act up in class or seem like a ghost
Who withdraw and make no waves
But stare out the window, a mind in a haze.
Something can be done -
Identification is step number one,
Then challenge all students to do their best.
Advocate for changes and don't let things rest.
Parents must fight for programs and supports
And read documents, papers and formal reports
And hear teachers and principals begin to say
Each child must progress in their own best way.
Next, Teresa brought her best friend Matt
To speak to us from where he sat
As a child identified with talents and gifts
But he had some rough times - turmoil and rifts.
It's hard to be told what your future should hold.
It's hard to be brave - it's hard to be bold
And venture off with your own song to sing
And wear your hair long and do your own thing.
People expect you to carry the flame
Of their own definition of fortune and fame.
But, what makes you happy, joyful and true
Are better questions to explore with you.
A video was presented by John
Not too short - and not too long.
About a young boy who's playing chess.
He's quite good and among the best.

Step 238

A Reflection in 13 Parts

(continued)

Session Eleven

Week four has come to an end
And week five is just 'round the bend.
Jason introduced us to Doug whose cool:
An accomplished artist who raps at school.
In his mind he has set his sights
On being a member of the Acolytes.
He has a web page with information and facts
And has been part of some opening acts
For musicians who see him with a different view
Instead of judging him by what he can't do.
Stephanie showed a film about two guys:
Two friends who talked and gave some jive
About who was better at a video game -
Seems to me they're just about the same.
Friendship evolves in its own natural way.
"Get out of our way," you might hear them say.
"We're teenagers who talk about girls and song.
We go by the names of Donnell and Bong."
The food's been good and such a nice treat
And flowers too just can't be beat.
People greet each other as friends
And learn from each other - It depends
On mutual respect, trust and sincerity
As we wrap up our class in its entirety.
We will remember this course for a time
And maybe even the instructor's rhyme
As we each continue on our way
To reflect back upon this day
And learn to include diversity, I know
Each of us will continue to grow
And develop into great teachers - I'll hear
Some of you will be teachers of the year.

Step 238

A Reflection in 13 Parts

(continued)

Session Twelve

Diane introduced us to her friend Michelle
Who, from a lawyer's perspective, did tell
About accommodations, modifications and rights
For people with disabilities who set their sights
On access, transportation and equality,
Respect, dignity and advocacy.
She shared a story from last week's news
In which a student decided to choose
To walk with pride on her graduation night
But to the principal she caused a fright.
Ralph had come to the class prepared
With a video clip of something to share
And it happened to relate to Michelle's tale.
That's how connections and learning prevail
When people are ready to share what they know
And the timing is right and they're ready to show
How single, isolated bits of news
Become enriched when together they're used.
One is good but two are better.
Now this story I'm bound to remember.

Session Thirteen

Ruth described a heartwarming tale
About Carlos, a student, whose body was frail
And he had a condition called Duchenne Dystrophy.
His life was brief, but he left quite a legacy.
His dream was to go to his senior prom;
A decision echoed by his mom.
That's when Ruth got into the picture.
She wouldn't take "No" as an answer to her
Request for funds for the ticket and ride.
He brought his sister by his side
And at the prom there was a wonderful thing
When his peers selected Carlos as their prom king.
A lesson learned from this story from Ruth:
Anything's possible when you search for the truth
Of assisting a student to reach his dreams
He enriched our lives - so it seems.

Step 239

Basic Insights

Instead of listing lesson objectives for one session of a course I had been teaching, I decided to list insights I hoped students would have upon viewing the resources I made available.

1. I wonder how the atmosphere of the learning environment changes when a positive message is shared with students when they enter your school space each day.
2. When we read from/view a new resource, I wonder what way of taking notes fits that resource in such a way that when we go back to that resource in the future, we remember important dimensions that seem right to reflect on for our current circumstances.
3. Meaningful engagement with any activity/resource allows both students and teachers to experience life more fully and feel the flow of energy and buzz in the room when such engagement occurs.
4. Mindfulness is a practice that takes time to nurture and realize that this current moment, the writing down of these words, is the most important part of the day. Now that the words are written down, I can move on to the next "most important" part of the day.
5. The same words can have different meanings in and out of the educational context.
6. It is nice to share quotes/cartoons/resources that bring a smile to ourselves and others.
7. Why can't going to school be more like going to summer camp?
8. Universal Design for Accessibility has applicability in both community environments like recreational parks as well as in school.
9. When students who receive special education supports struggle in school, they are also apt to struggle doing homework at home.
10. Study guides help students to focus on the key/main ingredients of a lesson. Students do not always distinguish between the important elements and the peripheral information in a lesson.
11. Is "grit" just another buzz word for perseverance and can we influence the amount of grit a student displays toward their investment of time in the classroom?
12. In most disciplines, you can break down an activity into more manageable steps for those of us who may be overwhelmed by the activity.

Step 239

Basic Insights

(continued)

13. Functional MRIs allow us glimpses into what areas of the brain are more active when certain processes like reading are occurring.
14. Learning about the similarities we all share in common is a much better emphasis than focusing on the differences among us.
15. Public figures can have a tremendous impact on how students with a challenge such as stuttering view their capabilities.
16. There are certain guidelines that need to be followed when having a Sign Language Interpreter in the classroom.
17. One type of universal design accommodation is to locate resources that have video captioning for students who are blind.
18. Using familiar tunes is a great way to change the lyrics to address a topic in a creative way.
19. There are many useful teaching resources located at the various State Department of Education websites throughout the country.
20. Outcomes can be achieved through different means and all students don't need to achieve that outcome the same way.
21. There are ingenious ways for individuals with disabilities to participate in sports activities.
22. Analogies are great ways to compare elements of activities in which we may participate to the supports we provide for students with disabilities.
23. We need reminders that our students do not all perceive information in the same way.
24. The competence that a student has influences the perception of others about that student's overall capabilities.
25. I enjoy sharing my writing and creative products with my students.
26. Often, assessments do not always capture what a student really knows in a content area.

Step 240

Study Guide Example – Bob Dylan

In one of my courses, I discussed the value of using study guides to alert students to the important ingredients of a lesson. One type of a study guide is a list of true and false statements. As students read through the content of the lesson, they verify if each statement is true or false. If the statement is false, they change it to a true statement. Contained in this step are the different variations of the study guide composed of content related to Bob Dylan.

	Fill in the bubble before True Statements with Green / False Statements in Red – Change False Statements to be True.
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan is dead.
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan's name at birth was Robert Zimmerman.
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan married Joan Baez.
<input type="radio"/>	Your instructor has been to 50+ Dylan shows.
<input type="radio"/>	Dylan wrote Blowin' in the Wind.
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan and Paul Simon have sung together.
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan wrote "Heart of Gold."
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan was born in Nashville, TN.
<input type="radio"/>	Dylan plays the drums at most live performances.
<input type="radio"/>	Dylan won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Step 240

Study Guide Example – Bob Dylan (continued)

	Fill in the bubble before True Statements with Green / False Statements in Red – Change False Statements to be True.
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan is dead.
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan's name at birth was Robert Zimmerman.
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan married Joan Baez.
<input type="radio"/>	Your instructor has been to 50+ Dylan shows.
<input type="radio"/>	Dylan wrote Blowin' in the Wind.
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan and Paul Simon have sung together.
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan wrote "Heart of Gold."
<input type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan was born in Nashville, TN.
<input type="radio"/>	Dylan plays the drums at most live performances.
<input type="radio"/>	Dylan won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Step 240

Study Guide Example – Bob Dylan (continued)

	All Statements Below Are True
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan is alive and well at age 79.
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan's name at birth was Robert Zimmerman.
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan married Sarah Lownds.
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Your instructor has been to 30+ Dylan shows.
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Dylan wrote Blowin' in the Wind.
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Bob Dylan and Paul Simon have sung together.
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Neil Young wrote "Heart of Gold."
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Dylan was born in Duluth MN / raised in Hibbing, MN.
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Dylan plays the harmonica / keyboards / guitar.
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Dylan won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Step 241
Tribute to ALEX TREBEK

You forgot to phr **A** se that in the form of a question!

Spel **L** ing doesn't count in Final Jeopardy.

Di **E** d on November 8, 2020 at 80

“X” - You know what that means.

T hank you, Johnny.

R eturning for a 10th time.

Sorry, you add **E** d an extra “s.”

Our champion can't **B** e caught.

Tim **E** to meet the contestants.

K en Jennings – G.O.A.T.

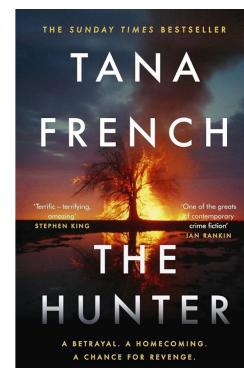
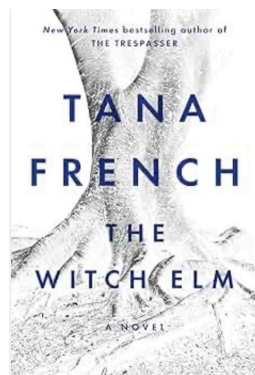
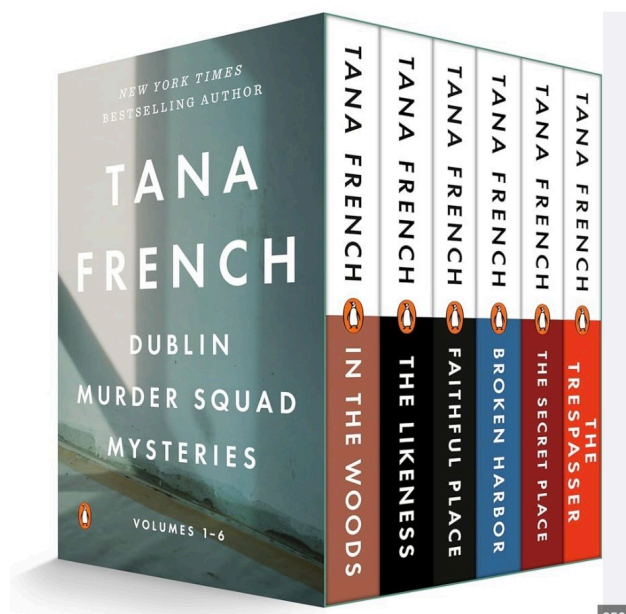
Please leave your worries at the door
Or drop them quietly on the floor.
It's time to focus on what really matters.
As your thoughts & ideas begin to gather,
Be mindful and engage in the lesson.
Welcome to a brand new session.

Step 242

***The Searcher* – Goodreads Book Review**

I submitted the following book review on the Goodreads site after listening to an audiobook of a recent Tana French novel: *The Searcher*

I chose the audiobook for this latest Tana French work and was enthusiastically satisfied with the results. Roger Clark, the narrator, was phenomenal! I have read most of the books by Tana French and would place the pace of the narrative with that of *The Witch Elm*. Some readers have commented on the slow pace of the book to their dissatisfaction. I listened to this book on the treadmill and I found the pace of 2.6 mph to be about perfect. There are elements from the book that interweave throughout each chapter, each with its own sense of beginning-middle-end: refinishing a dilapidated desk in the cottage / the chatter of the rooks in the trees on Cal's property / the songs in the pub and others sung by Cal and other characters with whom he makes an acquaintance / the path of the search both internally and externally. One of my favorite descriptions in the book, and this relates to my increasing weight gains over this pandemic, was how one character's "stomach was currently under construction." One particularly interesting exchange of dialogue had a focus on politically correct language for describing a person with a disability. As special education is my career path, I found this brief inclusion quite interesting. All in all - Tana French does not disappoint and has enriched my 15 hours of walking and I look forward to her next offering.



***Other books by Tana French
that received my strong
endorsement.***

Step 243

Anticipation: RETIREMENT

I started a notebook of resources as I advance toward retirement from my current work along my path of the perfecting teacher. I will be entering the “reflection” stage of this path and welcome the insights that will occur along that journey.

Ernie Pancsofar

D.O.R. – 8/15/21

Refreshment
Embracement
Testament
Improvement
Recommitment
Enchantment
Movement
Empowerment
Nourishment
Temperament

The interested reader is directed to a follow-up document in which I reflect on each of the elements above prior to retirement and while being a caregiver for my wife, Marsha:
On the Path of the Perfecting Caregiver

Step 244

The Covid19 Stuck-at-Home Blues

Members of my academic department wanted to share with our students our perspective of the past eight months. Each of us covered a different month and we will construct a TikTok with how we are putting those months behind us. I had July – 4 months into the pandemic. I did a 30-second parody to a Dylan tune: *Subterranean Homesick Blues*.

Is it Rolling, John?
The Covid19 Stuck-at-Home Blues
Take 51
ERNIE’S in the basement
Gradin’ his assignments.
All along the highway
Dylan isn’t gonna play.
Covid
No gig
Four months at school
Unfair, that’s not cool.
It’s Covid Kid
We are all hid.
Got to get out my door
Riding in my Forester.
Duckin’ down the alley
Lookin’ for Sally;
John comes round the bend
Look out Ma – This is ...
THE END

*When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I
am old, I admire kind people.*

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Step 245

Connection to Quantum Mechanics

In the directions for the Final Exam_ination of Content assignment in one of my courses, I asked students to connect aspects of special education to their content majors. One student, whose major is physics used quantum mechanics as his point of reference. Here are my notes to him.

Since I started my college life as a physics major, I enjoyed your treatment of this final exam_ination of content.

1. One of my favorite quotes from Niels Bohr is - *For every expert, there is an equal and opposite expert* - perhaps never actually said by Niels Bohr but attributed to him, nonetheless.
2. Chaos theory probably resembles the actual learning process when we need to make sense of unexpected phenomena in our environment every second of every day of every week for a lifetime. Everything is in flux and a true sign of emotional stability is how we function within this flux.
3. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle has relevance in the assessment process we use to determine each student's competence. Does the very act of assessing a student influence our perception of what that student has learned? Do different measures produce different results? Can we really measure what a student learns and retains by our current assessment methods?
4. Each of us is gifted and disabled at the same time; it just depends on which activity we are engaged at the time. I will not display my intellectual disability until you ask me to complete a Sunday edition crossword puzzle from the *NY Times*. If this never happens, that disability will not surface. However, if you ask me trivia questions about the works of Bob Dylan, I would probably do better than the average person. What is the worth of that knowledge? His music has enabled me to feel satisfied for hundreds of hours, yet each time I hear his music, it's like I am listening to it for the first time.
5. I had better conclude so that I can review the remaining assignments in my queue.

Step 246

Thank You Jimmy Carter

I watched a special on CNN about the relationship of Jimmy Carter's run for political office and his association with music legends of our time including Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson and the Almond Brothers. My respect and admiration for him increased from an already high place of honor.

After watching a special on CNN
About Jimmy Carter whose life of Zen
Was captured in just two hours' time
In both his deeds and verses of rhyme.

He is a hero among the human race
Who left this world a better place
Because of his values, commitment, and drive.
He helped keep our enduring truths alive.

Our society needs more people like Mr. Carter
Who lives and breathes a life of moral character.
He is a beacon and north star to guide us onward
And keep our path moving steadily forward.

His greatness is equaled by his humility
As he includes us all in his family
Of hope, love, and prosperity.
Thank you, Jimmy Carter, for your enduring legacy.

Step 247

Aosawa Murders (The)

Notable quotes from a recently read book by Riku Ondo:

There are two kinds of people in this world, I believe, those who frequent bookstores and those who do not. (p. 224)

... when an elderly person dies, a library disappears. (p. 230)

Every person spoke in the sincere belief that what they said was the absolute truth, but if one thinks about it, it's difficult to describe an actual event in words exactly as one sees it. (p. 249)

Her body retains an approximate memory of the geography that allows her to meander through the hustle and bustle like a migratory fish returning home. (p. 296)

Step 248

Improvisation

While attending a conference in Orlando in 1997, I wrote the following statements beneath the heading Improvisation:

- Do something – debrief later.
- Put yourself in uncomfortable situations and observe how you respond.
- Make a lot of mistakes quickly.
- Treat each person as if you haven't the faintest idea what to do.
- Be open to surprises!
- We are members of each other: John O'Brien and Connie Lyle O'Brien.
- Be open to paradox, chaos and uncertainty.
- Practice mindfulness – *Wherever You go – There you Are!*
- Do Your Homework – path to success – things that work.
- Read the biography of Mother Teresa, Tilda Kemplen, Saul Alinsky, Thurgood Marshall, Walt Disney, etc.
- Substitute the word "recipe" for "program" – don't follow a cookbook but understand the function of the ingredients.
- Change your mind a lot.
- Pick your battles and what you're willing to fight for.

Don't be afraid to be confused. Try to remain permanently confused. Anything is possible. Stay open, forever, so open it hurts, and then open up some more, until the day you die, world without end, amen. George Saunders

... I respond to reality in such a way that I look on existence as a great mystery and that at times, at certain moments, this mystery carries a strong charge. Tomas Tranströmer

Step 249

Upon Reading of the Death of Sir Ken Robinson

The writings and videos of Sir Ken Robinson have greatly influenced my outlook on the purpose for education at all levels: to enhance the gifts and contributions a student can make to the community and a sense of well being, both academically and within social-emotional contexts. If my own educational outcomes are any measure, I would conservatively estimate that 95% of all information to which I was exposed and tested has long since left my long term memory or is buried so deeply I have lost the directions for where to find it. I am nearing the end of my formal teaching experiences at the university trying to influence teacher candidates and seekers of other professional certificates such as school counseling, marriage and family therapy, social work and educational leadership. I tried to mirror the way I would prefer they interact with future students. In doing so, their own creative energies would treat each unique learner as if that learner had a personalized, individualized program that differed from any other learner. How would the activities/content be assessed? Simply, with another question: Do you want to go on and learn more about this subject or move on to something else? It seems so simple, yet there is a fear that if enough minutia of content is not poured into a student's brain, education has failed that student. I don't see the logic in such a position, yet I don't have the persuasive nature that Ken Robinson had when commenting on this alternative approach. He will be missed. I'm glad to have been influenced by his presence in my life.

Step 250

WATCH

While watching the UConn women's basketball game yesterday, I noticed on the back of their warm-up jerseys the following acrostic, which I thought was quite cleverly designed:

We
Are
The
CHange