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INQUIRY

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Introduction

Read on! Write for 20 minutes! Hands Up!—the past academic year began with many connections to previous semesters' ideas and work, as well as new challenges. Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) celebrated its 20th year at BMCC, at the same time that students came to their first classes with Ferguson in their consciousness. Students came with work experience, new knowledge of written and spoken English, desires to perform on the stage or to make movies, to nurse or to educate, to protect the public or to assess the ways people do things, to write novels or actuarial charts. We have an increasingly wide range of majors, more focus on retention and support for students, our faculty continues to grow, and we have been through our first year with our new Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Karrin Wilks. We have just celebrated our fiftieth graduation. We hope this issue of the *Inquirer* reflects and perhaps stimulates more thinking about these arenas, including your own thoughts for an article for issue #23.

We offer once again a diverse cluster of essays, starting with a look at the writing process and on being silenced as a child—literally a mouth taped shut. His goal now is to encourage the voices of all his students. We think these are a good beginning for the essays that follow—how we might handle students with extra needs, students who come to us as English language learners, then how we might expand our students' knowledge about the resources and opportunities available to them, including the opportunity to study in Vassar's summer program. Colleagues with valuable experiences in the classroom offer reflection and self-reflected approaches to working with BMCC's students, some of whom, as one colleague has noted, are "softly prepared," some who are still learning how to be college students, others who come eager to begin honors projects, or to integrate their personal and work experiences into their studies.

In connecting with a Balancing the Curriculum project, we came into working contact with Iyana Titus, Esquire, our Director of Affirmative Action and Compliance Officer. This faculty/administration contact zone resulted in an article where the administrator enters the classroom. We are honored to offer a celebration of twenty years of Writing Across the Curriculum at BMCC, a discussion shared here by WAC colleagues. And finally, our closing article begins far outside the classroom, evoking references to crime, police, and Ferguson, sadly, the experiences many of our students face in their own neighborhoods. But it then zeroes in on the classroom, offering a moving collective process between faculty member and students, showing the great ties and the mutual respect that can evolve in any of our classrooms.

All in all, this volume of the *Inquirer* continues the lively discussions we colleagues share—among ourselves, with our students, and with our staff. This issue for the A/Y 2014-5 in particular focuses on community and collaboration, and we hope these articles not only honor the hard work we do, but stimulate and challenge us.

Valuing a Writing Process

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English

In our Freshmen Composition course at BMCC, students are required to write four to five 500-word essays. Grades indicate to students how well or not they have completed the tasks assigned. Often, teachers will have worked long hours on grading only to see their students turn to the last page of an essay to see the final grade and often ignore the comments on the paper. Like most of my colleagues, my reaction, when students flip to the grade at the back of the essay without reading through the thoughtful comments I've made throughout the essay, is one of annoyance and frustration. I've wondered for some time how I might get students to value the process of writing so that they don't just read the grade at the end of the paper, but use the writing process as a serious learning activity.

Recently, I began to re-read Peter Elbow's work on the writing process. Elbow presents the idea of *making a mess* and as a teacher teaching writing, I had to really think about what that should mean for my students. I turned my attention to the *journal* I often asked students to keep in the courses I teach. Shouldn't the journal be the place where the *mess* occurs? Where thoughts, whether organized or jumbled, can have a space to house them? So, I reconsidered my approach, moved away from the organized and grammatically correct version of the journal and presented my students with opportunities to truly *create messes* where ideas look like a train wreck, colliding and contradicting without much effort of shaping them into a coherent point. That would come later. Elbow tells us that we need to "give ourselves permission to make a mess" to move away from the familiar structures of jumping into outlines that for some writers create more difficulty than organization. The process of *making a mess* allows us to write without constraint. The journal then becomes a place for some of my own comments regarding *making a mess*, students earn points by participating in the process of making a mess, and I am privileged to read through the mind maze.

Enough written mess allows students to review more critically so that we can start organizing. Thus, here is where I engage students in organizing a temporary outline. But the point is not to create a perfect one; instead, it is to move quickly into the drafting stage so that students can begin to develop the mess and temporary outline into the beginnings of a paper that is somewhat more organized. The drafting stage is not based on any notion of perfection. To draft, the writer must begin with some sense of what she/he wants to write. This stage is not written in stone; the writer can and should change her/his mind at any point about what's written. Students earn points for developing a draft that is written and ready for the first peer review, which is also assigned points. The draft must follow the conventions of writing an essay, which includes introduction, thesis, supporting body paragraphs. I also require that students who are writing response

essays include quotations (MLA style documentation completed correctly). The peer review points are not based on a reviewer's ability to edit grammar, but to provide a serious reading of the writer's work. Students are given a series of questions to answer, first from the writer, and then from the instructor about the writer's ideas, development and how the writer's work impacts on the reader's understanding of the topic. Peer reviewers earn points based on the usefulness of the reviewer's comments on the writer. Thus, in a brief paragraph the writer explains how the reviewer's discussion and comments helped to revise/reshape or support the writer's idea development.

The students go through two drafts and two peer reviews as well as sending me one draft to review alongside peers. Each draft and peer review are given points. Then, finally students produce a final paper, which is worth 50% of the final essay grade. The other 50% is allocated to the writing process stages mentioned above.

With this in mind, I put more emphasis on the writing process—grading students' efforts to work through it, and I provide comments along the way. From choosing a topic; outline; drafts (2 or 3); peer reviews (2); final proofreading; to the final polished essay, each part of the process is seen as equally important. I don't believe in teaching writing in ways that negate the essential messy writing processes that take place. To grade just the final product teaches students not to value the actual messiness that must take place in order to reach the final polished version of a piece of writing. I agree with Valerie Strauss when she says, "For grades to be meaningful and useful to students, they require some explanation, perhaps suggestions or direction." In that same vein, I take time to explain ways students can improve a piece of writing.

At the outset, providing students with clear grading criteria essentially helps them to understand what is expected of them; therefore, I handout *grading rubrics* and variously specific writing task oriented *checklists*. John Bean's important pedagogical suggestions in his book *Engaging Ideas* offer many more ways to ensure clarity in grading criteria; in addition to the two mentioned above, *in-class norming sessions*, *peer-review checklist*, *revision-oriented comments*, and *student responses to teacher's comments* (to name a few) present clear grading criteria. And, we must not forget that our comments, which often align with grading, need to offer students encouragement as they participate in the writing process.

In a Freshmen Composition course where there are between 25–30 students, many of whom are struggling writers, taking the time to explain to students how they can improve their writing requires a lot of time, coffee, and hand strengthening exercises. For me, there is no getting around how important the process of writing is and my students begin to understand and value it as much as they do the final grade, because in working through the process as a valuable part of writing, students experience writing as a work in progress shaped by their engagement in the process. A single-minded focus on counting and circling all errors in a paper can effectively demoralize students and constrain their efforts to learn to improve their writing. To meet the learning needs of students, we focus on the process of writing and the notable improvements in writing that occur along the way. Students have informed me that this approach generates a deeper

understanding of writing and the grades associated with developing/improving writing skills. By focusing on grading the process of writing, both students and teacher become invested in the writer's work as it takes shape.

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Stop Talking or Start Talking

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What happened, I mused, reading the introduction to *The Silent Attentive One's* essay, the first of the first stack of writing I have collected at BMCC. I see verbs, nouns, adverbs, adjectives, and they are all a jumble. This collection of words arranged in a riddle-esque puzzle is my fault. I should have known better. I think back to the first day. They are all so quiet that first day of classes. It almost feels inappropriate to go over demeanor in class on the first day—to talk about how we should not interrupt each other or talk over one another or talk out of turn—in a room in which no one is talking save for the motormouth holding extra syllabi in one hand and a piece of chalk in the other. Within a couple weeks, most students will talk and many will at least smile. But then I remember something about what I never was and what I need to do. It is the quiet ones here and elsewhere, I remind myself, who should concern me, quiet ones such as *The Silent Attentive One*, whose first essay will garner a C- merely because the drafts have markedly improved.

“Domy, stop talking or I’ll put tape on your mouth!”

“Okay. Sorry.” But I wasn’t sorry and I would continue to talk. I had a lot to say. There were a lot of strangers in the class, and I wanted to know them all.

So I kept talking and she kept threatening.

I did not take her seriously. Why would a teacher put tape on my mouth? I wasn’t talking that much more than the others, was I? The others had been told to quiet down during long division as well, so, really, what worries should I have?

Having arrived from Holy Name of Jesus Christ, a Catholic school, to Trinity School, a K-through-Six public school in New Rochelle where I didn’t have to wear a tie and fear the particular wrath of Sister Mary Ellen Francis, the principal, I thought the talking I was doing in class appropriate. Wasn’t I free in public school?

So I talked.

And she, eventually, box-tape taped my mouth shut. One piece across the lips. At least twice a week I would have that awful-tasting beige tape on my mouth.

At the time, my mother knew about the teacher’s method but didn’t really say anything. Now a Montessori-licensed daycare provider, she still wishes she “knew then what I know now about teaching. I would sue the shit out of that woman and the school.”

But that whole tape ordeal is in the past. I never really held it against the teacher. And I still don’t. And I never learned to keep quiet in her class or any other teacher’s class. I had, after all, tape on my mouth every week in that third

grade class. I would also go on to fourth grade and beyond to spend many hours after school for talking during quiet time or reading time or any other stupid time the teacher needed to just hear silence.

Ah, the myth of the perfect student. I count myself as barely ever having threatened to be one of those students. I had no sense of an imagination that teachers could connect with. I hated taking risks. I daydreamed in the middle of my own comments. So, now, as an instructor, how can I expect perfection from my students, imperfect as I was, and let's be honest, still am? The idea of the perfect student is quixotic, but admirable—isn't that, indeed, what quixotic is all about? I don't think my third-grade teacher was looking for perfection, but I do think she wanted quiet.

In my sophomore year of college, I recalled this teacher's failed strategy of silencing me (indeed, not only did I not stop talking but other students also started donning the box-tape accessory about their lips) with a friend who had also been perceived as too talkative in class. He boasted that he had been worse than I when it came to blabbering.

"What?" Andre intoned when I told him of my third-grade trauma. "Shoot," he reflected, "my teacher moved me around the room."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Instead of telling me to stop talking, which would never happen anyway, he would sit me next to a quiet kid—we had a lot of ESL kids who didn't talk in class at all. And there I was. I wouldn't stop talking, and in a week or two, these kids would start talking. Then the teacher would move me onto the next one."

"That was smart." As I said this, rage grew in me. A box-tape-taped rage.

I thought of Andre's teacher's strategy as I stood in front of my first City College composition class, FIQWS Engineering. I met the first of the talkative students before class had begun. He rode BMX bikes, he told me, and that the others were on their way to the room. He then told me his name. I gave him mine and smiled. A few minutes later, three minutes before class was to begin officially, the remaining twenty-two students walked in, smiling, apprehensive, and dubious about me, about the classroom, about the subject.

I watched my semester's writers as they moved to select their seats for the next fifteen weeks. They had been at City College since Monday and it was Friday. The lines had been drawn and the allies picked, already. Some had made friends and already had inside jokes. Others sat in the corners, toward the back of the room, silently, looking at me, looking at the board upon which I had etched in dusty chalk my name and contact information.

The quiet students sitting in the back and to the sides, not wishing to draw too much attention to themselves, immediately caught my attention. They unwittingly reminded me, strangely enough, of Andre's and my teachers' innovative ways of dealing with talking in class.

My ideal student is my ideal teacher. She is a talkative person. He is not afraid to challenge authority. This person knows that education is about him or her and not merely what the teacher thinks: the student implicitly understands Freire without having read his mesmerizingly leftist critique of the banking concept of education. In fact, Freire has this person in mind when he talks about

the relationships of power and knowledge. This student understands that real education is liberating, not suffocating. This student understands a teacher who says—and means it—“I am just as much a learner as a teacher and so are you as much teacher as you are student.” This student is my ideal student and teacher.

That first day, I met several students who were “non-native” English speakers. They had come from countries in which English, though learned in school, was not used daily. I came to know this because I asked each student where he or she was from—Queens? New Jersey? Northern or southern hemisphere? The challenge, as I understood it, would be that these new-to-the-US students, some of whom have only been speaking New York’s English dialect for a couple years, would invariably remain silent, sit way in the back of the room—up against the wall—and wait until class had ended (or contact me via e-mail) to ask a question about material I had covered in class and about which I had asked, thrice, whether anyone had had a question.

Here are my thoughts at the time. Does their reticence stem from two possible, troubling origins? Could these students be afraid to speak aloud in class because they anticipate negative, embarrassing reactions from me or from other students? Do they fear what these other students—“native” speakers for whom “proper” English is neither a challenge nor a concern—may say or think about them? The BMXer doesn’t strike me as the verbal bully... Even worse is the second possibility: these students are waiting for me to deposit knowledge into their brains. And I am afraid I really don’t have much to deposit.

I professed my shortcomings to my students that first day. I smiled as I said it. I told them all, as I scanned the room slowly, moving about amiably, that I don’t know what they needed. I cannot read minds and my body-language-reading skills have softened as I’ve aged. I suggested asking questions in class, during class, to all students and offered that any question a student may have was more than likely the same question others may also have.

I wanted all my students fearless of public speaking so that they would freely talk in class—communicate—with (well, what I initially thought would be) ease, but I don’t think that is the word I want to use now. Communication, written or spoken or other, never becomes easier. But regardless of the inherent difficulties that communication of any sort comes strapped with, I think one’s writing improves when one speaks more and listens even more and has others hear one’s voice. So these students’ continued silence, out of fear of others’ negative, condescending judgments or their own image of how they sound or out of some uncalled-for respect for my “authority,” would be counterproductive to what they would accomplish in school. The earlier we address these concerns, the quicker these students could start to work and think as, and become, producers of knowledge.

There is nothing wrong with college students hesitating in class on the first day. I wish I were more hesitant at times.

The professor would ask, “so what does Geertz suggest is the link between Balinese cockfighting and masculinity?” and I would fall out of my seat to say the wrong thing or the not-quite thing. I would answer rhetorical questions because my mind wandered long enough to miss the tone but not far enough to miss the

sound of question.

“No, Domenick,” answered the professor.

“No, Domenick,” answered the teacher in junior high.

“No, Domenick,” is what my friends would also say to me as they pointed, just like Dr. Grant, at Isaac Young Junior High, had that day in earth science. But unlike Dr. Grant, my friends mocked me for my jumpiness.

No, Domenick.

Freshman composition students are new to college, surrounded by strangers with strange mannerisms and fronted by a stranger at the head—or in the back or to the side—of the room barking on about a syllabus and critical thinking and due dates and voice. They are used to seeing the teacher in front of the class, the depositor of knowledge. Some may be lucky enough to have had a teacher who saw herself or himself as a student, also, who asked his or her students what they thought about things that he or she as teacher and student thought were important enough to learn. And some learned to question, question, question, and reflect.

The ideal change I strove for in that situation in that first City College composition class was for the reticent “non-native” speaker to gain comfort with his or her “language barrier” and to understand that she or he is in college to learn how to learn and communicate openly and effectively, and to accept that mistakes will be made and perhaps teachers will be chagrined and other students annoyed at having to stay in class another three minutes. I wanted these students to talk as much as, if not more than, the “native” speakers and the teacher in the class.

So I did what any good-intentioned life-learner would do. I tricked the whole class. I used more small-group work and combined the talkative with the silent. Ostensibly, they were reading and critiquing each other’s work, not to establish bonds that would make all communication in and out of class less frightening for the frightened. They were, of course, reading each other’s work as part of their peer-review-sharpening skills, but I was more concerned with enabling them to all talk comfortably with their peers. These students worked together weekly. In their groups, they would work on an issue or problem I would propose to the entire class. In small groups, students discussed possible solutions. Once they’d arrived at a solution, each group elected a presenter, a speaker for the group to deliver the group’s proposal. Each week, a different student in each group—of three students—had a turn speaking. If one spoke for his or her group last week, one could not speak for the group again until everyone had spoken at least once. Once three weeks passed, new groups were formed.

And they all seemed to enjoy the group work and peer review. I looked, in vain, for chagrin or doubt.

I found on the first day that those hesitant students had seemed more at ease speaking to classmates in groups of three or four. But when it came to class-wide discussion, these students were silent. Perhaps the size of the group and the proximity of seating helped, I wasn’t sure.

Using peer review for writing exercises and essays became the best way to get students to talk to one another in ways they may not have normally talked

to one another. Another boon was that they ended up exchanging ideas and thoughts with people in the class they might never have talked to were it not for the rearranging of seats. Students not only commented by writing on the student's text; they talked to the writer and said what they thought of the text, clarified any handwriting concerns, and explained any ambiguous commentary—two-way ambiguity being a certain conversation maker when writers write and comment on writing.

Did my plan work? Did I manage, along with the help I had from my talkative students, to draw out and ensnare and entangle my reticent ones into dialogue and disagreement with student and teacher alike?

I remembered my silenced self—at age eight, mouth haphazardly taped shut, wanting to speak, embarrassed but no longer shocked—as I gazed at my reticent and outgoing students, all talking to and with each other, arguing the finer points of word choice. And I smiled. Within weeks each student had talked to every other student in the class, had each other's e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers, and there were no more strangers amongst us.

My first year at BMCC has reminded me of what needs to be done to help students learn how to write. The talkative ought to sit next to and nudge the reticent. Remember the really quiet student from the beginning of the semester, the one who turned another color when I'd asked him, before the class, how he was doing, the one who'd scored a C- on his fourth draft of his first paper despite having come to every class and taken part in peer-review and written copious notes? He started talking a little more in class, thanks to the extended sessions of peer review, and ended up earning an A- on the final.

Supplemental Instruction Support and the Path to Academic Success: Promoting Effective Learning through Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction in the Community College

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Tutors and supplemental instructors are valuable assets in a community college setting and oftentimes can be what saves a struggling student from failing a course. However, the success and productivity of a tutoring session can be affected by the relationships between the student, the professor, and the tutor. This paper aims to address important aspects of the relationship between a student and a tutor, a tutor and a professor, and how these relationships affect overall learning both within the classroom and within a tutorial setting. The intention of this paper is to give professors and those who work in tutoring/supplemental instruction environments some ideas about how professors can use tutoring to better assist their students, how tutoring in community college settings can be improved, how productivity and learning can be maximized, and how communication between tutors and professors can make tutoring more effective. As tutors we have encountered problems with students related to a lack of communication between the tutor and student, students who have misconceptions about the role and function of the tutor, and there being unclear rules and boundaries regarding the function and structure of tutoring sessions. As professors, we have also learned how clear communication and conferencing between a tutor and a professor can maximize student learning both in the classroom and during the course of a tutoring session. By sharing our experiences, the policies we follow, and ideas for improvement, we hope to shed light on these important relationships and convey how tutors can be most effectively utilized.

Professor and Student Communication

As someone who has worked as both a tutor and a professor, I have a unique perspective as I have experienced both sides of the situation and understand the problems and issues that can arise for who work in both positions. However, I can say from experience, that as a professor making frequent use of tutors in conjunction with your classes and communicating with tutors with regard to the student's progress can make your job much easier and actually save you time. Communication regarding a specific student's progress can also maximize student improvement and productivity, especially since a professor can only give so much one on one attention to each student. This is particularly the case with

remedial students whose shortcomings in grammar, clarity, and reading comprehension require so much additional attention outside of the classroom.

I discovered how valuable access to tutors can truly be for professors this past fall when I taught an English W course at Kingsborough Community College. This course is designed to help remedial students who have passed all of the required tests aside from the CATW exam. Many of the students within the course were students who had been in remedial courses for many semesters and were frustrated that they were still one step away from making it into English 101. Four of the students in the course were students that I had seen again and again through the remedial courses. Their issues with grammar and clarity in their writing were holding them back and were causing them to continually fail the CATW exam. I worked with the students during class, after class, and during my office hours but realized that the students needed more one on one attention than I could possibly provide, as I had other classes and students to attend to. With this in mind, I brought the students to the school's Reading and Writing Center and arranged for each student to be paired with a tutor. I brought in samples of the students' writing and gave them to the tutors, explaining to the tutors what issues the students were having. The students then arranged to have weekly one on one sessions with the tutors to address their shortcomings and try revising their essay drafts. I had a conference with each tutor for a few minutes each week and brought the tutors copies of the work the students had done in class. At the end of the semester, each student that I made this arrangement with passed the CATW. In fact, each of them scored well above the minimum needed to pass the exam and moved on to English 101. Without this tutoring system in place I am sure that each student would not have done as well on the exam.

On the other side of the coin, I have also learned from my experience that it is extremely helpful to have regular communication from a professor when you are working as a tutor. Knowing the specific needs and problems of a student can make the tutoring session much easier and more productive over all. Having a basic understanding of the instructions for an assignment can also be of a great help. As a tutor at Borough of Manhattan College, some of the professors have met with me in the past about students. One professor in particular would give me copies of assignment instructions and copies of sample essays from particular students that she had recommended attend tutoring. She would discuss issues that students who were behind in her class were having and I would take notes and prepare for these students. When these students arrived for tutoring, I would be ready with lesson plans and worksheets aimed at targeting specific problems. The tutoring sessions with these students were far more productive than sessions with other students typically are because I had already been familiarized with the specific needs of each student and with the specific instructions for each assignment. When professors provide tutors with directions for assignments or students have specific written instructions that the students can pass on to the tutor this makes the tutoring session far more productive. Receiving some type of communication from a professor regarding the specific assignment and needs of the student can save time and also maximize the effectiveness of a tutoring session.

A tutor's role with a student goes beyond simply aiding students to better

comprehend course material and build their academic skills. In a community college setting, a tutor will encounter students of differing ages and backgrounds. Some will be returning to school after many years, others may not be used to the academic rigor that college demands. This confusion and uncertainty may manifest itself in fear and anxiety. I have found that some students attend tutoring for reassurance about their progress and to ask questions about how they might approach their professor and communicate the problems they are having. In a large, highly populated school such as BMCC, which exists within the hustle and bustle of Manhattan, tutors can serve as the familiar faces that offer reassurance and guidance when assignments and due dates seem overwhelming. In her article, "Adult Learning Theories and Tutoring", Susan Mucha describes the role of the tutor by saying, "Tutors guide learners through the process of discovery. Since this process can be somewhat uncomfortable for some students, tutors can offer support and guidance" (8).

Students will also often be more open with their tutors about the problems both in terms of skills and in terms of personal issues, as students will view tutors as being less intimidating than professors. This is another reason why conferencing with a tutor will enable the professor to get a better grasp of where the students' difficulties may lie. In her article "Academic Tutoring and Mentoring", M. Anne Powell describes the bond between the student and tutor by stating, "Properly matched tutors and tutees can develop positive personal bonds. Cross-age tutoring in particular seems to foster bonds so that participants come to regard one another as surrogate siblings or extended family members" (4). The bond between a tutor and a student can be a strong one that gives the student guidance and consolation during times of uncertainty.

Addressing Session Time Limits

However, in order to maintain a healthy student and tutor relationship, I have found that setting boundaries and limits from the beginning is imperative. One important factor that I have experienced in regard to tutoring is setting limits. Time limits are especially important, as I have had students who will sit all day at my table and write their papers slowly word by word. Besides the fact that this monopolizes the tutor's time, it also leads to a pattern of handholding and can discourage the student from learning to work independently and productively.

Setting boundaries with students in general from the second they enter tutoring is also imperative as in my experience most conflicts stem from not making the boundaries more clear. One key rule is that before students come to tutoring they should have attempted to write a paper or attempted to do the required readings for class before they come to tutoring. Establishing boundaries with students early on makes it easier to create a productive and respectful educational environment. In the case of tutoring groups of students, it is also important to establish a setting where students feel comfortable with one another and maintain a level of respect towards one another's views and backgrounds. When you are teaching students to think critically and analyze texts it is helpful to create this type of setting. Mucha describes the importance of this type of setting by saying, "Tutors, who understand the power of transformative learning, foster an open,

safe, and supportive environment for exploration. Establishing rules for respect during the tutoring session and encouraging students to think critically about topics creates the necessary environment for successful movement through this process" (10).

Limitations, Policies and Boundaries

One of the oldest forms of instruction is the process of tutoring and "It has been around longer than the common form of school that is seen in education today" (Graesser 104). This historical point directly alludes to the fact that tutoring is a huge part of many universities. Therefore, inside of any institution, organization or program, in order for the daily operations to run smoothly there must be a prescribed structure, set policies and boundaries and the acknowledgement of human limitations. These established restrictions and boundaries should not be viewed as a limit to the services that any tutoring or learning center provides for their students, but as a way to communicate realistic expectations for both the students as well as the tutors.

When I first started at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) as a Supplemental Instruction Supervisor my duties varied from day to day. My focus was to ensure that the students are being supported academically in accordance to the LRC mission statement that states, "The goal is to preserve the departments' integrity and provide the best possible service." It bears mentioning that the development of the LRC at the Borough of Manhattan Community College is based on the Supplemental Instruction Model in which an instructor teaches a small group of students in a context that promotes social contact. To support the idea of learning through social contact, J. H. Hartman wrote in his article " Factors Affecting the Tutoring Process", "While the conventional goal of tutoring is to help students improve academically, tutoring is also a social process where motivation and learning skills improve through social interaction" (4).

My experience as a New York City public school teacher has taught me how to maximize classroom time. On the subject of time and limitations for tutoring sessions students should gain a greater understanding of what we do at the tutoring center. In regard to time, students who come for tutoring need to be taught how to come prepared with an agenda of what they hope to accomplish during their session. After the tutorial session it is their responsibility to work on their own, and revisit the Learning Resource Center after they have done a sufficient amount of work on the assignment. Due to students not fully understanding how much guidance they can receive, they will regard any policies, such as session time limitation, and cooperative learning in a group setting as a hindrance to their academic success. Yet students need these boundaries to succeed.

Methods for Teaching Grammar

A large misconception that students have about tutoring is that tutors are there to proofread their papers and fix all their grammar mistakes for them. Besides the fact that most tutors do not have enough time to devote to this it also inhibits student learning. If a student always has a tutor correcting their grammar errors for them then they will never learn how to write properly on their own. While

some students may be resistant to this, the general policy within the tutoring centers where I work is to identify the general patterns in errors that the student has and explain to them the grammar rule that they are breaking. At BMCC each tutor has access to a blackboard that they can use. English tutors will typically write out a sample sentence from the student's essay that exemplifies a key reoccurring grammar mistake that they have in their paper. The tutor will then ask the student to look at the sentence and ask them if they can see what the mistake in the sentence is. If the student still does not know what the mistake is, the tutor can fix the mistake and explain the rule to the student.

Study Skills Workshops

One problem that we have seen as both tutors (and as professors) is that there are students who have such severe issues with grammar that it greatly impedes their writing and makes it impossible to understand the ideas they are attempting to convey. As there is a limited amount of time available to devote to each student, there is not always time to address all grammar issues within tutoring, although we try our best. As an attempt to resolve this issue, the Learning Resource Center and the English tutors organize workshops to teach students grammar. As grammar is a very broad topic, each workshop is devoted to different topics such as subject verb agreement, comma usage, verb tense, etc. Other workshops were also created to address the specific needs requested by the students within the workshop. The center has also offered workshops for other key skills such as citing sources in MLA format, conducting research, outlining papers, essay structure, creating works cited pages, creating clear topic sentences and thesis statements etc. Other workshops offered review of such key academic skills as time management and note taking. Professors who have students who are lacking key skills and who are behind where they should be in regard to class level can refer their students to these workshops.

In addition, a large number of English 101 students at BMCC also come to tutoring each semester for help with reviewing the departmental readings for the final exam, which all students are required to pass in order to pass the course. Each semester workshops are held where tutors go over the departmental readings and review key ideas that will be relevant to the final exam. The tutors also facilitate discussions in which students are able to discuss the readings with one another and brainstorm potential ideas for their exam essay. This eases the students' anxiety and gives them a better idea of how to approach the exam and analyze the readings. When faced with readings that students find to be unfamiliar or disorienting, such as last year's departmental reading, *Borderlands/De La Frontera* by Gloria Anzaldua which has many ideas that students were resistant to analyzing and connecting to, it is helpful if the tutor can find ways to attach the ideas in the reading to the student's personal experience and viewpoints so that they can write about the text in a thoughtful, critical manner. As students come from many different backgrounds and are of a range of ages, students will all connect differently to a text and view its subject matter in a myriad of ways. Mucha describes the importance of tutors helping students to draw connections to their own knowledge and experience by saying:

Adults have numerous life experiences that they draw on as they are learning new concepts. It is important to relate concepts to adult learners' prior knowledge during a tutoring session... Learning needs to be connected to the learners' knowledge base and to their experiences. Thus, it is imperative that the tutor working with the adult learner draws on that adult learner's knowledge base and experiences (5).

As this exam, like the CATW, focuses on intertextuality, it is important that students find ways to relate themselves and their experience to the text.

While many professors may be dismissive about the help that tutoring can provide, we hope that these explanations and anecdotes emphasize how truly valuable tutoring and supplemental instruction can be. Reviewing basic skills, introducing the structure of an essay, analyzing relevant readings, and finding ways to connect oneself to a text are just some of the ways that tutors can make a great difference in an English student's life, especially in the case of a community college where students may be unfamiliar with the demands and expectations of college level coursework. Often times, a skilled tutor can make the ultimate difference between a failing student and a passing one.

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What Can Students Do After Graduating with an AA Degree In Human Services From BMCC?

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Since I started teaching at BMCC in 2008, students have been asking me this question: “What can I do after I finish my Associate’s degree in Human Services?” It’s a really short question with a really big answer. This paper will address the different types of four-year college degree programs that Human Services graduates might want to pursue, as well as examples of a variety of jobs that could be pursued by graduates of BMCC’s Human Services program. It will be especially helpful to professors who want to share these resources with their students, as it is addressed to the students’ point of view. Overall, the paper will provide a wealth of resources that can prove to be helpful to students, faculty, and staff.

Educational options

First, this paper will discuss educational options for Human Service graduates. There are many four-year colleges and several college majors to pick from. The college majors most closely related to Human Services are Social Work or Human Services, Disability Studies, or Psychology. Also, some students might choose to study Substance Abuse Counseling, which could be a college degree and/or certificate, depending upon which school they attend. Let’s look at each of these educational options in turn.

Social work degrees. All of the social work degrees include requirements to complete the general college coursework, social work courses, and fieldwork (internship) experiences. There are many public and private colleges in New York that offer bachelor’s degrees in social work. The two main public university systems in New York are: The City University of New York (CUNY) and The State University of New York, (SUNY). Examples of colleges that are part of the CUNY system are: College of Staten Island, Hunter College, Lehman College, York College. Examples of colleges that are part of the SUNY system are: Stony Brook University and University at Albany. Examples of private colleges that offer social work degrees include: Adelphi University, Columbia University, Fordham University, Long Island University, New York University, and Touro College.

For students interested in studying social work, it is important to find accredited programs. Many bachelor of social work programs (BSW) that are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) have credits that are able to transfer to CSWE accredited master of social work (MSW) programs, so students can finish a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree in five years. Examples of “Advanced Standing MSW programs,” where BSW credits transfer to the MSW program, are: Adelphi University, College of Staten Island (CUNY), Fordham University, Hunter College/Silberman School of Social Work (CUNY), Lehman College (CUNY), Long Island University, New York University, Touro College,

and University at Albany (SUNY). It is important to note that it is extremely competitive to get accepted into an “Advanced Standing” MSW program; you need to have significant work experience, a high GPA, excellent references, write a detailed application essay, and pass an individual and/or group interview.

There are also doctoral programs in human services and/or social work (DSW or PhD), but this would not be needed unless someone wants to become a professor. Some schools offer online options. The master’s degree would give students the best employment opportunities. To locate all of the BSW, MSW and doctoral social work programs that are accredited in New York State and/or around the United States, please contact the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE): <http://www.cswe.org>

Students who are living in New York City, might be interested in checking out the following CUNY bachelor’s degree programs in social work, among many others:

- (1) **Hunter College/CUNY.** This college offers the MSW degree and doctoral degree in social work. Until recently, this college offered a few selected social work courses as part of its bachelor’s in Sociology.
<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/sociology/undergraduate/major-requirements>
<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/sociology/undergraduate/preparation-for/social-work-careers>

However, a new BSW program is set to open in Fall, 2015 at the Silberman School of Social Work of Hunter College. The program will focus on child welfare. The contact person is Dr. Patricia Dempsey: pdempsey@hunter.cuny.edu <http://sssw.hunter.cuny.edu/programs/bsw/>

- (2) **Lehman College/CUNY.** Located in the Bronx, this program offers BSW & MSW degrees accredited by CSWE, and has an advanced standing program.
<http://www.lehman.edu/academics/social-work/>
- (3) **York College/CUNY. Jamaica, Queens.** It offers a CSWE accredited BSW program. <http://www.york.cuny.edu/academics/departments/social-work>
- (4) **Medgar Evers College/CUNY. Brooklyn.** It offers a BSW in social work. Website: http://www.mec.cuny.edu/schools/liberal_arts_education/Social-and-Behavioral-Sciences-Department.aspx
- (5) **College of Staten Island/CUNY.** This college offers both BSW degree and MSW in Social Work, and has an “Advanced Standing Program”.
BSW: <http://www.csi.cuny.edu/catalog/undergraduate/social-work.htm>
MSW: <http://www.csi.cuny.edu/catalog/graduate/master-of-social-work-msw-mission-and-goals.htm#o7948>
- (6) **Brooklyn College/CUNY.** This college does not offer an accredited social work degree, but it does offer a few social work courses as part of the Sociology major.
<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/academics/schools/socialsciences/>

[undergraduate/sociology/majors_details.php?major=096&div=U&dept_code=86&dept_id=98&mode=data](http://www.bmcc.edu/undergraduate/sociology/majors_details.php?major=096&div=U&dept_code=86&dept_id=98&mode=data)

Human Services degrees. Bachelor degree programs in Human Services can be located by the Council for Standards in Human Service Education (CSHSE) by looking under “accredited programs” on the top of their main homepage: <http://www.cshse.org>

The only Human Services program in the New York City area that is accredited by CSHSE is the BS degree in Human Services at NYC Tech/CUNY, in Brooklyn. <http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/academics/deptsites/humanservices/bachelorHS.aspx>

Disability Studies degrees. Disability Studies is another option for students who graduate from BMCC. The CUNY School of Professional Studies (SPS) offers several programs designed for students interested in pursuing careers with people who have disabilities. The B.A. in Disability Studies is offered online, with concentrations in developmental/intellectual disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or behavioral/mental health. They also have an MA in Disability Studies and a certificate program. Internships are available. For more information: <http://sps.cuny.edu/static/disabilitystudies.html>

Certified Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC). The CASAC is a certificate that is based on an internship training, coursework, and an examination. Some CASAC programs are for people working in the field. Some CASAC programs are for people new to the field. Some CASAC programs have credits that are transferable for college credit and some do not. To find a list of registered CASAC programs, visit the website of The NY State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services: <http://www.oasas.ny.gov/training/>

Psychology degrees. Some students may choose to major in psychology. This major is offered at most four-year colleges. Conducting research, intelligence and personality testing, statistics, and laboratory experiments are a larger part of the educational coursework in psychology than in other fields of counseling, such as social work or human services. Therefore, students studying psychology need to have a higher level of ability and skills in math and computers. The differences between psychologists and social workers is best explained by Greenwood (undated) and the American Psychological Association (undated): <http://work.chron.com/social-work-vs-clinical-psychology-6672.html>
<http://www.div12.org/sites/default/files/DifferencesBetweenDisciplines.pdf>

Client Populations and Fields of Practice

There are many client populations and fields of practice within human services or social work. No matter what population they work with, human service workers and social workers demonstrate that they are caring people, who are patient and good listeners. They learn to develop empathy, which is a feeling and understanding for a client’s situation and being able to put themselves into the client’s shoes, which is different from pity or sympathy. They strive to be aware of their own stereotypes and not impose their views on clients.

Human service workers and social workers follow ethical guidelines, or

Codes of Ethics, set up by professional organizations. For social work, you can find this code by reading the website of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW): <http://www.socialworkers.org>. The New York City office of NASW is <http://www.naswnyc.org>. There is also social work career information: <http://careers.socialworkers.org> or <http://50ways.socialworkblog.org/>.

In general, the helping professions value the client as an individual who has dignity and self-worth, who is striving for independence, wants to be productive, and needs to be integrated in his/her community rather than being isolated. Clients are seen as having strengths and resources, being able to have self-determination, to make their own decisions.

Human Service/Social Work roles. Human service workers and social workers perform a variety of roles that include advocating, activism, mediating, case management, education, facilitator of groups, coordination of services, outreach work, clinical work, and research.

Client populations. Human service workers and social workers work with diverse client populations that can include children, adolescents, elderly, families, couples, people with disabilities, people who are homeless, people with HIV+/AIDS, people addicted to drugs or alcohol, people with mental health disabilities, victims of domestic violence, immigrants, refugees, and many other client populations.

Practice settings. Human service workers and social workers work in practice settings that can include places such as schools, hospitals, job training programs, nursing homes, after-school programs, settlement houses, drug treatment programs, day treatment centers for people with developmental or mental health disabilities, senior centers, residences for people with developmental disabilities, assisted living facilities, homeless shelters, hospices, jails, prisons, courts, and more.

There are several free online magazines that offer information about what it is like to work in any of these practice settings. These magazines feature articles written in a reader-friendly tone, rather than an academic journal style, by people working in the fields of practice. One magazine is *The New Social Worker*: <http://www.socialworker.com>. Another free magazine is *Social Work Today*: <http://www.socialworktoday.com>. An online chat sponsored by NASW and *The New Social Worker* is at <http://www.socialworkchat.org/>. Another good career information source is the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2014–15 Edition. For Social and Human Service assistants see <https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/21-1093.00>.

Job titles. For students who are job hunting, the following job titles might be suitable for someone with an Associate's degree: activities specialist, care navigator, counselor assistant, case worker, case manager, child care worker, direct care worker, direct service professional, developmental aide, employment specialist, family advocate, family support worker, group home counselor, habilitation counselor or habilitation specialist, housing outreach specialist, job coach/job developer/employment counselor, mental health technician, outreach specialist, overnight counselor, peer specialist, psychology aide, recreation assistant, residential aide, teacher's aide, teen counselor, tutor, youth development

worker, etc. General job categories would be: human services, social services, social work, direct care, sociology, psychology, liberal arts, developmental disabilities, mental health, and behavioral health. Job growth for the category of “social and human service assistants,” which includes many of these job titles, is reported as “faster than average” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014–2015).

Combining a job title and practice setting interests. Here are some examples of jobs that would combine a job title with your practice setting interests. You can work as a counselor in a residential setting at group homes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, residential alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment programs, or children/youths in a residential treatment center. Jobs in residential settings are plentiful. In residential settings, a driver’s license could be beneficial to use the agency car or van to transport clients to and from community activities. Here are a few job titles and some discussion of what kinds of work they entail.

Counselor/Residential Aide/Direct Service Worker: Children/Youths or Intellectual-Developmental Disabilities. A counselor at a residential treatment program for people with disabilities of all ages would help residents with independence and daily living skills, for example, cooking, grocery shopping, money management, medication supervision, laundry, and learning to traveling on public transportation; also, you often need to escort residents to medical appointments, attend meetings at their schools, and to recreational activities (for example, the movies, restaurants, malls, the beach, bowling). A driver’s license is often needed in rural areas to drive the agency vehicle to escort residents to and from appointments in the community. Sometimes, the resident’s situation requires advocacy in the legal system or courts or with government entitlement programs, for example, Medicaid, Public Assistance, or Social Security. When agencies hire new employees, they provide training in first aid, CPR, behavior management, and medication administration. There are full-time and part-time positions available. Although the salary is low to start, there are often flexible daytime, evening, overnight, and weekend shifts, would can easily be combined with pursuing a four year college degree. A criminal background check is usually required for these positions.

For more information about overnight counselors see <http://work.chron.com/description-awake-night-counselor-22242.html>.

This website describes direct care jobs in the NYS Office of People with Disabilities: http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_careers_training/careers_in_direct_support.

Counselor/Residential Aide: Residential Substance Abuse Treatment. At a substance abuse residential program, a counselor would be involved with individual and group counseling regarding issues, for example, such as relapse prevention, smoking cessation, HIV+/AIDS prevention/education, parenting skills, and exercise/weight management. Counselors are also involved with career exploration, hygiene, and grooming. Counselors assign duties to the residents (for example, in the kitchen maintenance crew), and arrange for residents to obtain passes for the weekend to visit their families. They attend team meetings. They collect urine samples from the residents. Counselors assure residents’ safety

by making house runs to be sure residents are following the agency's rules and imposing sanctions to those who do not obey the rules. There are rules about curfew, dress code, relationships, etc. For example, clients who do not follow the dress code get assigned additional hours of house duties in the kitchen, washing the pots, or scrubbing the floors. Sometimes, counselors accompany the resident to appointments in the community, for example, to the treatment court or family court, when residents' mandated to residential treatment have to meet with the judge, parole, probation, etc. Although the salary is low to start, there are often flexible daytime, evening, overnight shifts, and weekend shifts, which could easily be combined with pursuing a four-year college degree.

Social Work Assistant: School, Day Treatment, or Medical setting. You can also work as a social work assistant at a variety of settings, such as a school, a day treatment program for adults with developmental disabilities, a nursing home, a hospital, or a job training program for people with disabilities. A social work assistant would assist a social worker with some of the paperwork involved with the admissions/discharge process into the facility or from the facility back home. They can assist a client with his/her benefits/entitlements, such as Medicaid, Welfare, Food Stamps, or Social Security. You might help a client apply for new benefits, reapply for benefits that were cut off, do annual "recertifications" for certain benefits, or attend a "fair hearing" with the client at a government agency. This could involve escorting a client and/or bringing documentation, or making phone calls to the client, the client's family, and government agencies, escorting the client to appointments, and completing documentation. Home visits are often required. For more information, see <https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/21-1093.00>.

Job coach. A job coach would accompany a client or a group of clients to a worksite at a job or an internship. The job coach would help teach the job to the client beyond what an employer would have time to do. Repetition helps the client learn the job. Whenever possible, the goal is for the job coach to reduce his/her hours as the client learns the job. In most cases, the job coach can phase out and then the client works independently, but the job coach is always available for support, if needed. In some cases, depending upon the client's disability and needs, the client always has the job coach for part of the time. For more information: <http://work.chron.com/job-coach-developmentally-disabled-17700.html>.

Salaries. There is a wide range of salaries in the field of social work and human services, due to the wide range of job titles, fields of practice, degrees held, client populations, whether you have a social work license, and geographic area, such as a big city or a rural area. Also, it depends if you work at a non-profit agency, state agency, city agency, or government agency. The government jobs often require a test and then you go on a waiting list until a position becomes available. The salary also includes unpaid compensation, such as personal satisfaction for your work and the good feeling of helping others. When determining a suitable salary, many things should also be considered, such as the larger benefits package.

Arendt (2015) wrote that social workers should research the organization and not only consider salary, but also look at the larger benefits package, deter-

mine your worth, point out your value, and negotiate; this article gives excellent tips about how to negotiate salary with potential employers. Arendt (2015) also recommends checking out the organization's financial rating on GuideStar. Two other articles also worth reading about salary negotiation are Healey (2013) and NASW Leadership Ladders (2012).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014–2015a) reported that the median wages for Social and Human Service Assistants was \$14.05 per hour or \$29, 230 per year, while the median wages for a Social Worker was \$20.25 per hour or \$42, 120 per year (2014–2015b). The difference is due to the fact that Social and Human Service Assistant jobs require a high school diploma and/or some college, while Social Worker jobs usually require a bachelor's degree at minimum. Please see the following websites for the most up-to-date information about expected salaries.

National Association of Social Workers, NYC Office:

<http://www.naswnyc.org/?25>

Bureau of Labor Statistics (Social and Human Service Assistants):

<https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/21-1093.00>

Bureau of Labor Statistics (Social Worker):

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/social-workers.htm>

Bureau of Labor Statistics (Child, Family, and School Social Workers)

<https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/21-1021.00>

<http://www.indeed.com/salary?q1=Licensed+Social+Worker&l1=>

<http://www.thecareerproject.org/> (type in Social Worker)

<http://www.salary.com/> (type in Social Worker, Licensed Social Worker, etc.)

<http://www.glassdoor.com/index.htm> (type in social worker and location)

<http://www.payscale.com>

<http://www.guidestar.com>

<http://www.salarylist.com/>

Licensing. Salary also depends whether you have a social work license. Most licensure is at the master's level, but some states provide licensure at the bachelor's degree level. In New York, the social work licensure test occurs after the master's degree. Please consult the NY State Education Department, Office of the Professions, for information about social work licensing: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/sw/>

Students can find a job in many ways. Word-of-mouth, or through friends/family is very likely. Use the Internet; attend a job fair—at college. Go to the BMCC career office—they help with resumes, interview skills (NOT job postings). Look in your free, local newspapers that you find in supermarkets, banks, and sidewalk boxes. Talk to your neighbors. Use religious connections. Network at a conference or training. Go to a temporary employment agency. Try a full time employment agency. Contact a professional organization, if you are a mem-

ber. Join a job club at school. Go to the Department of Labor. If you have a disability, you can apply to get funded for job placement assistance and/or partial funding for your education from ACCES-VR (aka VESID), which is part of the New York State Education Department.

Non-profit agencies. There are many job websites for searching for Social Service Jobs at non-profit agencies. Non-profit means that these agencies put whatever profit they make right back into improving the agency; the money does not get redistributed to individuals, investors, or employees. Many non-profits get a variety of funding from government, charging fee-for services, insurance, and private donations.

Job-hunting websites. You can search by job title, education level, salary, and/or location. Most of job-hunting websites let you sign up for customized email alerts in which they send you a list of current job openings that match your interests; you can determine the frequency of emails that you will receive, such as daily alerts or weekly alerts. These are the best job hunting sites:

Idealist: <http://www.idealist.org/>

Social Service: <http://www.socialservice.com/>

Indeed: <http://www.indeed.com/>

City Limits: <http://citylimits.org/jobs/> (New York only)

I-hire: <http://www.ihiresocialservices.com/>

Psychology jobs: <http://www.psychologyjobs.com/>

New York Nonprofit Press: <http://www.nynp.biz/index.php/find-a-job> (NY only)

Coalition Behavioral Mental Health: <http://www.coalitionny.org/jobs/> (NY)

Chronicle of Philanthropy: <http://philanthropy.com/section/Home/172>

United Neighborhood Houses: <http://www.unhny.org/about/jobs> (Settlements)

Non Profit Talent Match: <http://www.nonprofitjobseeker.com/>

Literacy Assistance Center: <http://www.lacnyc.org/>

NY Council on Nonprofits: <http://www.ccsnys.org/>

NYS Rehabilitation Organization: <http://www.nyrehab.org/>

Inter-agency Council: <http://www.iacny.org/> (120 member websites)

Opportunity Knocks: <http://www.opportunityknocks.org/>

Common Good Careers: <http://commongoodcareers.org/>

GuideStar: <http://www.guidestar.org/>

Nonprofit Jobs: <http://www.nonprofitjobs.org/>

Coalition on Human Needs: <http://www.chn.org/>

Human Services Career Network: <http://www.hscareers.com/>

Social Work Job Bank: <http://www.socialworkjobbank.com/site/>

Allied Health Careers: <http://www.alliedhealthcareers.com/index.shtml>

Government jobs. There are jobs for social workers and related fields in city, state, and federal government. You often need to take a written test for government jobs and/or they review your background (education, years of experience, military service) and give it a score. Then, your name is put on a list according to your score on the test, until a position becomes available. The government will notify you by mail or phone when there is a job available that you can apply for. To find a job in a government agency, you can check out the following websites:

New York State jobs: <http://www.cs.ny.gov/>

Federal jobs (all 50 states, all job categories): <http://www.usajobs.gov/>

New York City jobs: http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcas/html/work/exam_monthly.shtml

Some social workers can also locate their jobs through employment agencies. You have to ask about fees at the time when you fill out the application to register with the agency. Most of the time, an employment agency charges a fee to the employer. Sometimes, the fee is based upon your salary and taken out of your salary. Employment agencies are not really such a popular way to find a job since the Internet, but some people still find jobs this way. Examples of a few employment agencies in New York City that place people at human services or social work jobs in the social services field are the following:

Social Work PRN: <http://www.socialworkprn.com>

People and Systems Nonprofit Hiring: <http://peopleandsystems.com/>

Winston Staffing: <http://www.winstonstaffing.com>

ProMed: <http://www.promedpersonnel.com>

Interview Tips:

Interviewing is a very important part of career planning, but is slightly beyond the scope for this paper, which is focused on sharing information about career options with your professors. Arendt (2014) discusses ways for social workers to prepare for a social work job interview, including questions that you can be asked, as well as what kinds of questions to ask the interviewer during the interview. Also, there are excellent articles about professional interview attire by Salisbury University (undated) and Smith (2013). Please check these out.

Conclusion

There are many opportunities for graduates of BMCC's Associate's program in Human Services. This article discussed examples of degree paths in social work, human services, or disability studies, or substance abuse counseling. Also, it provided examples of client populations and practice settings where human service graduates might become employed. Getting an Associate's degree in Human Services is a path of entry to the field, but students need encouragement to pursue their education further. Some of the best rewards of teaching are: helping students with their resumes, reviewing BSW/MSW application essays, and learning the good news that a former student has obtained a job and/or got accepted to pursue higher education.

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Classroom Modification Workshop: For Students with ASD and Other Social Communication Challenges

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Teacher Education

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Project Pass

During the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015, in conjunction with the Office of Accessibility, workshops were conducted to assist faculty in developing a more inclusive classroom. The objectives of the workshops were:

- To offer a brief overview of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other social communication challenges.
- To recognize some possible challenges in the classroom for students with an ASD diagnosis.
- To identify possible challenging behaviors that may be observed in the classroom.
- To propose modifications to class structure and activities in response to these challenges.

Both workshops began with a brief introduction to ASD. ASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder. A person may exhibit one or more of the following symptoms:

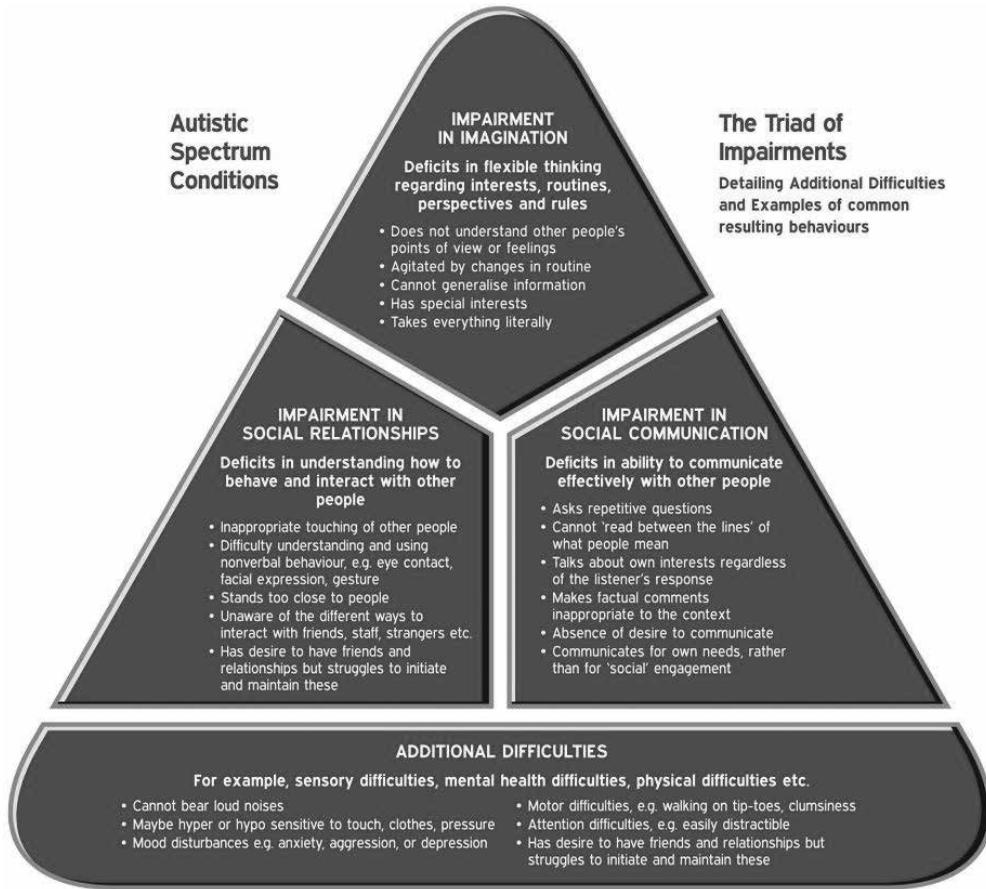
- Social communication deficits: Many people with ASD do not interact with people the way most people do, some might not even be interested in people, while others might be but are very awkward around them. Many people on the spectrum do not know how to read feelings and might not understand that something that they think is normal might make others feel uncomfortable.
- Language deficits: You might see that some people with ASD are not able to control their voice volume. Also, some might not be able to have a back and forth conversation, but instead stick only to one topic of conversation. This might be seen in a class when the student goes off the class topic often to speak about something that has their current attention.
- Restrictive and repetitive behavior: This can be either physical or mental, from the flapping of hands to following a strict routine.

No two people with ASD will demonstrate the same symptoms and/or at the same magnitude, which is why the word “spectrum” is used as a descriptor. Currently some of the disorders that fall within the spectrum are Autism Disorder, Asperger’s Syndrome, Rett’s Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorders and Pervasive Developmental Disorder- Not Otherwise Specified. These diagnoses are variations of the symptoms and levels of impairment that an individual possesses.

However, within each diagnosis, there is also a spectrum of symptoms. For example, no two people with Asperger’s Syndrome will demonstrate the same symptoms.



People with an autism diagnosis show severe social communication and language deficits as well as severe restrictive behaviors. Asperger’s syndrome diagnosis, on the other hand, reflects deficits in social communication and restrictive behaviors but normal language skills, whereas PDD-NOS diagnosis is given when any of the three symptoms is present. Rett’s syndrome and childhood disintegrative disorder are the least common of the five.



It is important to highlight that people—including our students with autism—have several skills and may excel in certain areas, especially if they are in non-social domains.

The Autistic Brain

Executive Function is our ability to finish our tasks/goals. It helps us to choose some actions over others, to inhibit us from inappropriate ones, to block unwanted stimuli and to think abstractly. Thus, with this ability we are capable of planning, organizing, and accomplishing our tasks. Therefore, students on the spectrum may have difficulty being organized, knowing when something is due, and keeping track of all assignments

These students may exhibit Executive Function Deficits

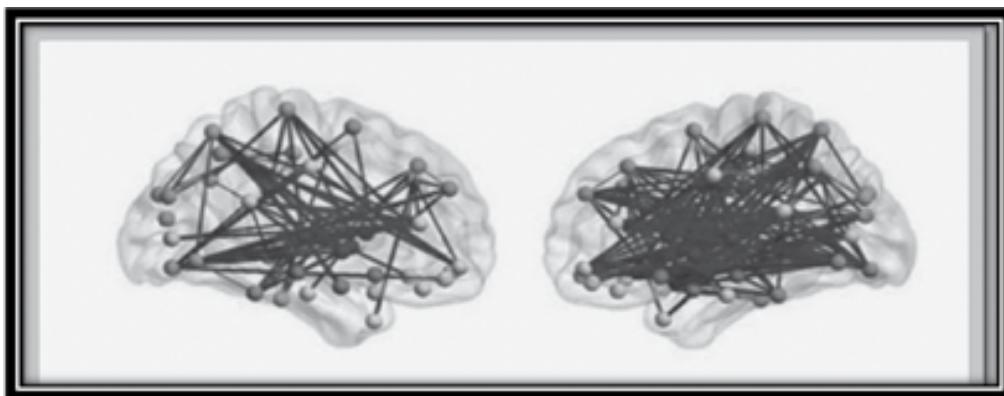
- Monitoring
- Planning
- Prioritizing
- Inhibiting
- Memorizing
- Checking

These deficits may be the reason why these students struggle in class. These students are often very bright and can excel academically with the proper accommodations.

Oversensitivity causing overstimulation, Theory of Mind

Similarly, people with ASD might have an impaired theory of mind, which is the ability to attribute mental states to our self and others and thus predict behavior. In other words, with this ability we can read a person's expression and/ or understand how a person might feel under a certain situation. For example, a student with ASD can interrupt a class to ask what he/she might think is an important question without understanding that the professor and his/her classmates are annoyed by his interruptions.

Recent studies have found that variations in brain circuitry exist in children with autism and typical developing children (Keown CL, 2013). There seems to be a hyper-connectivity in the brain of a child with autism that does not exist in a typically developing child. It is hypothesized that this hyper-connectivity may be the reasons for the various signs and symptoms individuals with autism exhibit.



Typical developing child

Child with autism

Prevalence of ASD Diagnosis

- About 1 in 68 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) according to estimates from CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network.
- It is the fastest-growing developmental disability; 1,148% growth rate.
- ASDs are almost 5 times more common among boys (1 in 54) than among girls (1 in 252).
- Thus the numbers in college are also on the rise.
- At BMCC, there are approximately 10–12 students per year that register to the Office of Accessibility. This number only reflects the students who self identify; actual numbers may be higher.

There are several programs throughout the City University of New York system. Project REACH (Resources and Education as CUNY's Hallmark) program

is one such program and Project PASS (Progressing Autism Spectrum Services) is another. BMCC has various resources to assist the students attending the college. See Appendix.

Unfortunately many students do not access these services for a variety of reasons, the main one being fear of social stigmas. It is estimated that the number of students with ASD or some form of social/communication disorder is higher as many students do not self-disclose. It is important to highlight that many of these students are bright and with proper accommodations can excel academically.

In Fall 2014, the first workshop, Classroom Modification Workshop #1-ASD Challenges and Strategies for the Classroom, was held. During the workshop several possible challenging behaviors that may be observed in the classroom were listed and suggested strategies were discussed. The behaviors and strategies are listed below:

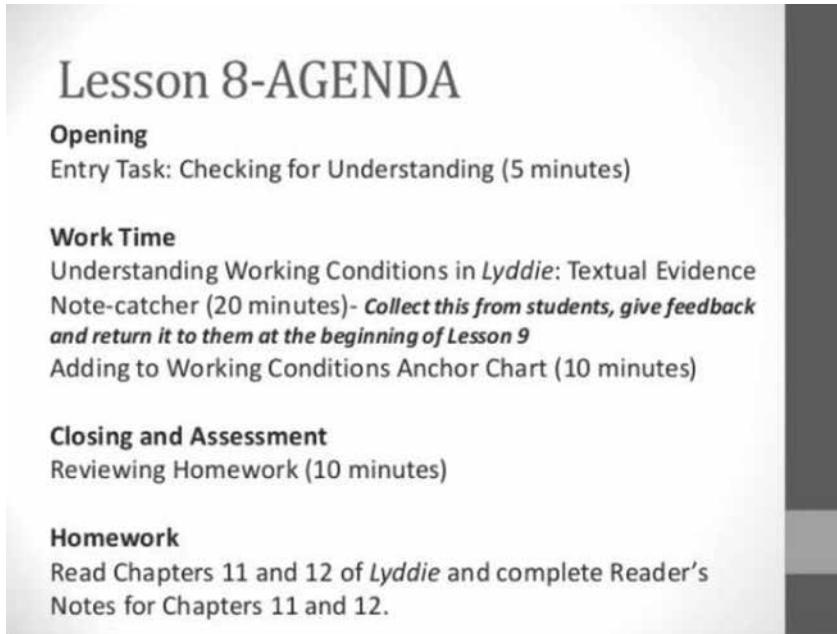
| Possible Challenge | Suggested Strategy |
|---|---|
| Straying off topic/ Asking a lot of questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allot Q&A after class • Advise to email. Or schedule them for office hours |
| Anxiety due to rigid routines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a general class routine • Try to avoid giving pop quizzes • Constantly remind students of due dates and test dates |
| Unusual repetitive gestures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow them small breaks • Allow them to sit close to the doors |
| Lateness with assignments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break down of large projects (i.e. Research paper—intro, methods, etc. due at different dates) |
| Bullying | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set strict rule in syllabus against it |

One of the main classroom modifications demonstrated during the workshop was using your syllabi to assist all students, not just the students with ASD or other communicative disorders. The syllabi are usually distributed during the first two classes meetings. The syllabus can be used to:

- Set tone for class atmosphere (i.e. a rule against bullying)
- State general class outline
- Clear due dates
- Clear instructions (i.e. “write the report like the following example”)
- State rubric for assignments if available
- For courses where syllabus is systematic—Add Addendum

One suggestion to encourage all students to review the syllabus was to have a scheduled quiz about the syllabus to make sure students have read it.

Another suggestion for classroom modification was to use an agenda at the start of each class. The agenda would allow the students to see how the class is to be organized and the topics that are to be covered. A sample agenda was provided:



Use writing and visuals as tools.

- Provide alternatives to lengthy oral instructions.
- Written or visual instructions allow students to process the information at their own pace

Use the student's focused interest.

- Explain concepts using student's interest or have students use their interest as the topic for an individual/personal assignment.

Make the current teaching material as clear and concise as possible:

- Use concise instructions.
- Provide hands on or visual activities.
- Explain non-literal language as needed.
- Provide examples of concepts across situations to encourage generalizations.
- Break tasks down into smaller steps and monitor progress.

Another classroom modification was to provide a calm structure in the classroom.

- Provide clear instructions that you and the students can refer back to.
- Prepare students for upcoming changes as early as possible.
- If students become upset, respond calmly.

Providing support for social interactions/ group work is also a key classroom modification.

- Assign designated roles/duties to ensure all students participate in group activities.

Understanding Learners with ASD and Social/Communication Challenges

In addition to the above modifications, understanding characteristics of students experiencing challenges may also provide these students with the support needed to succeed. This section will discuss several considerations for our teaching practice. The first consideration is that we view all students as capable of learning and capable of succeeding. They may not always succeed during a given semester because of extenuating circumstances, but viewing students positively is crucial for mutual respect and engagement. Within this positive framework is the notion that students do have challenges, but that we focus on their strengths and use their strengths to help them address their challenges. For example, if a student has difficulty interacting with peers but is great at taking notes, this student may be the note taker during small group work.

Observation

At this point, the question may arise, how do we know what strengths a student possesses? Maria Montessori, who focused on early childhood education, has greatly contributed to the idea that through observation we are able to know our learners, their strengths, challenges, interests, and needs (Garhart Mooney, 2013). This is true of college students as well. Within a college classroom, we may not have the time to observe closely all of our students but we can take a few moments to observe those students with special needs. As we teach, we can analyze which methods enable the students to grasp the material, through small groups, visual presentations, a lecture, in class reading, peer interaction, hands on activities and whatever other modalities we use. As students interact with our lessons, we note when they are most engaged and thus try to incorporate more of these activities. When modalities that are not as engaging need to be used, we may alert the students to the change in procedure and provide additional support. Through observation over time, we learn what helps our students.

Direct questioning is another manner in which we can discover our students' strengths and needs. The following are questions that we may ask and that may provide useful information about students' learning processes.

- Which aspects of the class have been the most interesting?
- Which aspects of the class have helped improve your academic skills?
- Which aspects of the class have been the most difficult?

Students' responses can help guide our preparation and our work in the classroom.

Learning Styles

Consideration of your students' learning styles is another valuable tool. One framework of learning styles notes four types of learners: auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic (International Learning Styles Australia, 2015). The names of the styles are a clear indication of how they impact the learning of each type of learner. Auditory learners learn best when information is heard. They respond well to lectures, discussions, and verbal instructions. Visual learners benefit from seeing information in print. Tactile learners need to interact with the material to be learned, and kinesthetic learners may need to move as they are learning. Allowing kinesthetic learners to hand out materials, turn on and off lights as needed for projection, and assisting with other duties frees the instructor from these chores and gives that learner the opportunity to move.

Many individuals utilize more than one learning style. Talking with students about their learning style and how to use that to maximize their learning guides students to become agents of their own learning. It also allows educators to plan lessons that are effective for our learners.

There are additional components of learning styles. Some students are top down learners; they need the big picture first. Other students are bottom up learners, and need to understand all of the components so they can then understand the big picture. Some students prefer to work in groups, others prefer to work alone. Even though we may have group work, there may be times when we allow students to choose to work alone. Sometimes the key is if they are being productive rather than doing what we want them to do. Some students are highly motivated and when given a project need little instructor guidance. Other students struggle with persistence and motivation and may need to hand in small parts of an assignment rather than wait until a whole project is completed. Environmental needs of space, lighting, sound level, and temperature also impact student learning. That student who keeps his/her jacket on may need to be warm in order to learn. The graphic below highlights aspects of learning styles.



Universal Design

Universal design, a concept that originated in architecture, allows for access to buildings and public spaces by a variety of people. Curb cuts, automatic doors, signs in Braille and door handles that are easy to open are just a few of the accessibility modifications in architecture. Universal design also impacts product design with computer keyboards being ergonomically correct for keyboarding, jars and bottles with easy to hold designs and lighting that simulates natural light. Within education, universal design is a manner in which all learners can access the material to be learned. Therefore there are multiple means of representation of lessons, multiple means of expression of learning and engagement in the learning process, and multiple means of assessment (Heward, 2013). Similar to learning styles, lessons may be presented in written and auditory formats, so there may be a variety of ways to access the material. Students may choose to express themselves and engage with the lessons orally, in writing, through poetry, music or drawing, in groups or alone. When assessing students, there are opportunities for tests, written papers, oral presentations, and group projects. Universal design incorporates many facets of learning providing a rich arena for assessment.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is similar to universal design and learning styles in that it considers the needs of the learner (Robb, 2015). With differentiated instruction we meet the students at their level. Use of student interest and choices draws on their strengths. Continuous formative assessment of student engagement with the work and their problem solving strategies informs our methods of assistance to students. We provide appropriate individualized assistance when students encounter material that is personally challenging. We also offer extensions when students are grasping the material easily and need more stimulation. For example, during a lesson on cultural competency, several students were struggling with vocabulary and the sentence structure of the reading material. Other students were fascinated by the concepts and wanted more information. Students who were struggling worked with the instructor as she modeled word learning and reading comprehension strategies. Students then had guided practice in interacting with the remaining text. Those students who needed enrichment engaged with additional readings and Internet research. With differentiated instruction there is no need to dilute the curriculum or create separate lessons; instead, individualization supports each student.

Another example of the use of strategies to assist all students, especially those with social communication challenges, comes from the Teacher Education Department. In a class on social and pedagogical foundations for exceptional children, one assignment focuses on the development of the professionalism of future teachers. The students create a brochure, flyer or website about a school in which they have been interning. Students are given choices in the manner of representation of the school. They are supported in developing their project. Class time is allotted for development as students work in groups, individually or with instructor assistance. When they bring the completed projects to class, they role play the part of a teacher providing information to parents or the part

of a parent looking for a school for their child with special needs. Professional language, promotion of services, and methods of engaging parents are reviewed. Students who are secure in role-playing demonstrate the methods of role-playing. Students who struggle with socialization and communication are supported in their interactions. As they work in small groups, instructor support is given first to students needing assistance with interactions. Other groups are supported as needed, but identifying those who need the most help and providing them with initial support allows them to participate in the activity more effectively. The activity ends with reflection on being a professional, using graphics to engage others, and sense of self as an active learner. By using a variety of methods in our teaching practice, we can promote positive learning and successful college experiences for our students.

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Appendix

Resources available at BMCC

Counseling Center

Room S343

(212) 220-8140 for an appointment

Office of Accessibility

Room N360

Learning Specialist Mark Mueller (X 5236)

Leaning Specialist Heidi Durkin (X 5012)

Project PASS Project Assistant Fatima Aguilar (N360E)

Beyond the Limits Club

Every Wednesday 2 pm–4 pm

Room N470

From Cubicle to Classroom: How I Went from Administrator to Professor

Iyana Titus

President's Office, Director of Affirmative Action and Compliance Officer

A few weeks ago I was invited to speak at my first college class at BMCC. I had worked at the school for almost five years and at no point had I ever spoke in front of a real college class. Sure, I have conducted a few workshops before students, but this was different. The course was on human resources, and the idea of speaking as a guest lecturer appealed to me. I would be a real professor for the first time and I could impart knowledge in a more detailed way. After all, I was just an administrator (not a professor) who spent her day in the office, rarely seen in the classroom. In fact, my office was on the seventh floor, tucked in the corner and away from any real student interaction. At BMCC, everyone knows what the seventh floor represents—administration. And my office was in the granddaddy suite, also known as the President's Office. This location was a sure way for me to have no friends in the organization. Indeed, hardly anyone visited me unless they had a problem or were considered by another as a problem. Students who saw me mostly had non-academic concerns. Need I say, these were no ordinary mundane challenges that an average college student faces. Indeed, these issues revolved around the most negative topics such as sexual harassment, discrimination, and assault. I gladly accepted the invite because I knew it would stretch my public speaking skills and give me an opportunity to influence students to consider a career in human resources or labor and employment law. But more than anything, it gave me a chance to get out my office and walk in the large shoes worn by faculty.

In order to prepare for my lecture, the professor provided me with the required reading on "Human Resources and Equal Employment Opportunity." I read the chapter with careful precision, examining the content, making sure that it was indeed valid and up to date. As I skimmed the chapter, I also felt slightly bored; after all, it appeared to be just words on a paper. Nevertheless, I read the chapter at least twice and I started putting together what I considered the essential points of the reading. I also thought that I could add real life examples to make the material come alive. On paper, they were simply words, but with my lecture, those words could have true meaning that related to the students' lives. I now understood the mission—to make apparent the words they read and explained how this material applied in everyday use.

After weeks of preparation, the day of my lecture finally came. I arrived in the classroom and saw a sea of faces staring back at me. These were night students and to my surprise they all seemed so young. I had pre-conceived thoughts about night students. In my mind these students would be people with full time jobs and children and so I assumed an older audience. Needless to say, at the old age of 40, I somehow felt like a wise soul in the room.

The student personas revealed themselves in a short amount of time. As I looked out at their faces, I saw people who appeared to be asleep, some who were day dreaming, one who was overly attentive and excited, a questioning student with frowning eyebrows, and of course the silly student who sat up front. I use the words “of course” because in my experience, each classroom always had a class clown. However, I have to admit, my favorite was the silent student, who had the stoic face which I prayed would have some kind of reaction to the lecture. That person was a challenge and while I enjoyed a good test, I also felt the need to be understood and to a certain extent appreciated.

As I started with my first four slides of my power point presentation, the first hand went up. Wow! Am I really going to finish the lecture on time, I thought. Am I that insightful to illicit an immediate response? That same hand kept coming up in the beginning of my presentation. On one hand I felt so happy that someone was actually paying attention. At the same time, I questioned the motives. Was this simply the “show off” student? Was it the challenging student, who only wanted to keep me on my toes? Or was this just an inquisitive person. Either which way, my goal was simply to answer the questions correctly without feeling like the student—or anything found on her phone—knew more than I. I responded to the questions to the best of my ability and then proceeded.

As I continued my lecture, my favorite moment revealed itself like a ray of sunshine. Ironically, this was not really the best moment in my talk. I explained the American with Disabilities Act and how the law defined a disability. When most people hear the word disability, illegal drug use is not typically what they visualize. As I tried to explain the application of the act and the importance of employers granting reasonable accommodation, the comedic student chimed in with a profound thought. In her attempt to understand the concept, she pondered whether as a supervisor would she provide an accommodation to a person battling illegal drugs in comparison to an alcoholic. This was clearly not where I was going. What happened to the first prong of the analysis, I wondered. Did she not understand the definition of a disability? Did she not understand my words? Was I unclear in my own thoughts? Whatever the case was, I found the moment to be humorous and at the same time slightly disconcerting and frustrating. As a professor in this moment, I really wanted each student to grab and hold on to the concepts that I was teaching. At the same time, I applauded the student’s reasoning skills and her willingness to try to understand.

My lecture ended smoothly although I was rushed for time in the end. I tried desperately to answer the students’ inquiries, which ranged from unemployment insurance to illegal interview questions. In the end, they clapped and told me how much they appreciated my words. Some of the students remained to ask further questions. I was surprised at the scenarios they mentioned, most of which involved what I considered to be illegal and inappropriate conduct on the part of an employer.

The professor who had invited me to lecture required the students to provide me with written feedback. This was a new experience for me, as I am often not informed about my performance. The students told me how much they appreciated my lecture and that they had learned a lot. Only one student indicated that

she already knew the information because it was in the book. However, I took issue with the criticism as the lecture was supposed to reinforce the content in the book. At the same time, her comment forced me to evaluate what I said in my talk and whether it had elicited new thoughts among the students.

As I reflected upon my experience, I valued getting into the classroom and truly seeing the faculty's world, even if just for a glimpse. I understood the time it took to prepare for a lecture and then to subsequently execute the lesson plan. Moreover, I grasped that desire to want the students to comprehend and learn. My guest lecturer experience ended with my having a great sense of satisfaction, and yet I had a greater value for my expertise. I never saw myself as a professor, even though I worked in a college and was often presumed to be one simply because it was my place of business. What I realize though is that we all are professors in our own right. We each impart knowledge and we each have experiences that others can learn from. Sometimes because we are defined by our titles and limited by the organizational structure, we forget the professor inside each of us. In my tenure at BMCC, I have encountered many professors in non-faculty positions. They have expertise in everything from child rearing, to event planning, sales, and grand-parenting, and so on. My experience has taught me to see the professor inside of me. I only wish that others could see the same in themselves. In doing so, we can create a greater college experience for our students.

Getting Students to Read...

Mathew G. Marcus

Academic Literacy and Linguistics

On October 30th I led a workshop in CETLS on getting students to read more and understand more of what they read. It is no secret that many BMCC students, perhaps a majority, do not read at a college level and that students' inability (or unwillingness, usually a result of frustration or fear of failure) to complete assigned readings interferes with learning. I believe this is a problem we should address head on by using strategies that motivate students to read more and help them understand more of what they read. I also think it's important for all teachers at BMCC to think of themselves as reading teachers within their discipline, each of which has its own language, replete with jargon, that students need help negotiating.

In my reading and critical thinking classes, I try to instill the notion that reading is a conversation between the reader and the writer and, therefore, reading is an active and interactive process. We must ask questions of the text, look for answers, agree and disagree with it, come up with new questions as we read, makes connections to ourselves and to other texts and, perhaps most importantly for our students, be aware of what we do and do not understand (in reading teacher jargon, self-monitor).

Generally speaking, reading is enjoyable when we understand it, and motivation is tied to feelings of success. Therefore, if we want our students to read more, we have to enable them to succeed. To an extent, this depends on making sure most of the reading we assign is manageable for most of our students. At the same time, there are myriad strategies teachers can use to help students get more from the reading, whether it is easy or difficult. Here are a few to try:

Use short (one page or less) texts as a basis for discussion. For starters, have students write what they believe is the main idea of the piece, then compare their responses with a partner's. This approach helps students see that there isn't always a "right answer" when reading, and the discussion forces them to clarify their thinking.

Give students directions for annotating the text as they read. For instance, tell them to use the following symbols:

A for statements by the author that you **agree** with

D for statements by the author that you **disagree** with

U for statement you found **unclear** or did not understand.

R for ideas in the reading you would like to **research** further

Use pre-reading anticipation questions. Ask students to take a position on various statements before the reading, then see if the author agrees or disagrees. Alternatively, ask students factual questions related to the reading and make them search for the real answers in the text.

Reading journals. I'm particularly fond of the double-entry format, with quotations from the text on the left and personal responses on the right.

Pair texts with similar content or themes but different styles or levels of difficulty. In the workshop, for instance, we read an excerpt from Montaigne, "The Language of Animals," which is demanding reading, followed by a more accessible essay, also called "The Language of Animals" from NPR's *This I Believe* collection (www.thisibelieve.org). The easier second text will often help students get more from the first one. This approach also gets students in the habits of making connections between texts.

In the October 30th workshop, we applied some of these strategies using the texts mentioned in strategy #5. My observation was that the participants really enjoyed approaching the text in this manner, and the discussion of the Montaigne was spirited. Encouraged by this result, I used the activity with my critical thinking classes and found that my students, many of whom are struggling readers, were equally engaged and, better yet, showed true understanding of the writers' arguments and the similarities and differences between them.

The larger lesson here, I think, is that providing even a little bit of structure for students' reading, even if it's as simple as giving them a partial outline to complete, will get much better results than simply assigning the reading and hoping for the best. Also, when we make reading interactive, conversational and, dare I say, fun, we make students want to do more of it.

If you would like further ideas or just want to talk about the challenges of teaching reading, please get in touch with me or some of the other outstanding teachers in the Department of Academic Literacy and Linguistics.

Undergraduate Research in Psychology

Marjan Persuh

Social Sciences, Human Services, and Criminal Justice

The very first course in microbiology that I took as an undergraduate student included a strong laboratory component. In fact, the laboratory component seemed more important than textbook based lectures. It was also the more exciting part of the course. While a mere portion of students appreciated the lectures, everybody was excited to be in the laboratory and explore microbes with their own hands. Such course configuration is not unique to microbiology; most science courses are structured similarly, theory is covered during the lectures, and the laboratory component allows students to explore science on their own. Students show disproportionately higher engagement during laboratory sessions. Once I witnessed a group of high school students so fascinated by the laboratory demonstrations of physics they encountered on a daily basis, they arrived at 6 AM for a school experiment. This was necessary in order to assemble a large, swinging pendulum that spanned several floors when nobody was around. When a puzzled member of a school maintenance crew passed by, students explained with excitement that precise calculations based on pendulum measurements revealed that earth is rotating. He shrugged his shoulders and commented that he could have told them that.

Introductory psychology courses are usually structured very differently, with no separate laboratory component. Students learn about experimental approaches during lectures but rarely have the opportunity to be actively engaged in experiments and to perform data analysis. Yet opportunities exist to bring research into the classroom, either through virtual laboratories or through thoughtfully designed laboratory modules that can be completed during a single class session.

I incorporate several laboratories into my introductory psychology courses. Each laboratory is designed to illustrate and enhance understanding of one of the sub-disciplines that together constitute the exciting science of psychology. I will provide two examples.

To illustrate the concept of correlation, I conduct a lab in which students explore correlation between jumping rope and hula hooping. The lab starts with an introduction to basic statistical terminology and concepts. Measures of central tendencies, variability, and correlation are introduced and students are asked to perform some simple calculations. Several student volunteers then demonstrate rope jumping and hula hooping, while other students count and measure time. Everybody is involved. Students quickly start to appreciate that two physical activities are correlated; students with better performance in rope jumping are usually better at hula hooping. Students also realize that two activities are not perfectly correlated; some students excel at rope jumping but show poor performance on hula hooping. This real life example of correlation makes the concept much easier to understand. After the data are collected, students work in groups to calculate the correlation coefficient and answer questions on labora-

tory reports. Psychology students are frequently uneasy with numbers; having an in-class laboratory where students directly observe and experience the meaning of a correlation coefficient is thus especially advantageous.

Another in-class lab illuminates a nature / nurture debate. Students are fascinated by the incredible degrees of similarities between siblings in twin studies. Yet they often are not aware that some similarities are expected even between strangers. During the class, I present one example of twin studies accompanied by a video in which identical twins, separated at birth, are reunited after a significant period of their lives. They begin to realize astonishing similarities in their personalities and personal choices. The students are just as surprised. During the lab, students work in pairs and examine similarities between their laboratory partner and themselves on a number of traits. Another surprise follows after students realize the degree of shared interests and other similarities with their class partner. Through this laboratory, students begin to appreciate the importance of a baseline for a meaningful comparison.

Not surprisingly, laboratory sessions are the most memorable experiences for students. The level of motivation, understanding, and retention all skyrocket during laboratories. Frequently, shy and disinterested students come out of their shells during one of the laboratory sessions. A wonderful side effect is a stronger retention rate. Such laboratory modules are incorporated into recitation sessions at some senior colleges, or part of dedicated laboratory experiences in more advanced courses. However, all students taking introductory psychology can have laboratory experience directly in the classroom. No special equipment or supplies are required to demonstrate principles that cover many different areas of psychology.

Another possibility for classroom research is to use one of the freely available open source platforms, which students can use to design, implement, and test a simple experiment. PsychoPy is an open source platform with a highly intuitive graphic user interface for designing Psychology experiments. Written in the Python programming language, it is a standalone application that can support both standard coding and design through a builder interface, a point and click environment in which simple experiments can be created in a very short amount of time. Although conducting virtual experiments requires a computer room, this approach provides a fully immersive environment. Students are the creators of their own experiment and become more involved in the learning process. Another benefit of using PsychoPy is its platform independence; PsychoPy can be installed on systems running Windows, OS, or Linux operating systems. Students can continue working on experiments on their own computers regardless of the exact computer specifications.

Needless to say, such in-class laboratory opportunities readily identify motivated students as candidates for more serious undergraduate research. Each instructor can individually determine the best types of in-class laboratory activities and adjust the amount of laboratory time. Perhaps, introductory psychology courses should evolve into a two-part system with a dedicated laboratory component. In the author's opinion, such development would greatly benefit our students.

Working with English Language Learners in Writing Intensive Classes

Mary Sepp

Academic Literacy and Linguistics

Many of our students, both native and non-native English speakers, struggle with academic writing, a problem that the university has been addressing directly since the inception of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program. The WAC program is fundamentally about helping students think about, compose, and shape academic content. Knowing how to communicate complex ideas and interpret data are challenging to many underprepared students regardless of their linguistic background. Still, there is no doubt that English Language Learners (ELLs) add another layer of complexity to our WI classrooms. So how do we adapt our pedagogy to best handle it? There are aspects of second language writing that need to be considered, but first we need to understand this population.

Who are our English Language Learners?

Before we can think about how to serve our ELLs, we need to be sure we know who they are, what their linguistic background is, and what type of academic experience they have had. Getting to know our students will inform our teaching and benefit student learning.

ELLs cannot be lumped together into one category. At BMCC, and many urban community colleges, ELLs generally fall into three categories: international students, recent immigrants, and “Generation 1.5”.

International students are the smallest group. These are students who have come to the United States temporarily on a student visa. Many international students have had good academic preparation, but they may not be highly proficient in English because it is not their first language.

Recent immigrants to the U.S. come from a wider range of circumstances. Immigrant students may have come as refugees or been sponsored by family members. These students may be undocumented, but most are permanent residents or even U.S. citizens. Their academic preparation and literacy levels also vary. In most cases, these students came to this country with their families for a better life and therefore tend to be very motivated learners.

Generation 1.5 generally refers to individuals who immigrated prior to adolescence and find themselves caught between two cultures/languages. Typically, G1.5-ers speak their first language at home but have little or no formal education in that language. They often consider themselves bilingual but may only have literacy skills in the second language (English). However, these skills are frequently weak due to a lack of literacy in their first language (L1).

Some Misconceptions about ELLs

Having a sense of who our ELLs are can help dispel some of the common mis-

conceptions about these students' abilities. For example, instructors may have expectations of students' writing based on their speaking ability. For example, if a student is very fluent, one might expect that he or she would write with the same level of competence. Or if a student struggles to utter a complete sentence, it might seem likely that he or she would be equally limited in writing. While it may be true in some cases, there are students whose speaking and writing skills do not match. As mentioned earlier, Generation 1.5 students frequently present this dichotomy. Likewise, some students have had good training in grammar and writing skills in their home country and simply need to practice speaking and listening more in order to build their oral skills and confidence.

Another misconception about ELLs who struggle with writing is that they are academically deficient or that they are simply not good students. In fact, most international students and many immigrant students are academically prepared for college but have not yet had sufficient exposure to English to read, write, speak, and understand at the same level as some of their native-speaker peers. Furthermore, language acquisition doesn't happen overnight or even in one semester. A student who repeatedly omits grammatical markers such as the -s plural or -ed past tense marker may have excellent critical thinking skills and a rich vocabulary. The student may even be aware of the mistake and will probably get it eventually. It just takes time.

On the other hand, there are students who may have profound difficulties in expressing themselves clearly due to a lack of proficiency in the structures of English. It can be frustrating and even distracting to see writers repeatedly making multiple errors, some of which interfere with meaning. Despite the fact that WAC aims to develop students' critical writing skills, it may at times be hard to look past poor grammar and mechanics. So what do we do about it? First, we need to figure out why students are making errors.

Some Notes on Second Language Acquisition

One of the major theories within the field of second language acquisition is the "Critical Period Hypothesis" (Lenneberg, 1967). The Critical Period Hypothesis as postulated by Lenneberg is the idea that language is more difficult to acquire after puberty. Post-puberty, language is typically studied and learned in school. While acquisition is subconscious, learning is conscious. Learning a second language is more of an intellectual process than first language acquisition and thus requires more effort. Since many of our ELLs were not exposed to English until after the Critical Period, they are therefore "learning" English. The extent to which they "acquire" it will depend largely on their level of exposure to English on a daily basis.

Another factor that impacts second language learners is "language transfer," a process where the sound system and structure of the 1st language are transferred to the 2nd language. This is a natural stage in second language acquisition, which can be positive or negative. Where there are similarities between languages—cognates, for example—there is positive transfer. Negative transfer occurs when two languages have different structures or vocabulary, and the language learner applies the rules of the first language to the second. Negative transfer can produce

errors such as the following:

- Spanish – null subject
Is raining outside.
- French – word order (phrase level), inflection of adjectives
We will have the exam final tomorrow.
There are many different cultures in New York.
- Haitian Creole – single form for pronouns
They picked up they kids.
- Russian – no articles, no copula
Moscow very big city.
- Chinese – no verb tense markers; no articles
Soon my family move to apartment in Chinatown.

Another stage in second language acquisition is an intermediary stage involving what is known as an “Interlanguage,” a linguistic system created and used by the second language speaker who has not yet achieved proficiency in the L2. This stage is characterized by language errors that cannot be attributed to language transfer. Instead they are failed attempts of the learner to use the target language. If such errors become a habit, they may “fossilize”; fossilized language errors are very difficult to overcome, even if the language learner is aware of them.

As in first language acquisition, grammar in second language acquisition happens in a particular order for most people. For example, the possessive ‘s is one of the last inflectional suffixes to be acquired by ELLs (Krashen 1977). So even if they are explicitly taught about the possessive ‘s, they may not be able to use it accurately, depending on where they are in the acquisition process.

Other factors that affect second language development include first language literacy and the linguistic environment. When an ELL is unable to read and write in their first language, trying to read and write in English can be very difficult. There is no existing system to compare the new one to. Linguistic environment may include popular culture (music, TV, movies, reading), social interaction, the workplace, the home environment, and the classroom. The more exposure learners have to English, the greater their chance of achieving communicative competence. Conversely, if the linguistic environment is primarily in a language other than English, as when students leave English in the classroom, then the acquisition process is hindered.

Helping ELLs Become Better Writers

So how do we help our ELLs to be better academic writers? As with native speakers of English, writing improves writing. In other words, writing often, through both formal and informal assignments, and being exposed to many different types of writing makes students better writers. But writing is a process and has to be approached that way.

A process approach to writing may vary in its stages but generally includes

prewriting, outlining, and multiple drafts with peer and instructor feedback along the way. Getting feedback before the final version is due is a major advantage of the process approach. This allows students to develop and improve their writing so they feel more confident in their finished product. This is particularly important for ELLs who may not know a native English speaker that can proofread or critique their paper for them. It also encourages non-native writers to start writing early. Writing in a second language, even if your skills are quite good, typically takes much more time than writing in your first language. With scheduled peer reviews and multiple drafts, students can get feedback during the planning stage, and this helps keep them on the right track. In addition, getting feedback from native speakers (fellow students) can help ELLs avoid culturally different writing norms.

In addition to the writing process, ELLs will benefit from particular types of writing. For example, writing summaries or summary response papers checks comprehension of readings and also provides an opportunity to address the issue of plagiarism. Since plagiarism is not viewed in the same way across cultures, it is something that needs to be addressed explicitly. In addition, frequent informal writing assignments, such as blogs or journal writing, work well with ELLs. These are great tools for free-writing exercises or for exchanging ideas with other students. Finally, directed research such as library resource/research guides, etc. can help minimize confusion before students begin writing. ELLs frequently are not familiar with library resources and how to find appropriate sources for their research.

Keeping track of students' progress is arguably one of the most important jobs of the instructor. If students are overwhelmed and confused, it shows in their writing. And students can become confused for a number of reasons. It may be that the student didn't follow instructions or perhaps tried to take shortcuts. But often the problem is unwittingly created by the instructor. If the instructions for an assignment are not clear to the student, the result can be chaos. If students are asked to write about material that they don't understand, what they write is likely to be nonsensical or irrelevant. So before giving students an assignment, instructors need to think carefully about the assignment and ask themselves the following questions:

- Were the instructions clear?
- Was the reading too difficult?
- Was the assignment too complicated?

If students' writing is incomprehensible despite the instructor's efforts to be clear and create assignments that are reasonable and accessible, then some intervention might be necessary. For example, meeting with students individually to pinpoint the problem can make a big difference in motivating them and keeping them on the right track. Some suggestions that may help students in these cases include keeping sentences simple (i.e., to try to gain control of their writing), forming a study group (for discussion and proofreading), and of course reading and writing more.

Finally, feedback is essential for developing writing skills. While the focus is on content and organization of ideas, limited correction of grammar can also be helpful. Holt (1997) offers a number of suggestions including the following:

- Limit the number and types of corrections, pointing out the most significant errors
- If you suspect the student may not be able to come up with the correction on his or her own, then make the correction—for example, where the wrong word was used.
- If the types of errors are consistent throughout the paper, isolate one or two paragraphs and only make corrections there. The student should be able to apply the corrections to the rest of the paper.

Should Students be Penalized for Grammar Errors?

Instructors might wonder whether English language learners should be penalized for language errors in graded assignments. This is really up to the instructor and may also depend on the course itself. But if students are to lose points for language errors, they should know what to expect. So instructors need to decide how important grammar is to their assessment and then create a rubric for graded assignments, specifying this in quantitative terms—e.g., 5%, 10%—keeping in mind that although ideally we would like our students to master English grammar, this is not the purpose of Writing Intensive courses. Rather, the goal is to get students to think and write critically about the topics they study.

To summarize, the following strategies can be helpful in working with ELLs:

- Make sure assignment instructions are explicit and the assignment isn't too difficult.
- Give students regular feedback, with a focus on content (not grammar), and always try to include some positive comments.
- Have students give each other feedback through in-class groups or online.
- Meet with struggling students individually, and early enough so they have time to address the problems.
- Allow students opportunities for editing and revision.

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The Exploring Transfer Program at Vassar College—On Coming Full Circle, and Attempting to Implement Its Basic Principles into the BMCC/CUNY Classroom

Yolanda C. Martin

Social Sciences, Human Services, and Criminal Justice Department

“Friday, June 21st 2002: Today we discussed the sociological concepts of *reflexivity* and *reflectivity*, valuable tools to analyze social behavior. We review our past actions in order to understand the present (reflexivity), and we use that awareness to take control of our future, so that we can direct our actions towards achieving our goals (reflectivity).”

Introduction: On the Process of Becoming

This quote is an excerpt from the “intellectual journal” that I was asked to prepare as a student participating in the Exploring Transfer (E.T.) Program at Vassar College during the summer of 2002. The course was “Women’s Work in Food Production,” an interdisciplinary course team-taught by a Vassar professor of Urban Sociology (Dr. Pinar Batur) and an English Professor from LaGuardia Community College (Dr. Cecilia Macheski). My second course was team-taught by Dr. Sidney Plotkin, (Political Science Department at Vassar), and Prof. John Henry Davis, (Film Studies professor at LaGuardia C.C.). After a series of dead-end jobs, and as I figured in my 20s that I would not be able to do much without a college degree, I had enrolled at LaGuardia C.C. in the Fall of 2001. My enthusiasm was only matched by my sense of fear about navigating this new environment, as a first generation college student who had recently migrated from Spain.

At the end of that first semester, my anthropology professor casually mentioned his intention to nominate me for a selective summer program at a prestigious liberal arts college. I had never heard of Vassar College before, but the way that Prof. Julien’s eyes lit up when he said that name made me realize that I ought to listen and apply. I scrambled to write my first autobiographical scholarship application essay, gathered two letters of recommendation, and told work supervisors that I might need to take a five week break from both my jobs (a coffee shop during the week, and a boutique in Soho on the weekends). However clichéd this phrase may be, the Exploring Transfer Program acceptance letter signified a turning point, the beginning of a life-long process of becoming both reflexive and reflective, of taking control of my own future. I graduated from LaGuardia CC in December 2002, and transferred to Vassar on scholarship in January 2003. In the summer of 2014, 12 years after that summer program, a period of time that includes a Phi Beta Kappa graduation from Vassar and a doctoral degree in sociology (2012), I was invited back to the Exploring Transfer program, this time as faculty. I team-taught with my own E.T. professor, Sid Plotkin—the first time that such a team was formed, and we were asked to return again as a faculty team in

the summer of 2015. On top of my role as faculty, I currently serve as a member of the E.T. Steering Committee at Vassar College.

The Exploring Transfer Program has been transforming lives of first generation college students since 1985, when LaGuardia Community College was awarded a Ford Foundation grant. Every summer, for thirty years, cohorts of thirty community college students from all over the country have been invited to enroll in two team-taught, interdisciplinary Vassar courses, out of three offered, as part of a five-week intensive residential liberal arts college experience. Students are recruited based on academic potential as well as personal character, and must be first generation college students. A good proportion of community college students are unaware of their own intellectual potential. It is the job of their community college nominating faculty to identify that potential, and for the Exploring Transfer faculty not only to tap into it, but also to help students develop strategies to thrive in a high-paced academic environment. As a result, beyond discipline-based learning, students develop transferrable critical thinking, problem solving, and time management skills. They are also given the chance to establish meaningful relationships with faculty and their peers, which are critical for academic retention purposes. Program participants exchange ideas in and out of the classroom, forming a learning community of similarly motivated and intellectually curious students. The usual timeline pattern is “Week 1: cultural shock; impostor syndrome”; “Week 3: Physical and mental exhaustion; I cannot write one more analytical paper”; “Week 5: I can handle anything. Can we extend the program a few more weeks?” As a sign of its effectiveness, a high proportion of those that go through E.T. have gone on to be accepted at numerous selective colleges such as Amherst, Barnard, Smith, Mt. Holyoke, UC Berkeley, New York University, and, of course, Vassar College. Dozens of E.T. alumni have become attorneys, academics, or policy makers.

What makes the E.T. program successful, and what are the benefits and challenges when trying to implement the academic basis of the E.T. model into a regular community college classroom? E.T. faculty co-design course syllabi based on a Liberal Arts education, albeit grounded in modern day questions or social problems. Courses are run as upper level seminars. Course materials rely heavily on primary sources and peer-reviewed articles, selected to encourage students to challenge second-hand interpretations of documents or ideas. In an E.T. classroom, faculty strive to create a non-hierarchical learning environment in which students bring their own real life experiences as part of the building blocks in the deconstruction of reading assignments, and into their weekly academic papers. In addition to the objective absorption of knowledge, there is a profound emphasis on developing a sense of social awareness and social responsibility.

I have been teaching throughout CUNY campuses since 2007. I became full time faculty at BMCC in the fall of 2012. Throughout these years, I have had the “E.T. model” in the back of my mind as an informing guideline of good teaching practices. I hold my own students to high standards, building from the assumption that any of our community college students is able to succeed, if given the chance and the adequate tools.

The Exploring Transfer Model: Soft Skills and Passion for Learning

How do you translate this E.T. model into the regular community college classroom? Although we lose the most salient advantage of a residential college experience, (avoiding the pressures and routine of commuting), we could still aim to incorporate the basic principles of the E.T. methodology. I teach a variety of courses in the Criminal Justice Program (CRJ). My teaching philosophy involves emphasizing the development of soft skills—beyond memorizing facts, what sort of inferential knowledge do those facts allow you, the student, to conclude? I encourage students to analyze everyday phenomena, such as socially constructed definitions of deviance, through a critical thinking lens. Without a doubt, these are cognitive skills that will serve them well, whether students continue with their education and transfer to a senior college, or decide to join the workforce instead. Effective communication is an outcome of both *frequent* and *deep* reading and writing. However, on the part of many of the criminal justice students there is a great deal of resistance to the level of academic effort that thoughtful reading in the disciplines entails.

In my courses, I assign an average of 30 to 40 pages of reading per week. Course materials are a combination of primary sources, ranging from scholarly journal articles to ethnographic studies. I implement a set of low stakes and high stakes writing assignments. Writing is used as a tool for critical analysis of the information learned from readings and class lectures. I let students see the ways in which writing helps them retain and work through confusing ideas, and it helps them understand how the acquired knowledge may apply to their own everyday experiences. Frequent writing, I explain, turns them into better writers—a valuable skill that will serve them well in their future careers, regardless the line of work they decide to pursue. Low stakes writing includes weekly reading responses, and analytical journal entries; high stakes writing assignments are the various components of a scaffolded research paper, 3,500–5,000 words total. The paper is based on the students' original research, a project called "Fear of Crime and Drugs in my Neighborhood." The research project includes three main tasks that students are required to complete: a 35-question survey that students were asked to administer to 10 people in their neighborhood; an annotated bibliography of secondary source material that students assembled about their neighborhoods; and, finally, three in-depth interviews and students' own observations of neighborhood conditions. To supplement their research experience, and as part of this experiential learning continuum, I mentor interested students into presenting their original research outcomes at an academic conference (Left Forum 2014 and 2015, Eastern Sociological Society, 2015). In the panel presentations students reflected on their overall learning experience conducting criminological research, as well as on their individual research findings, discussing core issues in criminological research, such as obstacles in "gaining access" to hidden populations, or "establishing rapport" with study participants. In class, we all sit in a circle, which is conducive to an inclusive classroom atmosphere. I force students to synthesize underlying themes; I train them to move from the "micro"—their life experiences growing up in urban settings, to the "macro"—theoretical frameworks and social policies that allow them to make sense out of their own individual narratives.

Expecting this level of work in today's classroom is quite a dare, in the midst of the prevailing 140-word tweet student culture. This student-centered approach certainly requires a great deal of energy and commitment to student growth on the part of the faculty. However, it is also highly rewarding, as it allows us to see an arch in terms of student preparedness and ability to tackle challenging readings by the end of the semester. One of the exercises that I recently implemented in my courses is requiring that students prepare a total of ten inferential questions in connection to the weekly assigned chapter/s, and then respond to two questions posted by any other student. This was a low-stakes writing exercise, in lieu of the blackboard discussion board response.

Switching from regular (even if analytical) discussion board entries to the formulation of a list of close-reading questions has been surprisingly effective in fully engaging students in the readings. I asked students to describe the level of challenge that it required, in comparison to their usual discussion board response. "I had to think," said a male student, "I had to read the chapter once; think carefully about the major points; and, finally, think again about how to formulate critical questions." Many of his classmates smiled and nodded, as my student put special emphasis on the word "think" all three times that he used it. I incorporated several of the students' deep learning questions into the class discussion and, somehow, the content became alive for them. Students were readily prepared to participate. In conclusion, generating their own questions has trained the students to focus their attention on the main aspects of the text. These guiding questions also turn passive learning into a pro-active mindset. Close reading, thus, by virtue of the physical and mental exercise involved in writing these questions, activates higher-level thinking—which, maybe overly optimistically, I expect will lead to more efficient study strategies among the students.

Although courses are not team-taught at BMCC, with some rare exception, I make an effort to bring guest speakers, such as the authors of the books that we read, at least twice per semester. I believe in creating an intellectual space in which the students' voices are not only respected, but also validated as meaningful contributions to the learning continuum. Students, loyal to the E.T. program spirit become agents in the production and analysis of knowledge, rather than mere consumers of information.

Challenges: Fomenting College Culture

Reading and writing assignments, as well as a collaborative learning environment are central in the implementation of a "scaled down" version of an ET course. At a community college, however, faculty often stumble upon students who first need to understand and embrace the value of learning as a goal, rather than a means towards the utilitarian goal of employment.

Recently, during an advisement session, a male student came to my office with a peculiar request. He asked that I helped him find sections for Criminology (CRJ 102) in which he "wouldn't have to deal with much reading or writing—only multiple choice exams." I asked this student to explain the reason why he had enrolled in college in the first place, and then to reconsider his previous question. As it turns out, this student had managed to keep an above average GPA by avoiding profes-

sors who incorporated reading and writing into their course instruction. The student was strategic too in terms of classroom materials—he believed that no major reading or writing requirements meant that there would be no real need to buy any of the required books. After all, “anybody could get a passing grade,” he muttered, “in a multiple choice exam by looking at the power point presentations alone.” How can we go about dismantling this form of anti-intellectual college culture?

There is an obvious divide in the Criminal Justice Program among students. Is it a vocational program, merely meant to provide future law enforcement recruits with the 60 required college credits? What is the point of incorporating conscientious reading and writing into CRJ courses—“isn’t that what the English Department is for?” (The latter being an actual question formulated by a first semester student). Without a doubt, and regardless the nature of the student’s major (applied or theoretical program, the study of liberal arts or a professional certification), the continuum of learning should be a goal for its own sake—sound reasoning and the ability to deconstruct complex ideas cannot be detached from deep reading and writing across the disciplines.

Conclusion

Through using my own narrative in this reflexive essay, I have aimed to highlight some of the best practices that have been effective in instilling a life-long love for learning, for myself as well as hundreds of other first generation college students who have had the privilege to experience the Exploring Transfer program at Vassar College. Criminal justice students from BMCC were included for the first time in an E.T. cohort in 2014, and one of my own former students, a BMCC alumni ('14) who was admitted to Vassar College as a transfer student ('17) is now thriving as a Sociology major, and has already discussed with me his plans for graduate school studies. The admissions letters for E.T. 2015 were sent out this week, probably as I write this, and BMCC will have the largest, most diverse and promising group of participants from all the community colleges represented in the admitted class. It is exhilarating to see new groups of first generation community college students directly affected by the Exploring Transfer principles—academically emboldened to redefine themselves, embracing and celebrating their intellectual curiosity for what it means: an invitation to not only learning how to think, but most importantly, to gaining control over what and why to think, to becoming conscientious enough to choose their own paths in the construction of meaning from experience.

Appendix

E.T. Course Description:

VASSAR COLLEGE
EXPLORING TRANSFER
SUMMER 2015
LEGAL JUSTICE, SOCIAL JUSTICE: THE POLITICS OF IMPRISONMENT
Dr. Martin, Dr. Plotkin

No nation celebrates individual freedom more than the United States. Our constitution begins with a Bill of Rights that promises to secure our liberty and

protect us against arbitrary government power. Yet this “land of the free” imprisons a greater percentage of its population per capita than any other country in the world. How can we understand this paradox? Why does a nation so enamored of liberty seem equally attracted to its power to incarcerate? What economic, social and political forces and interests are involved here; what ideas, what values and interests? What do our habits of incarceration reveal about the character, dynamic structures, and direction of the society? What do they reveal about our law, our courts, and our police? What do they signal about our streets, our neighborhoods, our communities, indeed ourselves? To assess such questions, we shall study and talk together about what important social theorists and students of penal policy—critics and advocates of the status quo—have to say. But most important, we will encourage each other to think, discuss, and reflect seriously on the relation between liberty and imprisonment and what it may illuminate about ourselves and about our society.

Appendix 2, Photographs



#1 Yolanda Martin and classmates, bottom row, center, “Women’s Work in Food Production” (2002)



#2 Graduation Day Celebration, (2014). Author front row, center.

On WAC

In mid May, Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) co-coordinators Holly Messitt and Rifat Salam sponsored an event in the Hudson Room to celebrate “Twenty Years of WAC at BMCC.” While the event aimed to honor this year’s participants in writing across the curriculum, including those who have been teaching writing intensive (WI) courses, the event was primarily a tribute to Gay Brookes, who has been instrumental in getting writing across the curriculum into our thinking and practice. Among those adding their congratulations and thanks to Professor Brookes was Provost and Senior Vice President Karrin Wilks.

Presented here are some thoughts participants in the event offered, followed by a general history of WAC by Gay Brookes.

Shirley Zaragoza, Business Administration

The WAC Group here at BMCC has allowed us the opportunity to find time to share thoughts and pedagogical ideas with other professors that share our passion for teaching. Integrating writing into the community college curriculum can be both challenging and rewarding. It’s extremely time consuming and inevitably we are correcting grammar. Helping our students find their inner voice and gain confidence in writing is an amazing feat for a teacher; through WAC, we find ways to continually revisit our writing exercises. It is challenging to find and apply a heightened level of academic camaraderie here at BMCC, because we often find ourselves very departmentalized. Reaching out to our WAC Group once in a while allows us to find interdisciplinary colleagues of “like minds”—ones that are committed to this career of enriching our students’ ability to express and apply critical thinking. Through writing, our students better identify their passions, knowledge and thoughts. We, as teachers, help them discover how enriching that process can be.

Christa Baiada, English

I’m sorry I couldn’t be there today in person, but I am attending a conference. Thanks to Rifat and Holly for giving me the opportunity to contribute in my own small way. Gay has been an important influence on me during my time here at BMCC from pretty much the beginning, so I want to be able to say a few words of thanks to her. Early in my tenure I was fortunate enough to take part in a teaching workshop she offered with the equally sage Milton Baxter. I attribute this workshop with imbuing me with a new awareness of and focus to my teaching. I cultivated, under their tutelage, an actively reflective and responsive approach to teaching that has been the cornerstone of my teaching philosophy since and that I believe is essential to my effectiveness as an instructor. I am very grateful for this. In addition by inviting me to participate as a co-coordinator of WAC, Gay also made possible an important aspect of my involvement on the college-wide level here at BMCC. More importantly, my involvement in WAC allowed me to engage and serve the college and our students with work that I truly believe in

and care about, rather than service for service's sake, which would have driven me mad. I learned a lot from Gay about WAC, reading, teaching, and how things work at BMCC (or more, how to make things work at BMCC!). Finally, I want to acknowledge what we all already know: Gay has been the driving force behind WAC at BMCC and made it a great success. I have been involved in WAC at CUNY for many years and in different capacities, and I can say with confidence that our program is one of the best. It truly serves our students, faculty, and fellows with a real program with structure, standards, and practice. Much of this a result of the hard work, knowledge, and wherewithal of Gay Brookes. WAC is, perhaps among many things, her legacy at BMCC and I hope we can keep going strong. Thanks to Gay for all she has done to mentor me and all she has done for the WAC program.

Gay Brookes, Retired, Chair of Academic Literary and Linguistics Department

These are comments Gay Brookes offered for The Inquirer:

WAC Beginnings at BMCC and CUNY

In the mid-1980s, Professor Leonore Hoffman of the English Department approached the administration with her idea to initiate Writing across the Curriculum at the College. Her plan was to run faculty development sessions in WAC pedagogy across a range of departments and courses. Luckily for me, one of the Deans suggested to Leonore that she find a colleague in another department to work with so that the effort was truly across-the-curriculum, and Leonore asked me to join her. We ran training sessions and covered topics like informal and formal writing assignments, revising drafts, giving feedback, and writing about reading, just as is done in WAC training in 2015. Milton Baxter and Ruth Misheloff were two English faculty who joined in the training. In one exercise in how to use writing to help students with difficult texts, Milton Baxter was asked to write a question to the instructor about a text reading on Boolean algebra; Milton wrote: "What are your office hours?" Faculty trained in those years included Pat Wilkinson, Shirley Zaragosa, Mary Padula, and Sadie Bragg.

Other CUNY colleges also began developing WAC programs with local college funding, and the representatives shared ideas through a WAC Coordinators group. In 1999, the CUNY Board of Trustees gave WAC the push it needed with a Resolution mandating that colleges "intensify and expand efforts to strengthen the teaching of writing in courses across the curriculum" in all disciplinary areas. Further, the colleges' commitment would be supported by faculty development initiatives and the CUNY Writing Fellows program, through which doctoral students would assist in writing instruction. The resolution stated that all faculty have a responsibility for the development of writing proficiency and that writing is a focus of the entire undergraduate curriculum. Colleges soon began requiring a number of Writing Intensive courses for graduation. Through the Academic Senate, in 2008 BMCC adopted a requirement for one WI course, while most colleges require two to four. Since implementation in Spring 2008, reaction from faculty and students has been positive. A number of BMCC students choose WI courses over and above the one required because they know they'll be better prepared when they transfer and that they'll learn more.

The Origins of WAC Theory

The WAC movement began in earnest nationwide in the 1970s and 80s. Its roots were in writing and composition research, particularly that of James Britton and others in Great Britain. Britton's work came to the US in 1966 through the Dartmouth Conference, a meeting of historical importance to English composition and pedagogy. Composition studies in this country was changed by that meeting of minds. Americans regarded English composition as a formal discipline of genres, standard grammar, and critical reading of literature. Britton and his colleagues did not. Instead they saw English or composition not as a subject to be studied, but as a function to be used for learning, as a pedagogical tool. (Durst)

Britton's contribution grew out of his study of the development of writing abilities (1970) in which a team of researchers looked at thousands of pieces of writing of British students ages 11–18. The team was searching for a developmental model and considered the purposes of student writings and the audiences addressed. Britton divided the functions of writing into three categories: *transactional*, which includes formal academic writing from copying to reporting, summarizing, analyzing, and theorizing; *expressive*, which includes personal and intimate from journal writing to personal essays working out one's thoughts and feelings; and *poetic* writing or fiction, poetry, and drama. Britton claimed that *expressive* writing was the primary source of other types of writing. In other words, all writing begins in the expressive function because that's where the writer works out thoughts and feelings. Moving a piece of writing from the expressive beginnings happens in the process of writing, i.e., revising, getting feedback, rewriting. Using journals or informal, ungraded writing, students develop their ideas and write to learn. Britton placed writing at the center of student learning, where writing becomes the "engine of intellectual growth." (Durst p. 396)

Writing to learn pedagogy was strengthened by Peter Elbow, who wrote *Writing without Teachers* and promoted free writing, which he attributed to Ken Macrorie, who despaired of the writing of his students who'd been over-taught conventions and wrote in stilted "English." He urged his students to do free writing, to write anything, but write honestly. Ken Bruffee, a Brooklyn College faculty member, in *A Short Course in Writing*, shows how an instructor can move students from a personal story by finding issues in the story and creating a generalization that can be supported by the narrative. This process turns the expressive piece into an essay with a general statement supported by examples. Those of you familiar with WAC pedagogy can see the relationship of Britton's thinking about expressive writing to writing across the curriculum. Writing is the engine of intellectual growth. It's fundamental to student-centered learning, the learning that matters.

WAC Principles

WAC training seminars are designed around certain foundational principles. These principles grew out of writing process research done in the 1970–80s. Some may question and dismiss that research as "old," but like the importance of Newton's 1687 laws to modern physics, these findings remain true. The principles are woven through John C. Bean's *Engaging Ideas*, which participants in WAC seminars receive. Bean's book sets the principles in the context of curricu-

lum and pedagogy, with numerous classroom examples. Participants read chapters in Bean and in sessions experience the principles in action, for example, engaging in writing or revising or giving feedback activities, so that they can draw their own lessons on the impact of the practice. While a list of principles might seem a wimpy way to end a brief essay, these principles are based on this excellent research into the writing process and the development of writing abilities. If you keep them in mind, you will find WAC works for you and your students.

- Writing is a process, recursive, and in search of meaning.
- Writing is a way of learning, a heuristic.
- Students enjoy using writing to learn, searching their minds and finding out what they know—just like writers. “How do I know what I think until I see what I say.”
- “Writing for show,” i.e., writing to present knowledge and for a grade, is the end of the process.
- Writing does not need to be graded to do its work.
- Writing should be shared with others for feedback and pleasure.
- Everyone likes to write—when the writing is not evaluated. Evaluation kills curiosity.
- Everyone is logical in their own mind. If someone’s writing is not “logical” to you, it may be too short, truncated, or the writer is not clear about what s/he wants to say. Give feedback for a rewrite, not a failing grade.
- Writing about what you read is a good way to understand what you’ve read.
- Reading and writing “grow” the brain.
- Good writing shows thinking.
- Good writing shows movement; the end of a piece should be different from the beginning.

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Educating the Imagination

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In the first week after my writing class was robbed at gunpoint in a small Brooklyn café, my shoulders stayed raised, stiff and pulled in tight. They were stuck in that position from the second I saw the man's bright, silver gun pointed at the floor. I hadn't been afraid of the person. He seemed almost reluctant as he quietly instructed us to put our computers in his bag. I believed him when he said he didn't want to kill anybody. But, my body reacted when I saw the gun. Fear shot through me, every cell electric hot and buzzing fast. I was on fire inside and then I froze.

That first week, my heartbeat kept speeding in response to even the simplest unexpected noise. I noticed it at work: in the clink of a student chucking a soda can into a metal wastebasket in the classroom, a loud sneeze in the hallway outside my office, the thud when a colleague dropped a stack of books on his desk. These sounds induced a desperate panic inside my chest, a feeling both immediate and with a longer history than the robbery I had just experienced.

I felt a hollow of shame in my stomach, too. It was a dull ache that settled in the morning after the robbery when I told my mother what happened. I was going to spare her the part about the gun, but then all of the details tumbled out. I was so worried about worrying her that I had forgotten she was no novice. She had been robbed at gunpoint, twice, when our family owned a small gift shop in Corona, Queens in the late 1980s. Her cheek still holds a small purple scar from where the barrel of the gun struck her face. My immigrant mother was alone when it happened, on her way home to her three children. She lost rent money earned from standing on her feet all day; I cried over the loss of my computer and some half-finished stories. How could I deserve any sympathy, I wondered.

That my body held onto the experience of the robbery was not a surprise. The tough New Yorker in me hated admitting it, but I had been really frightened that night. And, for days, the shock continued to course through me, nudging bodily memories of other small and not-as-small traumatic moments. I felt myself hardening into stillness, a familiar posture that had protected me before.

I looked for ways to soften. I leaned back into the care I was offered by friends and family. I texted the other writers in our group. I felt awed by the generosity of community support that came in through a fundraising campaign for the replacement costs of our laptops. I had an acupuncture treatment. I lay on the couch and watched television. Every few hours, I placed three drops of Star of Bethlehem, a flower essence used to soothe the specific kind of pain that comes from energetic trauma, under my tongue. I took long naps wrapped up in

soft blankets. I felt grateful.

What I didn't expect in that first week after the robbery was the role that my students would play in my healing process. I didn't think of our classroom as a space that could, or should, nourish me in a time of vulnerability. But, my conversations with my students four nights later were honest, complicated, and transformative.

I am a teacher, in my second year of teaching sociology at CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College. My students are primarily working-class Black, Latina/o, and Asian people who live, work, and raise families throughout the five boroughs. They range in age, from eighteen-year-old teenagers who just finished high school, to adults in their late twenties determined to make a different life for themselves, to the grandmothers who have raised others and finally have the time and space to pursue their own education. Some of my students are recent immigrants, others have roots in New York City that trace back generations; most of them are the first ones in their families to attend college.

Last fall, I taught evening classes for the first time. Most of my students came to class straight from jobs as cashiers, paralegals, sales associates, domestic workers, and bank tellers. I was worried that they would come in with sleepy eyes and growling stomachs, and that I wouldn't be able to keep the energy in the room high enough. But the classes were curious, dedicated, and engaged. They helped keep my energy up, actually.

On the first day of the semester, we started with a close look at the murder of Michael Brown, a Black teenager, by a White police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Only a handful of students had heard of him. We looked at a timeline of the incidents, the media coverage, social protest in Ferguson and beyond, and state repression of these demands for justice. We ended the day with a free-writing exercise about the death of Michael Brown and what it meant for our lives in New York City. Most of us wrote about our feelings, messy combinations of outrage, sadness, fear, and anger.

During the semester, we returned to Ferguson as a live example to illustrate sociological theories about race, gender, class, policing, and justice, or to ground scholarly readings (e.g., *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander, *The Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. Du Bois). In our sessions and through other in-class writing exercises, many students, but primarily young Black and Latino men, described racial profiling and police harassment as an everyday experience. They discussed encounters with the NYPD (New York Police Department), such as being stopped and sometimes frisked on their way to school or work, on their bus rides home, or in their own apartment buildings. One student shared that she was arrested in the hallway outside her apartment; the police officers accused her of trespassing. Another student was physically pulled off a train and ticketed at 5:00 a.m., on his commute home from an eight-hour shift at the airport. His offense: putting his leg up on the seat next to him in an empty subway car.

Some raised the issue of police neglect as a problem in their communities. The police did not respond when they needed help in a crisis. One student gave an example of a neighbor's son who had been killed. The grieving mother begged officers in the local police precinct to investigate her son's murder, but she was

ignored. The killer was never found. “What message does this send to us?” he asked.

And, yet, many of my students were criminal justice majors. They wanted to be police officers because of their experiences with the NYPD. Most were motivated by a sincere desire to help people and make change. Some wanted a job where they could be brave. Others wanted a steady paycheck and benefits. And still others felt that being on the inside was a strategy to keep themselves and their communities safe.

Throughout the semester, we also worked on a series of assignments about our neighborhoods and gentrification. First, we conducted interviews with our families and neighbors. We asked them to share stories that led to their landing in the neighborhood and what changes they have seen over the years. We did ethnographic observations to examine what our neighborhoods look like today, using food access as an illustrative example. We mapped our neighborhoods and analyzed the options available to us within walking distance in order to learn how race and class shape basic resources, such as fresh and affordable food.

Stories about gentrification were abundant. Many of my students wrote about growing up in apartment buildings where neighbors became family, the people you knew you could turn to when you were in need. Now, new neighbors kept to themselves. “They don’t even say hello when you’re both waiting for the elevator,” one student said. There was a collective relief in learning that this phenomenon of new, wealthier, often-whiter, people in their neighborhoods had a name. They now had a different understanding of what they were seeing. One of my students told me how, for the first time, she was excited to share with her mother what she was learning in school.

Our conversations about our neighborhoods brought us back to policing. One student talked about seeing increased police in his neighborhood. He felt they were there only to keep the new residents safe while the existing residents, generally black and brown, became less comfortable moving freely around the streets where they grew up.

Now, towards the end of the semester, I found myself in the middle of a real-life case study ripe for analysis. The robbery took place in a gentrifying neighborhood in Brooklyn. Our writers’ group was made up of non-black women, trans and gender non-conforming people of color who had mixed feelings about the police. That night, the police told us they found the person who robbed us and took two of us with them as witnesses. But they hadn’t found anyone, and instead, our writers became implicated in random stops of black men on the street. Despite the robust police response and device-tracking technology, our laptops were not recovered. By the next day, local blogs to mainstream media were distorting and appropriating our experience to call for increased policing as a solution to neighborhood crime.

I was nervous to share this story of the robbery with the students. I worried that they would be able to tell I was shaken. My cheeks burned pink as I said, with a slight quiver, “I want to tell you about something that happened to me last Thursday.” They gave me their full attention.

Over the next hour and fifteen minutes, we dissected the events of the night

of the robbery. We tried to put the story into the larger context of our work through the semester, but mostly we asked questions. Was it a good idea for my writing class to have called the police? I had become part of a back story, an actual incident that led to young black men in the area being at risk of police interaction that night. We thought back to the personal experiences about NYPD interaction that were shared in our classroom. Many of my students said they would probably have called the police, too. We lamented the limited options in front of us in times when we feel unsafe.

My students expected me to feel angry with the person who robbed us. I didn't. I hadn't even spent much time thinking about him, but they were curious to know about this person. What led to his decision to rob us that night? Why did he rob our group and not the customers on the other side of the café? Did he feel bad afterwards? All we could do was speculate. Being able to imagine different possibilities without the need to come up with answers felt remarkably soothing.

I told them I had thought of them that night at the café. There was a point where the scene had disintegrated into absurdity. I was spent, giddy from exhaustion and ready to go home. Hours had passed since the man walked off with our computers, but the police officers were still taking witness statements. The officer assigned to me couldn't spell my name accurately, even after I corrected him several times. I wondered how he was going to reach me with an update on the investigation if there was a mistake in my e-mail address.

"At some point, in the middle of all of this, I thought: 'I wish my students were here to see this,'" I shared with the class. "Not that I wanted you to be robbed at gunpoint with me! I just knew we would have so much to talk about." They laughed in surprise. "You must really love your job if you were thinking about us right after that happened to you," one student teased. Now, I laughed in surprise. "Yeah, I guess I really do," I said.

One student asked whether this incident changed how I saw the world. It was a good question. After some thought, I said that nothing had really changed, but the robbery taught me many things, such as the beautiful ways that people can hold each other in a crisis, as our writers' group did that night. And, I left the robbery with a deeper responsibility to be active in dialogues about safety and policing in Jackson Heights, Queens, a gentrifying neighborhood where I was born and currently live. It felt good to say that commitment out loud.

At the end of class, we sat in an awkward silence. I didn't know how to end. One student spoke up, "Miss, you know, I'm glad you're okay." Another student added, "You know we have your back." The class nodded and murmured in agreement. My shoulders relaxed, just ever so slightly.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Inquirer is a journal devoted to teaching, learning, and scholarship at BMCC. The editors welcome manuscripts on any number of topics, including but not limited to the following:

- Successful and innovative classroom activities
- Special teaching themes and units
- New pedagogies in theory and practice
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- Impacts of syllabus, curriculum, and policy changes
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- Teaching about globalization and global citizenship
- Teaching about sustainability and environmental awareness
- Fiction, poetry, and narratives related to teaching
- Book reviews
- Proposals for Teachable Moment Symposia (four or more papers on a shared theme)

Please submit a 250-500 word proposal or working manuscript to the editors by February 1, 2016.

The deadline for completed manuscripts is April 1, 2016

Authors should aim for a finished manuscript of roughly 2500 words, though the editors will consider longer and shorter submissions. Works in Progress will also be considered for our new section on this topic.

All submissions should be in Microsoft Word, double-spaced and in 12 point font, with text, notes, and references formatted in a recognized style (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago) or in the conventional style of the author's discipline.

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