

# *Insights & Ideas for Teaching & Learning*

a publication of the Oakland University Senate  
Teaching & Learning Committee

Winter 1994

Volume 6, Number 2

## **Student Journals Across the Curriculum**

We all value writing as a pedagogical tool: it affords students opportunities to synthesize and apply independently the concepts from our courses while using the modes of thought central to our disciplines. But most of us find daunting the prospect of reading and grading a hundred or more term papers per semester. Given the wide range of student achievement, we may well suspect that such assignments exceed the point of diminishing educational returns on our expenditure of time and energy. As either an alternative or a supplement to other writing assignments, the student journal is an option worth considering.

Beginning with my days elsewhere as a teacher of advanced composition classes paired with upper-division courses in other disciplines (e.g., Embryology, Educational Law), the student journal has been a staple of my syllabi. When introducing the assignment, I tell my students that journals are a cross between a diary and class notes: like notes but unlike a diary, the journal focuses upon matters intellectual, i.e., course readings, discussions, and issues; like a diary but unlike class notes, the journal privileges the individual student's thoughts and reactions, rather than the teacher's or her classmates'. As one of my colleagues has suggested, the journal records what a student thinks before I've told her what to think; indeed, it both induces and captures the moment of discovery.

The cost to the instructor for assigning journals, like any other writing assignment, is paid in the currency of time. I ask students to write a 250-word entry three times a week, and such regular writing adds up rapidly. I collect, read, and grade journals four times a semester. However, I grade journals on a fairly simple scale: An average of three thoughtful entries a week

earns full credit, one or two per week partial credit, and none none. Note that to "count," an entry must exhibit thought. (Some students draw arrows pointing to the thought in each entry, in case I'm liable to miss it.) Freed from having to defend a grade, I'm able to read journals in a spirit of cooperative intellectual exploration, commenting, prodding, encouraging, and arguing with the student without the static of grades getting in our way. This also makes reading journals both more enjoyable and less time-

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The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives.

--Robert Maynard Hutchins

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consuming than reading an equivalent amount of student writing in other forms--a consideration of potential interest to instructors of large classes.

I find that the benefits of journal writing to instructor and to student are well worth the cost. Students learn to think about assigned material on their own, using writing as a means of exploration, and consequently arrive at class with something to say in which, because of their time at task, they are invested and interested. Participation is increased, and class discussion tends to be vigorous. Students have the opportunity to try out ideas without fear of penalty, as well as to ask questions that they might not raise in class. Moreover, they get practice in using the language of the discipline they're trying to learn. An informal means of communication is opened up between student and teacher through which I frequently discover that

more thought is going into a student's work than is immediately apparent in class. Through journals, I'm also alerted to my own occasional failures to articulate some ideas clearly: if two or more students make the same outrageous statement, I become aware that sometime, somehow, I've miscommunicated.

Journals can be used effectively in any discipline. In talking with colleagues throughout the university, I've become aware of many different approaches to journal assignments, each suited to the instructor's syllabus, teaching style, and goals. For a more comprehensive presentation of the potential of student journals, I recommend Toby Fulwiler's The Journal Book, (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook, 1987).

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### **Will the Nurse Who Cares for You Know How to Reason Well?**

It is the nurse who is at the front line of health care providers making life saving decisions. The ability to make good, well reasoned judgements is essential to the care they provide. The National League of Nursing (NLN), the accreditation body for all nurse education programs, recognizes this. It is has, also, recognized that traditional teaching methods have failed to insure that our college students graduate with good critical thinking abilities. Our faculty believe that we must prepare students for a future in nursing practice that exists in a continuously changing and complex environment. To accomplish this the student's preparation must foster the skill and habit of thinking critically.

This year the School of Nursing was faced with a formidable challenge by the NLN, as were all nurse education programs. The challenge is to give evidence that our students are being taught and encouraged to be critical thinkers. Recognizing the mandate, Oakland University's School of Nursing has participated in two workshops presented by Richard W. Paul of Sonoma State University, a noted expert in the area of critical thinking. Several committees were formed with the charge of defining the concept of a critical thinking process (one that is congruent with the SON philosophy), determining the criteria by which the existence of the process can be judged to be present and deciding how the

quality of critical thinking will be evaluated in student work. Each faculty member has been charged with developing teaching strategies that support the new pervasive organizer of critical thinking within the curricula.

We have begun to use case study scenarios to convey essential theory and specific topical objectives. Students are separated into groups and given a case study to discuss in their group. In most cases they are asked to assess the case, determine the appropriate interventions, indicate their reasoning for choosing the approach they have selected and to give an idea how they would evaluate the effectiveness of their care. Students then present the work of their group to their classmates. The instructors are finding that student participation in these groups and the responsibility for creating a well prepared presentation requires the student to keep up with outside readings and assignments.

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What people did not reason into,  
they cannot be reasoned out of.

--Frederick W. Evans  
Shaker Saying

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In the maternal-child clinical, students have an opportunity to construct care plans as a group. In this exercise the students or the clinical instructor chooses a client family being cared for, in the clinical area. One student is asked to conduct a biopsychosocial assessment of this family and present it to their classmates in a post-clinical setting (methods for maintaining patient confidentiality are incorporated). The student group then interacts to critically think through a plan of care for the indicated family. They determine together if they have the information needed. They cooperate in categorizing data. They discuss any interpretations or assumptions they believe might influence their decision making. The group discusses what they believe is the primary need or issue requiring nursing care. Once this diagnosis has been made the students work together to decide the goals that must be established to respond to the indicated need. As a group, they

decide upon the appropriate nursing interventions and again discuss why this approach is appropriate. Students are encouraged to reflect on what they believe the implications of this care will possibly be for this family and if there are other consequences related to putting their plan into action. Both care plan assignments require that the students submit individual papers discussing their assumptions, other potential consequences and scientific rationale for the plan constructed. This method allows the students to learn a variety of ways of thinking through the same problem and how to cooperate and interact with professional peers.

A major assignment for the junior year in nursing is the Family Paper. Students in nursing are rarely given an opportunity to gain insight about how their own life experiences influence their perceptions and care of patients. This assignment attempts to provide for this experience. The paper develops through two phases. In phase I, students are given criteria for writing a paper about their own family experiences. They are asked to share only what they are comfortable in sharing. They are encouraged to consider the structure, function and development of the family in which they grew up as a child.

Later the insights of phase I of this assignment are used to guide the second phase of the paper. Students select a family with whom they have worked during the semester. Using their knowledge of family theories, including family and individual development, the students are asked to compare and contrast their own family experiences with the family experiences of the individual/family for whom they have given nursing care. They are then to give an analysis of how they believe their life experience influenced the observations they made and the care they provided that client or that family.

Our evaluations of the critical thinking students have invested in these individual and group assignment is being conducted by asking about their work:

- Has the student given a purpose for their thinking?
- Have they presented the precise question they are attempting to answer?
- Have they discussed the point of view with in which they are thinking?
- Have they presented the information needed to answer the question posed?

- Have they discussed how they are interpreting the information?
- Have they given the concepts or ideas central to their thinking?
- Have they shared the conclusions that they have made?
- Did they discuss their assumptions or what they have taken for granted in the process of their thinking?
- Have they summarized any potential implications or consequences if their conclusions are accepted and put into action?

The student response to these teaching methods has been somewhat guarded. They were comfortable their past very passive role to learning. Some have voiced a preference for didactic lecture and rote memorization of facts. The didactic and rote is all that most have experienced as a method for learning. They have been unable to make the link of how ineffective a list of facts is when faced with a real life crisis in caring for patients. Our hope is that these methods will encourage them to be active learners responsible for their own continued learning throughout life. We hope they will learn critical thinking methods that they will find efficient and effective in their personal as well as professional lives. Most importantly, we hope that this more effective approach to reasoning will benefit the clients and families to whom they give future nursing care.

--Mary E. Mittelstaedt  
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### **Developing a Franchising Component and Class Within the Marketing and Management Curriculum**

"Franchising is an arrangement whereby a supplier, or franchiser, grants a dealer, a franchisee, the right to sell products in exchange for some type of consideration."

(Pride and Ferrell, 1992, p. 413)

In 1991 over 543,000 individual franchise retail outlets generated \$757.8 billion in revenue while employing over 7.2 million people. These revenues accounted for over 35% of all retail-related sales for the year. Yet in spite of the

contribution of franchise operations to our economy, very little is taught about franchising in the typical marketing and management courses at either the undergraduate or graduate level. This is in part due to the fact the franchising has expanded rapidly during the past decade. As a result, there are few formal programs in franchising and even fewer graduate educational experiences that discuss franchise operations. Consequently, the faculty within Management and Marketing have not been exposed to franchising through formal educational programs.

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What am I going to have my students do today?  
What's it good for?  
How do I know?

--Neil Postman & Charles Weingartner  
Teaching as a Subversive Activity

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Because many of our students are exposed to this type of organization (some typical local franchise operations include: Domino's, Little Caesar's, Ziebart and Inacom), we felt it was important to address the issue of franchising.

This proposal was intended to develop a franchising component within several marketing and management courses during 1992-1993. Based on information we generated during that year, our long term goals included developing regular franchising components in several Management and Marketing courses and possible MBA elective on franchising.

During 1992-1993 we accomplished several things:

1. Met with Mr. E. J. Hartmann, CEO of Ziebart Tidy Car. Mr. Hartmann is very involved in the international franchise organization. He provided information and sources to us. In addition, he volunteered and met several of our classes and allowed our students to tour his headquarters.

2. I introduced speakers in selected classes. The classes include: MKT-420 Distribution Channels Management, MKT-430 Sales Management, MKT-680 Sales Management and MGT-660 Small Business. In each of these classes, specific feedback was solicited through a short questionnaire. The items were focused on interest

in franchising, understanding of franchising, etc. This information was analyzed by a student assistant during the Winter 1993 semester.

Many of our student's have expressed a desire to enter into business for themselves. Pride and Ferrell report that franchise operations go out of business significantly less often than non-franchise operations during the first critical years. In fact, 94% of all franchise operations are successful. Introducing franchising into the curriculum not only exposes students to this area, but allows for a systematic examination of this form of business through the review of franchise-related strategic, marketing and economic issues.

During 1992-1993, we estimate that approximately 100 students were exposed to the guest speakers.

3. We requested published material from the international franchise group. This material will soon be placed in Kresge Library.

4. Based on the above information we conducted a faculty development seminar during the Spring 1993 for all SBA faculty who wished to learn more about franchising issues for their classes. Ten faculty participated.

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#### **Editorial Information**

***Insights & Ideas* is published twice a year, in the spring and fall, by the Oakland University faculty Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, Office of Academic Affairs, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48309--4401. The newsletter is distributed free of charge to Oakland University faculty. Letters, news, and requests for additional copies should be sent to the address given above.**

**--Kenneth M. York, Editor**