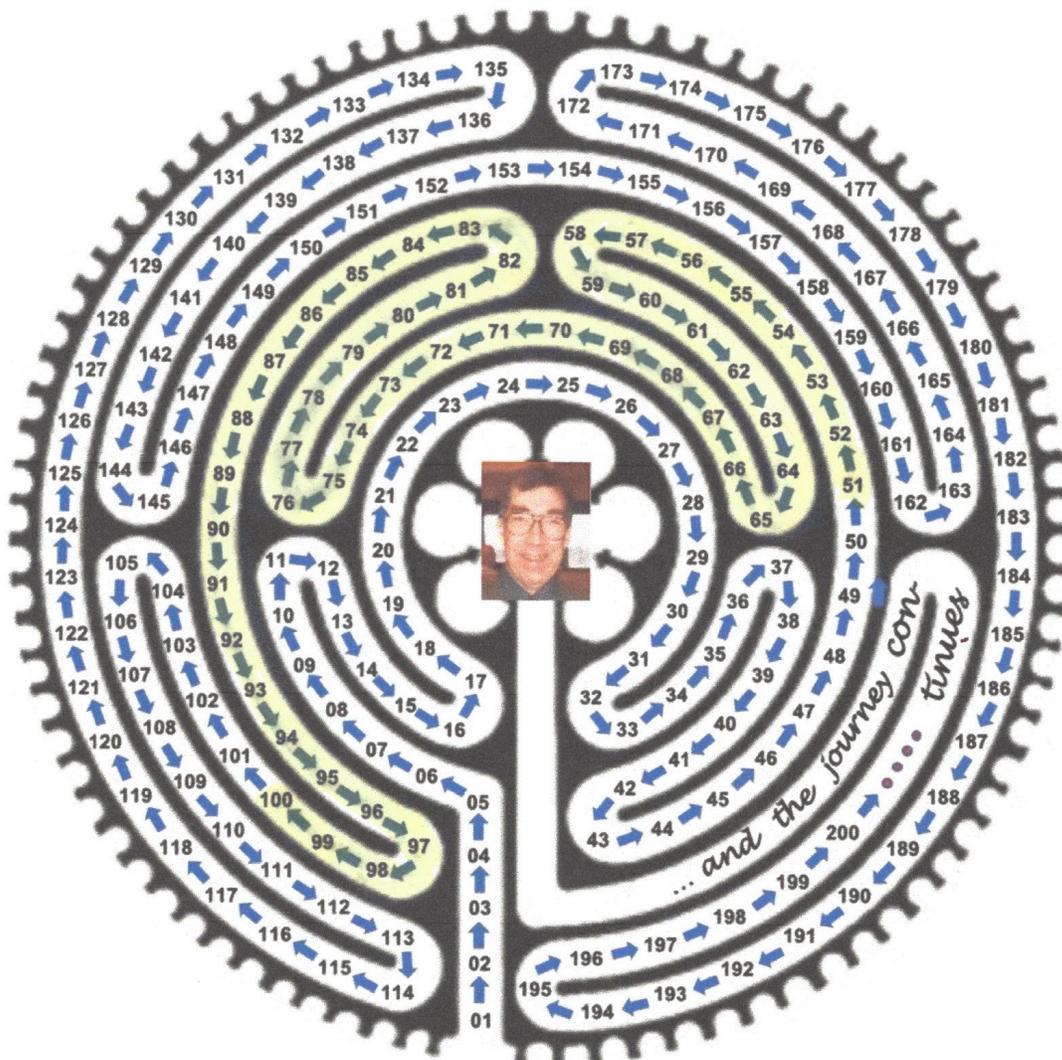


# On the Path of the Perfecting Teacher

Walking the Labyrinth  
Steps 051 - 100

Current Update: 03/10/26

Ernest L. Pancsofar



# Walking the Labyrinth

## Steps 051 - 100

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 P** ractitioner  
**A** Continual **L E** arner  
**A** Seeke **R** of Evidence-Based Practices  
**S**elf Re **F** lective  
**E** ngaging  
**C** reative  
**T** houghtful  
**E**mploys **I** nclusive Practices  
**Ki N** d  
**E**ncoura **G** ing  
  
**Cul T** urally Responsive  
**V**alues Formativ **E** Assessment  
**P A** rent Friendly  
**C** ollaborates With Peers  
**L**ives A **H** ealthy Lifestyle  
**A**sks Good Qu **E** stions  
**N**eve **R** Satisfied With What Is

# On The Path To Becoming a “Perfecting” Teacher

## Table of Contents Steps 051 - 100

<b>Step</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Step</b>	<b>Entry</b>
<b>051</b>	COMMUNITAS 25 <sup>th</sup> Year ...	<b>066</b>	I Lost My ATM and ID Cards
<b>052</b>	<i>Beyond the Miracle Worker</i>	<b>067</b>	Choices: Opportunities ...
<b>053</b>	Smorgasbord	<b>068</b>	MOTHER WIT
<b>054</b>	Books That Help Define ...	<b>069</b>	Moving On
<b>055</b>	DISABILITIES/ABILITIES PLUS	<b>070</b>	Community of Learners (A)
<b>056</b>	In Search of Community	<b>071</b>	PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION
<b>057</b>	Teaching and Learning	<b>072</b>	Anonymous Support Groups
<b>058</b>	Some Truths ... Creative ...	<b>073</b>	Ode to a Circle of Friends
<b>059</b>	Opening Comments	<b>074</b>	Commitments Pledge
<b>060</b>	PERSPECTIVE 2025 Super Bowl	<b>075</b>	Changin’ Truths (The)
<b>061</b>	ATTITUDE	<b>076</b>	CAPABLE Process (The)
<b>062</b>	There’s a Spirit in the Air	<b>077</b>	If Bob Dylan Was a Student ...
<b>063</b>	PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS	<b>078</b>	Please Raise Your Hand If ...
<b>064</b>	Being the Best	<b>079</b>	ERNIE PANCSOFAR
<b>065</b>	You Don’t Have a Name Tag!	<b>080</b>	Profile of Two People (A)

## On The Path To Becoming a “Perfecting” Teacher

### Table of Contents Steps 051 - 100 (continued)

<b>Step</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Step</b>	<b>Entry</b>
<b>081</b>	Hope-Celebrate-Dream	<b>091</b>	ABILITIES FOCUS
<b>082</b>	Notes To My Students ...	<b>092</b>	I’ve Been Dreaming
<b>083</b>	MONTICELLO	<b>093</b>	Why People Come to College
<b>084</b>	Mistakes	<b>094</b>	My Thoughts Early One ...
<b>085</b>	There is No Answer	<b>095</b>	HOPE Brings Forth PEACE
<b>086</b>	Profiles in “P” and “S”	<b>096</b>	Thoughts on Teaching ...
<b>087</b>	State-of-the-Art ...	<b>097</b>	PLAYING FOR CHANGE
<b>088</b>	Ruth’s Advocacy	<b>098</b>	The 10% Solution
<b>089</b>	There Are No Guarantees	<b>099</b>	CHOICE
<b>090</b>	Writing on the Wall (The)	<b>100</b>	Instructor’s Reflection On ...

## Step 051

### COMMUNITAS – 25<sup>th</sup> Year Celebration

During the 25<sup>th</sup> year celebration of Communitas, Inc., I developed this acrostic summary of the key elements from the day that held meaning for me. This has become a choice of summarizing an event or activity as you will find numerous examples among these steps.

**C**elebration

**O**ne Candle Power

**M**emories

Co **M**itments

**M** **U**sic

Pla **N**ts

**C** **I**rcles

**S** **T**ories

**A**lliances

**S**olidarity

Po **E** try

Hi **S** tory

**T**rust

## **Step 052**

### ***Beyond the Miracle Worker***

I read a biography of Anne Sullivan by Kim Nielsen. I am intrigued by Anne Sullivan's relationship with Helen Keller and I think she has been shortchanged and mythologized by snippets of information I know about her, but I have never gone any deeper in understanding their relationship. This book accomplished this investigation. One quote exemplifies the author's perceptiveness as she states: *Her [Anne Sullivan] life story, particularly when placed alongside that of Keller, reminds us of the diversity of disability experiences historically and today – and of the multiple ways that we, as individuals, as institutions, and as a country, contribute to the disabled nature of physical and mental impairments.* (p. xi).

## **Step 053**

### **Smorgasbord**

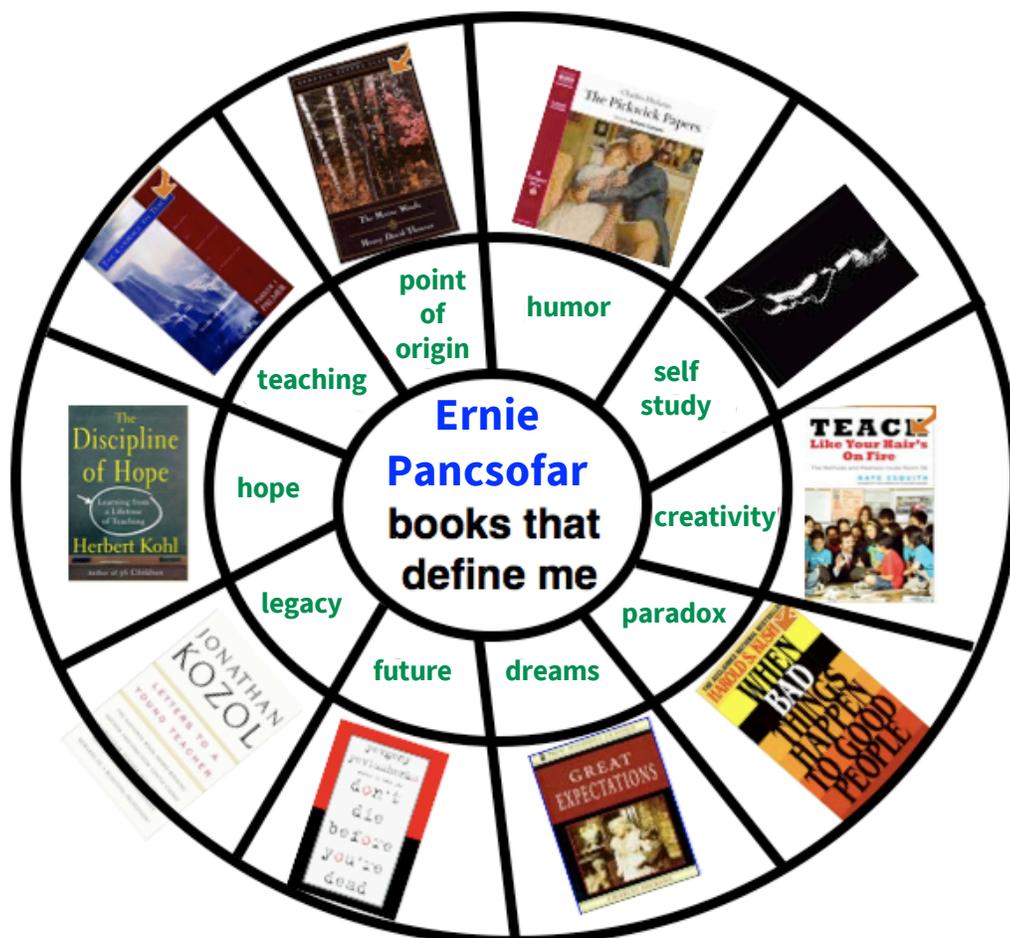
On my walk to class one day, an image came to me of how I arrange many of the resources in my courses. I offer a smorgasbord of resources to meet the current interests/needs of students who are entering the course with different degrees of experiences regarding the field of special education. For example, I may have read an article about inclusion from an engineering design point of view. This article may be of more interest to the technology and engineering education students. Or, a paraprofessional who currently works with a student on the autism spectrum may find an article more appealing on the evidence-based practices associated with the instruction for students identified on the autism spectrum.

***Welcome to the smorgasbord.  
Come and grab a plate  
'Cause what you take will help  
Decide your future professional fate.***

## Step 054

### Books That Help Define Who I Am

As I shared a concentric circles method of constructing a personal profile, a student in one of my courses used this type of visual organizer to develop a personalized profile using books she had read that helped define who she is. I took this lead and replicated her idea by including the following books (using the book jackets) as the visuals that connect to aspects of my own life.



**Creativity:** *Teach Like Your Hair's On Fire* by Rafe Esquith

**Paradox:** *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Rabbi Kushner

**Dreams:** *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens

**Future:** *Don't Die Before You're Dead* by Yevgeny Yevtushenko

**Legacy:** *Letters to a Young Teacher* by Jonathan Kozol

**Hope:** *The Dignity of Hope* by Herbert Kohl

**Teaching:** *The Courage to Teach* by Parker Palmer

**Point of Origin:** *The Maine Woods* by Henry David Thoreau

**Humor:** *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens

**Self-Study:** *The Encyclopedia of Bob Dylan* by Michael Gray

## Step 055

### DISABILITIES / ABILITIES PLUS

I was asked to speak to a group of high school juniors who were interested in becoming teachers and my role was to speak to them about working with students who have disabilities. I began my presentation with the following acrostic visual of how many teachers view students by associating those students by their label.

**Label D and set apart**

**D I srespected**

**S eparate from my peers**

**Limited A ccessibility**

**B ullied for being different**

**I can't do that!**

**L ow expectations**

**Def I ciencies emphasized**

**T old what is wrong with me**

**I solated in the community**

**R E garded as less capable than others**

**S elf-esteem is quite low**

## Step 055

### DISABILITIES / ABILITIES PLUS

(continued)

I then emphasized that our perception of each student can change significantly when we view students as individuals first who also live with a disability, but they share more in common with their peers than they do differences. I presented a different acrostic visual below:

There's **A**rt in each of us.

La **B**els of RESPECT

Focus on our **I**nterests

Emp **L**oyment niche

Recogn **I**tion

**T**alents highlighted

**I**t's a puzzle to me!

**E**ntire school effort

Mistake **S**are OK

It's all about **P**erspective.

**L**ocating our strengths

**O**ur passions and goals

Dream **S**

## Step 056

### In Search of Community

This is one of my favorite poems and an interesting story relates to its origin. I was at a conference in West Virginia when I asked if there was anyone in the audience of about 150 people who could draw an object on a transparency during the next five minutes. One woman raised her hand and I gave her some transparency markers and asked her to draw a wishing well. After a few minutes she drew a great wishing well and I read my poem after which I placed her drawing on the overhead projector. Her drawing had enriched my presentation. I built this lesson into my presentation.

*The community is composed of people with a great deal of talent who are ready to support us in our work, but we need to ask! Her skills as an artist were not made known to the entire community of conference participants until I made my request. She offered her gift willingly and also enriched my poem through the fruits of her talents*

**Where is community?** I asked.

Is it future? Is it past?

**Where is community?** came the reply –

It is ground. It is sky.

**What is community?** I then wondered.

Is it up? Is it under?

**What is community?** I heard it cry.

It is presence. It can never die.

**How is community?** I still proposed.

Is it poetry? Is it prose?

**How is community?** came back my quest.

It is here – a welcome guest.

**Why is community?** again, I sighed.

**Why is community?** it still replied.

The silence is broken by the sound of a bell.

Community echoes at the bottom of your well.



## Step 057

### Teaching and Learning

I felt a need to share with my students the contradictions that exist in the words used in education, from my personal point of view. A colleague and I read this poem at a Teacher Love Fest to honor teachers during the first week of May a few years ago.

Teaching is not about what is taught.  
Teaching is always about what is sought.  
Teaching is more about finding our path.  
Teaching is not only about reading and math.

Learning is not about what is learned.  
Learning is more about what is yearned.  
Learning is about understanding oneself.  
Learning is taking more books from the shelf.

Testing is not about what's on the test.  
Testing is not about knowing who's best.  
Testing just makes us compete for the prize.  
Testing just brings on a great, big demise.

Education is not about who is educated.  
Education is more about who is dedicated.  
Education is about building community.  
Education is about individuality.

Grades are not about what is graded.  
Grades are a curse that need to be faded.  
Grades cause harm and move us apart.  
Grades exist for only the smart.

Success is not about who can succeed.  
Success is for all of the students in need.  
Success is about finding our own abilities.  
Success is for ending all hostilities.

Achievement is not about who can achieve.  
Achievement brings promise and cannot deceive.  
Achievement occurs when all can advance.  
Achievement brings honor and joy to enhance.

Students are teachers and learners too.  
Their paths connect each day that they do  
Believe that creativity and learning can be fun  
After each school day's work is said to be done.

## **Step 058**

### **Some Truths I Think I Know About the Creative Process**

The following list of 10 “Truths” originated as I taught a summer course at CCSU that centered on enhancing the creativity of general educators to expand their instructional effectiveness with more challenging learners.

- 1) Creativity is not something you automatically get when you want it. Creativity must be learned and practiced and practiced some more.
- 2) Most of us have lost the ability to see alternative responses to a question. Many schools have a subtle way of suppressing the creative spirit of children.
- 3) Creativity is surrounded by the Six Ps: Personality, Perseverance, Persistence, Perspective, Purpose, Passion, and Paradox. (Oops! I guess there are now seven.)
- 4) The best time to change is when you don't have to; when there is no crisis. There is a lot of stress and negative energy when we deal with challenges in times of crisis.
- 5) There is always a unique “wisdom” in any gathering of people that cannot be duplicated in any other group. Each group will develop options unheard of by another group.
- 6) The process of decision-making is ultimately more important than getting the right answer. There is no right answer, just a best guess.
- 7) The more we get to know about our team and circle members and their likes and dislikes, talents, skills, and dreams, the better we are at working together through some tough decisions and circumstances.
- 8) The ultimate desire we have for the individuals we support is our commitment to assist each one toward an enhanced quality of life, as that person defines it.
- 9) Brainstorming is the key to generating novel and creative ideas. The facilitator's role is crucial in maintaining a positive atmosphere and nonjudgmental reaction to all suggestions and ideas. Remember, these ideas are not what the team will do, but a list from which team members can develop workable considerations.
- 10) There will always be a currently difficult challenge to address. The name just changes!

## Step 059

### Opening Comments

In one of my courses, this poem was part of the opening session to alert students to an overall sense of values that would permeate each session.

You will never learn all there is to know  
in this course you are about to enter - - -

You will learn some core values and truths  
that will surely help you center - - -

Yourself and hear that distant, inner voice  
To begin that journey and you have a choice - - -

To become fully engaged in the learning process,  
You have to allow yourself full access - - -

To the wisdom you hear, and see and think  
And take that glass – have a long drink - - -

Because it's never empty and it's never quite full;  
You just have to know the pull - - -

Of contradictions, paradox and metaphor learning  
That grip you hard and leave you yearning - - -

For self-exploration, mindfulness and fun;  
Your journey in this course has just begun - - -

To unfold into a path that knows no end,  
A labyrinth of sorts that is going to send - - -

You to depths unplanned and heights so high  
To answers to who, what, where, how and why.

## Step 060

### Perspective: 2015 Super Bowl

In the 2015 Super Bowl the New England Patriots beat the Seattle Sea Hawks 28 – 24. I composed the following visual organizer to capture the different perspectives fans from each team might display based on about 15 seconds that occurred during the end of the game.

<b>P</b> atriots		<b>P</b> erhaps the
win th <b>E</b>		<b>S</b> <b>E</b> a Hawk
<b>S</b> upe <b>R</b> Bowl		backe <b>R</b> s
with <b>S</b> econds remaining.		<b>S</b> earch for a
An interce <b>P</b> tion		<b>P</b> ossible
chang <b>E</b> d the	<b>VS.</b>	r <b>E</b> ason for the
<b>C</b> ourse of		<b>C</b> oach's call that
<b>T</b> he game		resul <b>T</b> ed in the
<b>I</b> n the final		<b>I</b> nterception with
dri <b>V</b> e.		just over fi <b>V</b> ve seconds
The Butl <b>E</b> r did it!		<b>I</b> <b>E</b> ft in the game!

## Step 061

### ATTITUDE

This visual organizer combines the Scrabble letters, alliteration and the message that attitude contributes greatly to a teachers' beliefs that they are capable of supporting and interacting successfully with students who have disabilities. Sometimes, it's more a matter of unlearning the stereotypes that are associated with the labels that many students have.

A <sub>1</sub>	Always Aim to Achieve Additional Accomplishments.
T <sub>1</sub>	Take Time To Teach Tolerance by working in Teams Together.
T <sub>1</sub>	Teaching Takes Tact and Technique To Tackle your Truths.
I <sub>1</sub>	Initial Insights Involve an Investment toward Instilling Individuality.
T <sub>1</sub>	Triumph Toward Tackling Tough & Tenacious Teenagers.
U <sub>1</sub>	Understand Uniqueness Under Uncomfortable Uncertainties.
D <sub>2</sub>	Demand Diligence During Daily Deliberations.
E <sub>1</sub>	Encourage & Engage Everyone Equally.

## Step 062

### There's a Spirit in the Air

After one especially gratifying teaching experience, I wrote the following reflection to share with the students who just completed the course.

There's a spirit in the air  
Of warmth, fun and care  
Where students meet  
To come and greet  
At the start of day  
With lots and lots to say:  
**It warms my heart to see.**

There's a spirit in the air  
As each one takes a chair  
And sits upon the seat  
Eager to repeat  
A lesson from their notes,  
A song, a poem, some quotes  
**And share their time with me.**

There's a spirit in the air.  
Of this we are aware.  
It's in the food we bring.  
It's in the songs we sing.  
I feel it in the room.  
It lifts away the gloom.  
**A teacher we each will be.**

There's a spirit in the air.  
It hovers 'bout our hair.  
It smiles from up above.  
It showers us with love.  
I feel its glow  
Both high and low  
**In everyone I see.**

There's a spirit in the air.  
It feels ex-tra-or-di-naire.  
It brings us rays of HOPE  
Like strands of a fine rope.  
It brings us all together  
In sunny and stormy weather  
**To build com-mun-i-ty**

## Step 063

### PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS

If a teacher reads a good article and wants to share it with colleagues, I advise them not to just make a copy and put it in someone's mailbox. They won't read it! But, if you summarize the main points using an Acrostic Organizer, the reader can see, at a glance, the main elements from the article and talk with you about areas of mutual interest.

CLINICAL REPORT

#### Promoting the Participation of Children With Disabilities in Sports, Recreation, and Physical Activities

**S** P ecial Olympics Research  
**I** n **A** ctivity Consequences  
**T** he **R** moregulation  
"I Can Do **A** t **T** itude"  
**D** efining Participation  
**C** ost of Specialized Equipment  
**F** lex **I** bility  
**H** ealth **S** u **P** ervision Visits  
**A** ttitudinal Barriers  
**F** unc **T** ional Limitations  
**R** isk of Injury Probability  
Negative **S** o **C** ietal Stereotypes  
Misco **N** ceptions

**I** **D** EA  
Sectio **N** 504  
**S** afety Precautions  
**P** ediatricians  
Adv **O** cacy  
Collabo **R** ation  
Web si **T** es  
Reference **S**

## Step 064

### Being the Best

During one of my classes I decided to try my hand at a children's song inspired by the many songs developed by Bob Blue. I am still in search of a tune for these lyrics and, perhaps, a reader of this blog entry might have just the perfect tune in mind.

There will always be someone better than you.  
It doesn't mean not to try your best.  
There will always be someone better than you.  
You can be different than all the rest.

Champions will not be champions forever.  
A new one takes their place.  
Champions will not be champions forever.  
Savor the victory in your race.

Everyone makes mistakes each day.  
Pick yourself up each time you fall.  
Everyone makes mistakes each day.  
Sometimes even my verses don't rhyme.

Being different is really OK,  
Even when we want to be normal.  
Being different is really OK,  
Like a dog, a cat or even a gerbil.

No one looks the same as you.  
You're as different as different can be.  
No one looks the same as you.  
You are you - - - and I am me.

Be the best that you can be  
And things will turn out in the end.  
Be the best that you can be  
And sing this song once again.



## Step 066

### I Lost My ATM and ID Cards

Have you ever lost your wallet or purse? After one such occasion, I wrote the following poem commenting on this occurrence.

It's been about a week or two  
This tale that I will tell to you.  
I lost my ATM and ID Cards  
To find them I did try real hard.  
I searched my car and nearby ground  
And waited for Monday to come around.  
It might have been just a quirk  
If I left them both at work.  
On Monday, I searched and searched some more  
But they weren't on my desk and they weren't on the floor.  
I called the Police Station and asked a man there  
If my cards were sent into their care.  
"No," he said. "They are not here today.  
We would have called you any way."  
I stayed calm, as best I could  
And looked at things from where I stood.  
I retraced my steps to where I'd been  
Searched more places all over again.  
My typical life went on day after day  
Until Dunkin' Donuts I stopped along the way  
To the counter for coffee to hear the worker I met say  
"Did you get your ID back?" she said in a quizzical way.  
"You left it in here just last week.  
My manager kept it, if that's what you seek!"  
They were not stolen or lost in a crack  
Of my sofa or in the chair in back.  
I had left them on the counter one day  
Having a snack as I was on my way.  
The lesson I learned to put in this rhyme  
Is to stay calm and collected – well most of the time.  
The moral of this story my friend  
Is things will turn out OK in the end.

## Step 067

### Choices: Opportunities and Experiences

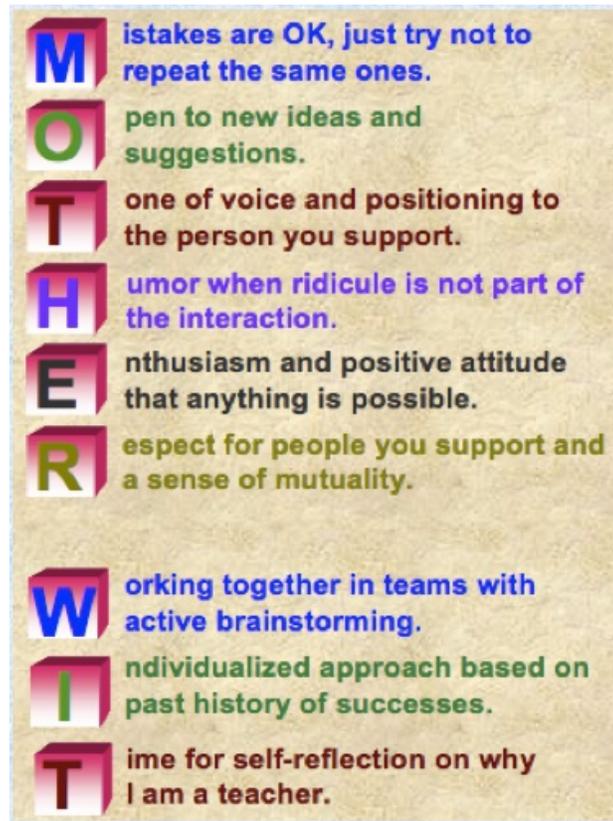
I am a firm believer in offering choices to students in my courses just as I want them to offer choices to their own students. Below is a diagram of several paths a student could take to complete the work from one session's assignments. Notice there are 9 overall choices, but each student must start with circle 1 and proceed down his/her own path toward the completion of four activities.



## Step 068

### MOTHER WIT

Sometimes, the informal way in which we interact with students has no official name or title but is just the mother/father wit or uncle/aunt wit that we bring to our work based on our values and personality.



#### **An Example of Mother Wit Provided to Me at an In-Service Training**

I am continually impressed with the expertise from unique sources when I am discussing creative strategies to current challenges. On one such occasion I asked participants if they had used some strategies in their out-of-work life based on their own ideas. In response to this request, Rosita related that she became upset upon constantly reminding her son not to leave his leather bomber jacket in the middle of the living room floor. She felt she was nagging him without getting any results. Finally, one day she asked her son to look through the clothes on the couch because she was going to Goodwill to donate a bunch of clothes that day. He went through the pile and found his bomber jacket. “Mom, you almost took my bomber jacket to Good Will!” His mom pleaded ignorance and said she wouldn't do it again. He felt he couldn't trust his mom not to make the mistake again and he didn't leave his jacket in the middle of the floor any more

## Step 069

### Moving On

I shared this poem with students in my class to let them know how pleased I was to be their guide in learning the content of this course. My work with them brought out the creativity in me just as I wanted them to be creative in how they approached their future work as teachers.

Before I teach this course again  
I like to look at where I've just been.  
Overall, I'm quite satisfied and clear  
About what I included in this course last year.  
However, there is always that nagging doubt  
That hides in the background and lurks about.  
Is "quite satisfied" what I want to feel  
Or is there another way that would be more real?  
What pleases one student another finds fault;  
One student likes pepper the other more salt.  
What I come to realize each semester is this:  
The changes I make are both a hit and a miss.  
But change I must for my own piece of mind.  
Every semester is one of a kind!  
The class is my outlet for creativity and more.  
I wonder next week what there will be in store  
And the feedback I receive keeps me honest and true;  
I'm on the right track - this class is for you!

## Step 070

### A Community of Learners

At times, I have sensed that a bond has formed among students in the class and on one such occasion, I brought this feeling to my students' attention in the following manner:

Thirty people were enrolled  
in this winter session;  
Most were strangers  
to special education.  
Thirty friends leave  
on Wednesday night  
With friends on the left  
and friends on the right.

You are the exceptional ones  
each night they were told.  
Teach to be ethical  
and teach to be bold.  
Teach to be creative,  
passionate and true.  
Teach like our mentor  
whose name is Bob Blue.

Five hours a night  
can be a very long time,  
But we got into some rhythm  
and even some rhyme.  
We listened to music  
and looked at some slides  
And always had food  
to fill up our insides.

John and Ernie  
facilitated the learning  
But the real work happened  
from each person's yearning  
To discover some strategies -  
perhaps a teaching tip  
To make it worthwhile  
to endure such a long trip.

Once John made a comment  
about a class to a friend  
About how much talent  
was in the course that did end.  
*Every group has talent  
if you know where to look,*  
Said Pat as he glanced up  
from reading his book.

I guess our job is to  
create such a stage  
Upon which gifts are shared  
as we engage  
In meaningful searches  
for small and large truths  
In our reading and projects  
and meetings in groups

And so - - attitudes need  
latitude which bring gratitude  
And education takes  
dedication toward integration.  
Labels can be fables  
that don't really enable  
Learners to find their gifts to share  
with everyone who is there.

## Step 071

### PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION CONFERENCE

After attending the New England Philosophy of Education Conference in 2014, I summarized my learning/insights with this acrostic organizer and shared it with committee members and my students.



## **Step 072**

### **Anonymous Support Groups**

As I opened up the newspaper one Sunday morning on a consulting trip and I noticed:

**Incest Survivors Anonymous**

**Messies Anonymous**

**Overeaters Anonymous**

**Nicotine Anonymous**

I kept on skimming the page and also found:

**Narcotics Anonymous**

**Cocaine Anonymous**

**Co-Dependents Anonymous**

**Gamblers Anonymous**

Then I wondered, Why not:

**Anonymous Anonymous**

## Step 073

### Ode to a Circle of Friends

I had the honor of being a member of a circle of support for Raymond “Todd” Kilroy at the time of his bout with cancer. I’m not sure this poem does justice to the sights and sounds surrounding that event. I believe I learned some important lessons that have influenced me greatly. I continue to advance toward my own inevitable encounter with the dying process with a keener perspective and peace of mind. Todd was an influential self-advocate in the disability rights community as a person living with cerebral palsy.

Bird on the feeder and squirrel in the air  
Friends stand around to watch the big fanfare.

A body dying - a soul rising  
Bonding, tears - embracing all.

Pain, pain and painful sounds  
Can’t do more in my morphine rounds.

Thinking often of how you are -  
As you wonder on that star;

Waiting for what’s in store for you -  
After this earthly life is through.

I’ve been to Pittsburgh. I’ve been to Maine.  
You’ve been to hell and back and living through the pain.

Dry lips, crusted tongue,  
Vaseline, suctioning on the run.

Residual and output are words I often hear  
Jevity? I’ll take that for \$800 Alex, my dear.

Oxygen tube running in your nose;  
Awake, asleep, and off you doze.

Classical music - Vivaldi I hear  
"What’s that, Pat? You want opera near."

Jokes, pain, music, and talk  
Beethoven, Vivaldi, Mozart, and Bach.

The words will come and the tears will flow.  
We make our peace; Todd surely knows.

"How long’s that breath been?" A voice calls out  
"It’s 6 times per minute and rattles about."

The circle of support has rallied to the call.  
Pat has the schedule taped up on the wall.

## Step 073

### Ode to a Circle of Friends

(continued)

"What color's that ceiling?" we ask Sarah's friend, Chris.  
"Is it green, yellow, limon or the color of bliss?"

The nurses are grand. The nurses are great.  
The nurses all know that Todd takes the cake.

The atmosphere here is good to behold.  
It's the best in Connecticut Joyce has been told.

There's a rattle I hear, a long, drawn-out sigh.  
When will the next one come from on high?

Todd does it his way and there's no telling why.  
He's been living that way since he was just five.

Maybe I'll do it. Maybe I'll wait.  
Just do it soon 'cause maybe's too late.

I want suction. I want love.  
I want a touch without a rubber glove.

It's cold in the room. Todd's warm to the touch.  
Put on a coat, mittens, a scarf, gloves and such.

Different reactions, from people who come near.  
Some bring sadness and some bring good cheer.

We all have our needs, each and every one;  
But Todd's needs come first, he's the one on the run.

He's not running for Congress, nor running a race.  
He's running to heaven with a smile of his face.

There's peace in his soul. There's joy in his heart.  
There are tears in our eyes as we watch him depart.

Maybe it sounds a little bit odd  
But, no one on earth has the spirit of Todd.

He brings friends together, they're all pretty handy  
From Columbia, Manchester, Bristol, and Granby.

To be continued ... This isn't the end.  
We'll all be together when the circle meets again.

## Step 074

### Commitments Pledge

At the conclusion of some of my courses I request students to sign a Commitments Pledge and I let them know I will not follow up to see if they have kept their commitments. I then share 25 possible commitments that evolved from the recently completed course. An example of a commitment might be – *I will discover an out-of-class interest of a student and build that interest into an academic content area in which the student currently struggles.*

Commitments Pledge
<p>Because I am a lifelong learner and realize that learning requires commitments to practice recently acquired skills, I agree to continue my exploration of resources that lead to a more inclusive classroom for students of all abilities.</p>
<p>By signing my name below and finding two witnesses, I am agreeing to further my education for no points because I realize that there are no points awarded for our ongoing professional development.</p>
<p>Therefore, in my capacity to be a creative teacher, I will endeavor to challenge my students with multiple paths to achieving anticipated outcomes. I will better understand each student's learning styles and match, as closely as possible, ways in which each student can demonstrate their competencies.</p>
<p>I will reflect on my teaching methods and content on a regular basis and seek feedback and input from students and parents about the way in which each student thrives within an optimum learning environment. I can set the tone for a positive experience for each student.</p>
<p>I will share my knowledge with my peers and become part of a learning community that strives to look at challenges from different angles and perspectives.</p>
<p>_____</p> <p>Your signature here</p>
<p>_____</p> <p>Witness One</p>
<p>_____</p> <p>Witness Two</p>

## Step 075

### The Changin' Truths

I have written several sets of lyrics to some Bob Dylan tunes over the years. One of my favorites is *The Changin' Truths*.

Come gather round people and I'll sing you a tale.  
I'll sing you this song and I'll send it e-mail.  
It's a song about learning, teaching and fun.  
It's a song that continues and never is done.  
'Cause you better start lookin' & searchin' some more  
For the truths - - - they are a changin'.

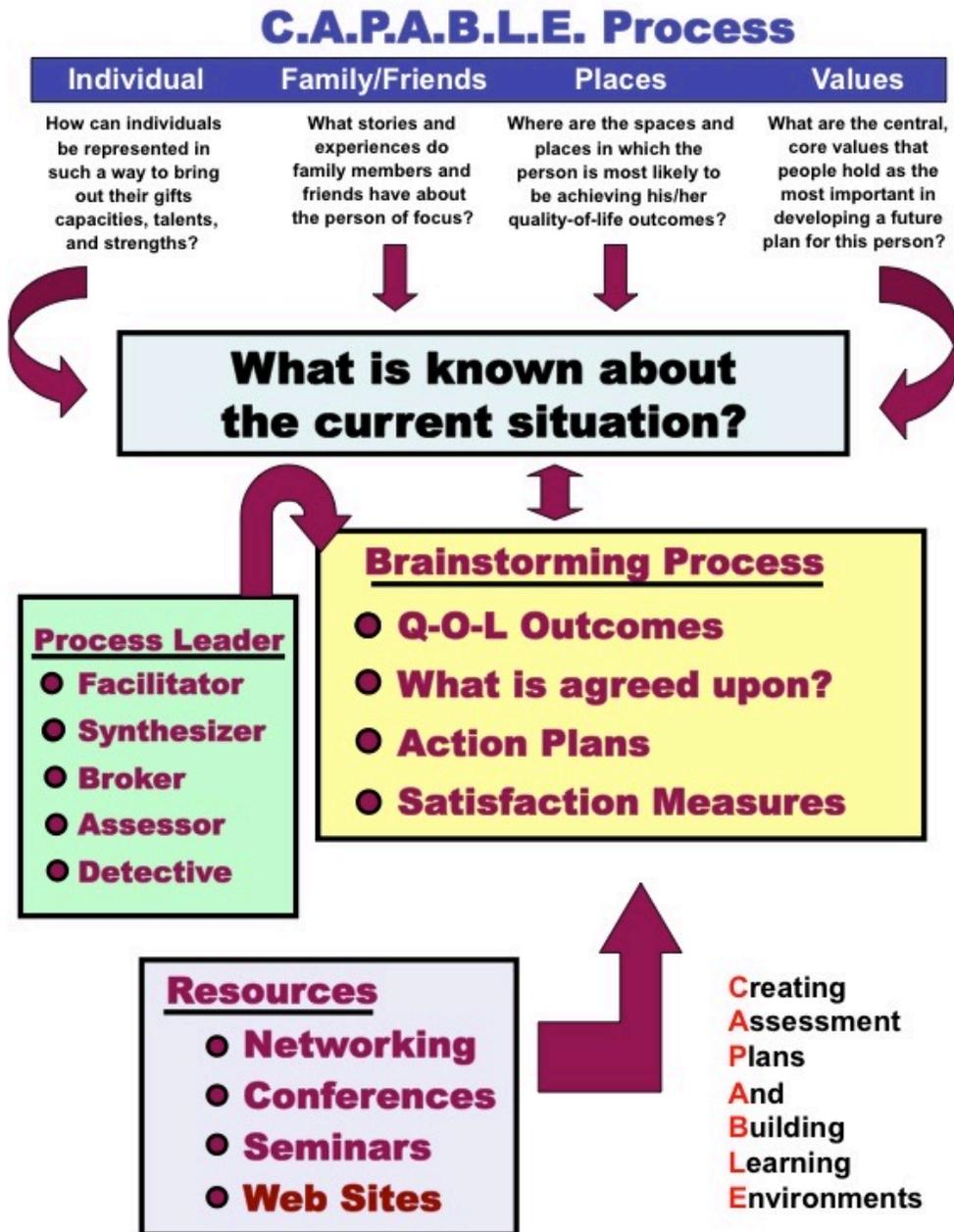
We're talkin' 'bout people with labels and names.  
Sometimes we're different & sometimes we're the same.  
We all have gifts and talents and skills.  
We all have minds and souls and wills.  
So look all around you and wonder in awe  
For the truths - - - they are a changin'.

Come teachers and students and everyone here.  
Come from your schools and gather all near  
And celebrate our unique diversity  
And welcome us all into your community.  
'Cause we all have ambitions and goals and dreams  
For the truths - - - they are a changin'.

## Step 076

### The CAPABLE Process

A colleague (Dan Steere) and I developed this graphic called the CAPABLE process to describe the decision making flow of activities for assisting a student to make the transition from school to post-school settings. I wanted a positive sounding acronym that emphasized the positive outcomes expected in this process. This diagram helps to solidify this focus as I share it with teams with whom I interact.



## **Step 077**

### **If Bob Dylan Was a Student in Your Classroom**

While attending the annual conference of the ARC/US, I spotted a postcard with a picture of Bob Dylan taken in 1962 in NYC. I composed the following poem and sent it to a friend who had recently sent me some Dylan CDs .

While in Boston at the ARC's national conference  
I picked out this postcard of a man of great prominence  
Who aspired to be a university professor \*  
But flunked the test created by an assessor  
Who said that he mumbled and jumbled and made no sense  
And would be a man of no great consequence.

How many Dylans are in our schools  
Who don't fit in and break all the rules?  
What labels do we apply  
To the sadness in his eyes?  
LD and ID are readily recorded  
And let's throw in behaviorally disordered!

The times they are a changin' each and every day  
I'm glad this "gifted" person happened upon my way.

\* To my knowledge, Dylan never aspired to be a university professor,  
but it makes good copy!

## **Step 078**

### **Please Raise Your Hand If ...**

After missing a class due to a medical emergency, this was the visual that I shared with students upon returning the following week.

### **PLEASE RAISE YOUR HAND IF ...**

- You have kicked a stone.**
- You have heard of the Rolling Stones.**
- You like Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone"**
- You know someone whose name is Stone**
- You have ever passed a kidney stone**

## Step 079

### ERNIE PANCSOFAR

Along with my official name and affiliation, this Name Acrostic is on my office door at CCSU.

**T**E am **P**layer  
**R**esponsible  
Depen**N**dable  
Av**I**d Red Sox Fan  
Cr**E**ative Teacher

**P**oppy  
**F**A culty Senator  
Husba**N**d  
**C**onscientious  
**S**ong Parodies  
**B**O rn in Maine  
**F**ather of Two Daughters  
**A**crostic Solver  
**R**eader of Good Novels

## Step 080

### A Profile of Two People

I address my former self in this brief set of verses and wonder if these two versions of “who I am” would recognize each other.



Who are these men who share  
the same name  
Separated by 40 years of  
experience?  
Does the younger man know  
what would be in store  
Or is their meeting just some  
coincidence?

Looking back or looking ahead,  
in the end does it really matter?  
You are who you are  
and I am who I am;  
Whether I be the younger  
or the latter.



## Step 081

### Hope – Celebrate – Dream

I had some postcards with the words hope – celebrate – dream and decided to write a resolution for the new year below:



I **hope** that I am able to have good sense this year  
For working and for playing and having some good cheer.

I **celebrate** the chance to live free of cancer's reins  
And spend some time thinking what of my life remains.

I **dream** of solving challenges as they may appear  
And have a sense of satisfaction at the end of this new year.

I **hope** that those around me enjoy each other's time  
And have opportunities to compose their own verses of rhyme.

I **celebrate** the sense of peace I feel deep down inside  
And keep in good health enough to enjoy life's unpredictable ride.

I **dream** of times when everyone will sit and share common space  
And be content with where they're at instead another distant place.

On this day I **hope, celebrate** and **dream**;  
Together, these three words from a dynamic team.

## **Step 082**

### **Notes to My Student at No Specific Time**

Periodically, I compose notes to my students in verse form. Here is a sample from a Monday night class.

In order to get better at what you do,  
Discomfort and doubt will follow you  
Into each experience – into each class  
And into every job in which you will pass.

If you are feeling a little unease,  
Welcome to the club, but please  
Don't give up – go with the flow;  
You'll be surprised at what you know.

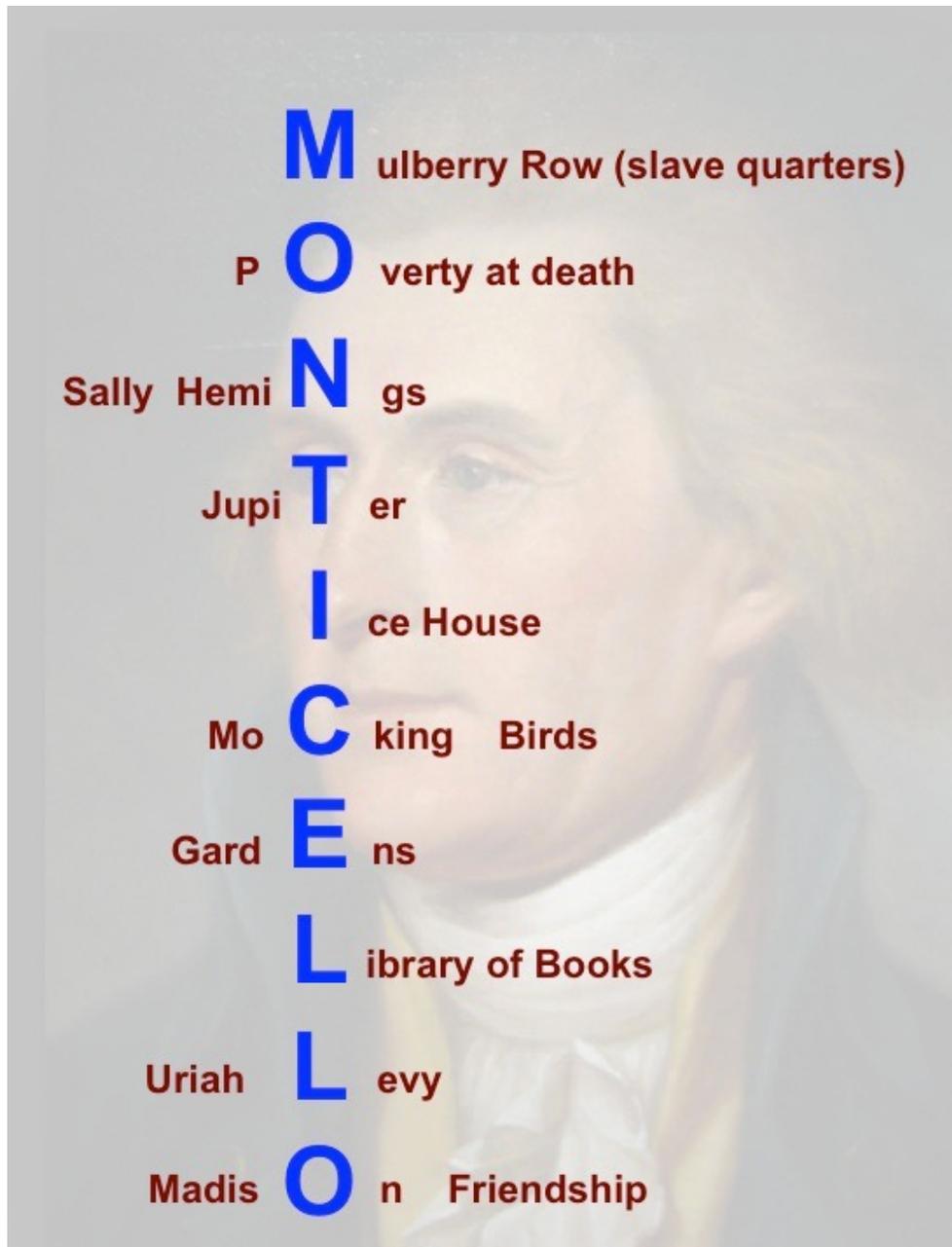
There are supports and talents available here  
To help make the muddy a little more clear.  
Already, the unexpected happened to me  
Someone brought me a cup of coffee!

So, bear with me as I plod on anew  
And before you know it, after a few  
weeks go by – you'll see the light  
As we meet once again on a Monday night.

## Step 083

### MONTICELLO

During the summer of 2013, my wife and I toured Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson. When I returned home, I wanted to capture some of the learning that occurred for me upon that visit and I composed the acrostic organizer below. I was proud of this representation of my visit and tell my students that I will remember more about Monticello from this summary than if I had studied for a quiz about the facts associated with this historical place.



## **Step 084**

### **Mistakes**

One of many reminders to the students in my courses is to allow for a learning environment in which students feel comfortable making mistakes, which are an essential part of the learning process.

Mistakes will come and mistakes will go  
And lasting learning comes real slow.

But stay with me as I journey on;  
There are many more verses to my song.

You were part of verse 103.  
Thanks for coming along with me.

Maybe we'll hook up again  
In verse 1,210.

Every day builds on the last.  
Every day is a little of the past.

There is no answer for everyone;  
The search for truth is never done.

We are all somewhere on our personal journey;  
Crossing my path, you just met Ernie.

We're each writing our own personal book  
About our life and how we look ...

At our values and truths every day.

## Step 085

### There Is No Answer

I developed this poster for my office bulletin board as a reminder of the role I can play in the development of strategies for challenging situations. I am not the "ANSWER" man, but I do have many responses to offer:

**THERE IS NO**  
**"ANSWER"**  
**BUT THERE ARE MANY**

**choices**    **reactions**  
**suggestions**  
**responses**    **options**  
**Questions**    **Ideas**  
**thoughts**  
**strategies**    **feelings**  
**approaches**    **beliefs**  
**connections**

## Step 086

### Profiles in “P” and “S”

In 2001 I used “P” as a starting letter to ascribe traits and characteristics to which I would ascribe. Then, in 2011 I used “S” to complete a similar self-analysis.

**Profile in “P”**  
4/17/01

**P**riorities **P**ile-a-tizing  
**P**erseverance **P**roductive  
**P**ersistence **P**rivate **P**horthy-nine  
**P**urposeful **P**ractical  
**P**rofessional **P**unctual **Dr. P**  
**P**ersuasive **P**ersonable **P**rotector

**Profile in “S”**  
11/4/11

**S**uccessful **S**olitude  
**S**erious **S**ixty **S**atisfied  
**S**enior **S**howman **S**peaker  
**S**ensitive  
**S**pecialist **S**teady **S**upportive  
**S**hy **S**ynergistic **S**tudent

## Step 087

### State-of-the-Art Educational Practices

(New doesn't necessarily mean better!)

What is the length of time a  
“state-of-the-art” practice remains so?  
My profession has a set of practices  
that seem to come and go.

A state-of-the-art car  
seems to last about two years.  
I often owned a used one  
when state-of-the-art disappears.

I wonder how long  
this quality can last  
As a new model emerges  
to replace the past.

I bought a “state-of-the-art” laptop  
at a computer store.  
I couldn't possibly want any better one  
or ask for anything more.

It had memory and speed and  
plenty of storage space.  
I thought it was just perfect  
as I left this selling place.

But I read a flier later  
in that very same year.  
It said a “state-of-the-art” version  
would soon be coming here.  
This works the same in education,  
I am sad to have to say  
When state-of-the-art curricula appear  
in much the same way.

A product emerges with high,  
professional acclaim.  
The “best of its kind”  
is often included within its name.

But this product too  
lasts just about two years  
When a different publisher's creation  
suddenly appears.

I think “state-of-the-art”  
Loses all its spark  
When you pay your first bill.  
It's already over the hill.

It was just a marketing ploy  
To buy the latest educational toy.

## Step 088

### Ruth's Advocacy

Ruth was a school nurse who was a student in one of the summer courses I taught at CCSU. She demonstrated how the advocacy of a school nurse can have a profound effect on a student who had difficulty accessing one of the cherished rituals of a high school experience: the senior prom.

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 requests 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.

Ruth informed me that she shared my poem with Carlos' mom. If I am not mistaken, Ruth told me that Carlos passed away shortly after the prom.

## Step 089

### There Are No Guarantees

I enjoyed creating this visual when describing our relationship to families when on a team of professionals seeking to discover supports for a family member with a disability. We offer no guarantees, but we can offer HOPE!



## Step 090

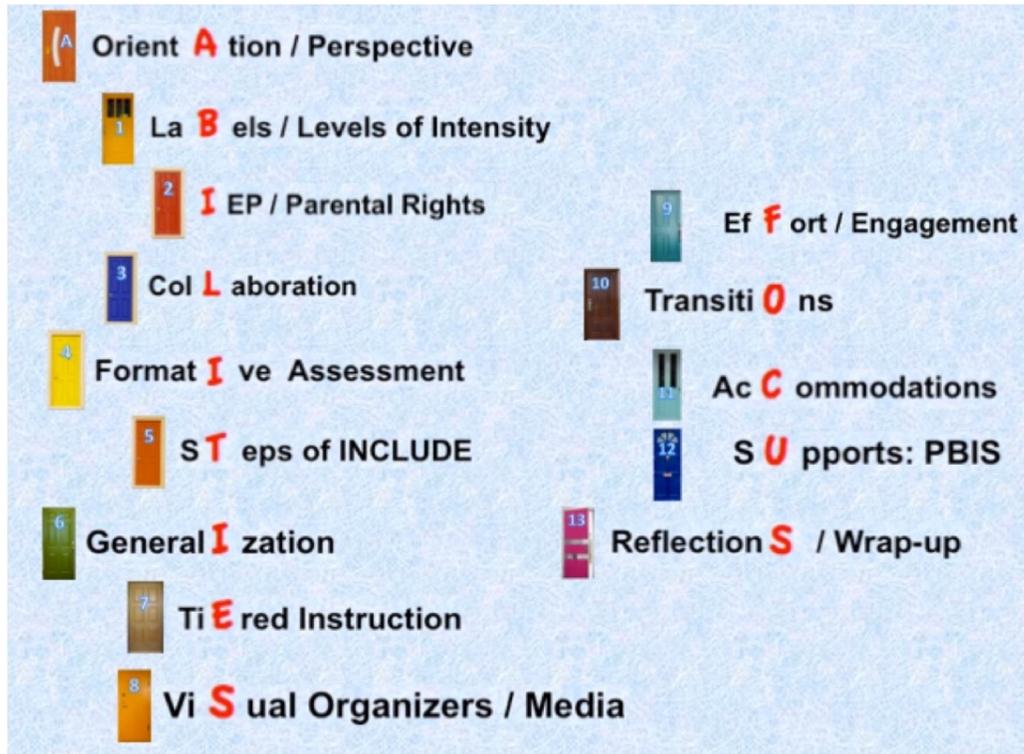
### The Writing on the Wall

A cookbook of learning does not exist.  
 There is no master strategies list.  
 Creativity – you’ll find is the key  
 To help unlock the mystery  
 Of how to teach  
 The hard to reach  
 And how to yearn  
 For ways to learn  
 That allow you to grow and show  
 How much you now know  
 And how much more there is still out there.  
 It’s a life-long journey to become aware  
 And focus on the positive and limit the strife;  
 To discover the roles we play in each student’s life.

## Step 091

### ABILITIES FOCUS

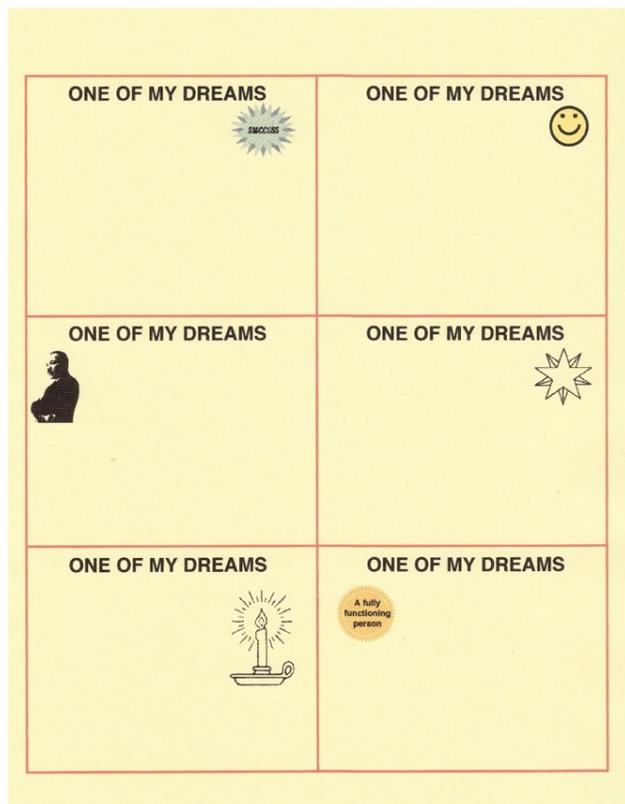
At the beginning of one of my courses I introduce this visual as one of opening doors to new resources based on the themes/titles for each session. The overall theme of the course is to focus on the “abilities” of students and not a “fix-the-disability” orientation.



## Step 092

### I've Been Dreaming

On the first day of class while engaging in a “getting to know you” session, I requested students to identify one of their dreams on a post-it note. Then, I had them put the post-it note on the top of a piece of paper and go around to their peers and take notes on what people had to comment about regarding their dream. Comments could take the form of “Oh, I did that and this is what I found useful!” or “Please clarify more about what you mean.” Or “I have a friend who might be able to help you.” Seldom, if any, do I hear someone say “That’s unrealistic!” I then comment to students about the dreams that parents have for their sons/daughters both with and without disabilities. We need to honor their dreams just as we want people in our lives to honor our own dreams.



### I've Been **Dreaming**

The **Dreams** of the young;  
The **Dreams** of the bold;  
For people we support  
Their **Dreams** must be told.

**Dreams** are uncertain.  
**Dreams** can be vague.  
But all **Dreams** are visions  
From Sue, Bob and Peg.

Stop and reflect.  
Listen with care.  
Give your support  
And your **Dreams** to share.

Today's a good day  
To sit and to listen;  
To share and reflect;  
To talk and to vision.

A **Dream** will grow.  
A **Dream** will shine.  
Because of your efforts  
And also of mine.

## Step 093

### Why People Come to College

I always hope students in my courses fall within the last three rows indicating their role as learners.

Some come	sit in their seats	read the requirements	and slowly nod off.
Some come	act quite smug	need certification	and look displeased.
Some come	take good notes	don't say anything	and space out.
Some come	act interested	ask good questions	and pay attention.
Some come	are optimistic	do all the assignments	to get a good grade.
Some come	are motivated	build connections	and personally grow.
Some come	expect the best	use their talents	to build community.
Some come	are challenged	build on their skills	are life-long learners.

## Step 094

### My Thoughts Early One Morning

Sometimes, I wonder  
if I've given you enough  
Resources that emerge  
from my piles and piles of stuff.

Then I realize that there's always  
more that I could give  
About the ways to teach and help  
the students learn to live

And use their strengths and  
gifts and talents more  
And help them with their struggles  
so that they can explore

And meet their daily challenges  
from what our teaching brings  
To help them find their rightful place  
within the scheme of things.

## Step 095

### HOPE Brings Forth PEACE

The tragedies that surfaced on 9/11 influenced my remembrance of this event with the following visual:



## Step 096

### Thoughts on Teaching My Course One Semester

Overall, I am quite happy with the feedback I receive from students. Their satisfaction with the way in which I develop and present the content is greatly appreciated. However, there are occasions, and I think all teachers have these moments, when a particular student is vicious and mean when sharing comments about the course.

The power of words can cut quite deep  
Once the send button is hit – it's for keeps.

Be careful of the words you write today.  
Be careful it's what you want to say.

Feelings are feelings – facts are facts.  
Don't confuse the two – Don't be lax

And state a feeling as if a fact to be true;  
Harm can come when this you do.

It's OK to be angry. It's alright to be mad.  
Just be sure your facts are true to be had.

## Step 097

### PLAYING FOR CHANGE

In one of my courses, we listened to a song “Stand By Me” by Playing for Change and I asked students to record some words that connected to the song as it relates to inclusive practices in the schools. Here is the visual organizer I constructed from their input.

Acce **P** tance

We al **L** work together

Te **A** mwork

**C** ombined talents

Diversit **Y**

Enric **H** es all!

Happ **I** ness

Common go **A** l

Commo **N** ality

We're all i **N** this

Stren **G** ths

To **G** ether

Make a conn **E** ction

Advocate **F** or student needs

**C** o llaboration

Suppo **R** t one another

## Step 098

### The 10% Solution

I like to share this poll at the very beginning of a large presentation or in my courses in the late fall leading up to local/national elections.

**10%** of you are here physically but not mentally.  
**10%** of you are not here yet.

**10%** don't believe anything I'm saying.  
**10%** believe everything I'm saying.

**10%** dream of what is possible for students.  
**10%** dream because they're sleeping in class.

**10%** take in food for thought.  
**10%** take in food.

**10%** are in the right place at the right time.  
**10%** should be some place else.

**10%** will nod in agreement.  
**10%** will nod off!

**10%** will write notes about what I say.  
**10%** will write notes to their friends.

**10%** will be glad to leave with excellent material.  
**10%** will just be glad to leave!

This survey has an error margin of

About **10%**

Give or take **10%!**

## Step 099

### CHOICE

As you can see (top of visual below), I noticed that the word CHOICE could be read among other words that looked backward and/or inverted. I had found this arrangement on a transparency in my resource notebook one day and realized that I had not intentionally developed a graphic like this. When I picked it up and looked at it from the other side . . . (bottom of visual below) I could still see the word CHOICE but the other words now made sense. I bring this to your attention as a way of emphasizing the importance of giving choices to students as part of an overall style of classroom management.

**SECURITY**  
**RESPECT**  
**FRIENDS DIGNITY**  
**CHOICE**  
**PRESENCE**  
**INTERDEPENDENCE**  
-----  
**INTERDEPENDENCE**  
**PRESENCE**  
**CHOICE**  
**FRIENDS DIGNITY**  
**RESPECT**  
**SECURITY**

Choices allow for the development of an atmosphere of learning highlighted by the words Interdependence, presence, friends, dignity, respect & security.

## Step 100

### Instructor's Reflection on 6/30/15

I don't know how you think things went  
From your own point of view - - -  
I just know I enjoyed my time  
Learning and teaching with you.

The summer is a time to reflect now & then  
And see how things are going - - -  
Thank you for being part of that time and  
To keep my learning growing.

Every time I teach this course  
It keeps on getting better  
Because I meet people like you - - -  
The readers of this letter.

We are more alike than different.  
We use our strengths and skills.  
We meet ourselves at different levels;  
Our hearts, our minds and our wills.

*I teach so I can hear myself think -*  
I once heard a wise man say.  
Thank you for being part of that time  
As we met along the way . . .

To advance forward;  
To be better than we were before;  
That was the purpose of the past five weeks  
To build up from a solid core . . .

Of values, strategies and  
To meet people of inspiration,  
So we can find that inner voice  
That leads to our celebration . . .

And we move on  
Maybe never to meet again - - -  
But, your presence  
Will not be forgotten - when . . .

I plan the agenda  
For each future lesson,  
I will remember this group  
From the summer 2015 session.