**HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE HIGH EXPECTATIONS TO YOUR STUDENTS IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE THEIR SUCCESS? .**

Ted Panitz

I have tried a number of things that have a very positive impact upon my students.

1. I send my students a letter prior to class describing the cooperative nature of the class and my expectations. I ask them to write a math autobiography, get the text, read chapter 1 and work out as many problems as they can. I give them my home and work phone numbers just in case the letter causes an anxiety attack. The effect is marvelous as reported by my students.

2. I collect and read all the autobiographies and respond with personal notes of encouragement and/or verbal responses when appropriate. The fact that we are writing back and forth opens up a line of communication about each student in the context of the course.

3. I ask the students to sign a Success Contract which I sign outlining what I will do and what I expect them to do. I actually refer to it throughout the semester and remind them of their commitment to the course and themselves as well as to me.

4. I ask my students to do a written analysis of the 7 principles as they apply to math classes and cooperative learning. Number 6 often receives a lot of discussion because students are not used to hearing high expectation expressed about them. Again I write back explaining my thoughts and experiences. In a way this establishes a peer relation versus that of student and teacher.

5. When students are working in groups I resist providing quick answers and encourage them to seek answers themselves by relying on the abilities of their members. I comment that someone in the group will be able to find a solution and working together they will certainly be able to answer each members questions. It takes them a little while to get used to this but after they do they revel in each group members success.

6. At the end of each exam or assignment I ask students to comment on how they feel they are doing and how the class is going. I also ask if they have any suggestions for me which might improve the class. This is optional and not graded. It tells them that I respect and value their opinions.

7. I provide a lot of verbal encouragement throughout the semester. Especially before exams when they may be nervous and after exams when they do well. Since I observe them working together I am in an excellent position to suggest where they need extra work, where they are doing especially well, or what strategy they might try to prepare themselves.

8. I try to learn something about each student that I can relate to and I discuss things with them which will help them understand my background and interests better. I always explain my rationale for doing things. I share my experiences with them and the class and encourage them to do the same. Many students have told me that knowing me personally sets high expectations since they do not want to let me down. They see me as a friend and mentor.

9. I use a mastery approach to testing where I check exams for correct answers and return the papers for corrections during the exam. I do not give partial credit at this point, I simply circle the problems which are not correct. The passing grade is 80% after the corrections are completed and if students obtain the 80% I then keep returning the tests until the student has 100% correct answers. The emphasis is on understanding the problem, not the grade and all students become capable of obtaining a perfect test. The effect of this approach is to empower the students, create a positive assessment atmosphere and encourage the students to take more responsibility for their learning and success.

This approach encourages students to keep trying problem solutions until they figure out how to solve a problem. It helps them get past the problem of their making silly mistakes that imply they do not understand a concept because they did not get the exact right answer. It demands that they keep thinking about a solution until they resolve in their minds how to complete it and it puts a great deal of responsibility on their shoulders for their success. The alternative of giving a test in 50 minutes or what ever a class period is, collecting it, without any time for student reflection, and returning it at the next class or next week with perhaps some review by the teacher is just the kind of assessment that has not worked so far. If it did we would not be trying to implement the NCTM standards or talking about the apparent decreasing math abilities of our students.

10. Cooperative learning techniques set high expectations of students. Students work in groups collaboratively in all my classes during every class session. I encourage them to help each other and express their opinions about their problem solutions. As they get comfortable with this approach and with their partners their self esteem grows and the expectations of what they can accomplish rises dramatically. People who previously approached math with great anxiety suddenly see themselves as tutor/teachers, not just recipients of someone else's knowledge. Cooperative learning carries with it a presumption that students can learn the material together and then demonstrate their abilities individually through a variety of assessment methods including exams, oral presentations, written assignments and working on the board.

11. During the semester I periodically survey the students to ask their opinion about how they feel the course is progressing. Is it meeting their expectations, what could I do to facilitate their learning, what could they do to help the class and themselves? We then discuss their observations and concerns and try to arrive at a consensus about how to improve the operation of the class. This procedure allows me to explain my rationale for my class procedures and to find out if the class is responding positively. I accept their suggestions when a "strong" majority of students reach an agreement on what they would like to see change and formulate a rationale for their decision. I rarely run into problems with a few students dominating or moving the class in an inappropriate direction because I facilitate very interactive discussions and by request a philosophical basis for their desired changes. The one answer which I do not accept is "The change will make the class easier" Accepting the classes collective wisdom has an empowering effect which raises their expectations of themselves. Imagine convincing a professor to alter his/her class procedure.   
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From: "Gail R. Englert" <genglert@pen.k12.va.us>

I always give my students (fourth graders) a chance to correct the errors on their tests, for a higher grade, but also to learn a bit more than they showed they understood on the test. I have discussed with them the idea that a test is an

open door with an invitation to learn something... and even at that young age, they begin to understand they have some responsibility for their own learning. I have been pleased that often even the ones with the A's turn in corrected tests.

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From: Jennifer Mather <mather@HG.ULETH.CA> STLHE-L

The list of ways to set high expectations for students was a fascinating one. I can add a couple of ideas. One I try is to include them in the decision making about grading. For instance, my students in Child Development are beginning to write an essay (entitled generally Me as a Child). Next class I will go in and ask them what I should allocate the marks for, and from their suggestions (with a little pressure here and there from me) I will make up a simple marking guide, which differs a little from semester to

semester as they decide, but is basically the same. It's true that this makes my life simpler for marking, both as a guide to me and so they KNOw where their grade comes from. But also we as a class have made it clear what a good essay should have, and that can't possibly hurt in setting the stndards for them.

Jennifer Mather Psychology, U of Lethbridge

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From: joe parsons <jparsons@UVIC.CA> STLHE-L

Possibly the best evidence that this principle is valid comes from the extensive research done on the late Fred Keller's method of instruction best known as PSI (Personalized System of Instruction) or the Keller Plan. One element of PSI is "Unit Mastery," the requirement that every student attain a high performance standard (often 90%) before being allowed to advance to the next unit of the course. Essentially, this tells every student that they are expected to attain high levels of performance.

The evidence that PSI works to foster higher performance, better retention of material covered, more student activity (work), and higher course ratings is well documented in a number of research articles. Indeed, I know of no other instructional method that has as much empirical support. I've included below some references to PSI that you and other list members might find interesting. One other that related specifically to "unit mastery criteria" can be found in:

Parsons, J.A. and Delaney, H.D. (1978) Effects of unit-quiz mastery criteria on student performance. \_Journal of Personalized Instruction\_, 3, 225-228.

Keller, F.S. (1968) "Good-bye, teacher..." \_Journal of Applied BehaviorAnalysis\_, 1,79-89.

Taveggia, T. C. (1976) Personalized instruction: A summary of comparative research, 1967-1874. \_American Journal of Physics Teachers\_, 44, 1028-1033.

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From: HEPROC Moderator <reimann@radix.net>

From: Carol B. Rein <crein@moose.uvm.edu>

" I ask the students to sign a Success Contract which I sign outlining what I will do and what I expect them to do."

RE: this, I would like to add that \*I\* outline what is expected of \*me\*, as well and what a student's rights are. I encourage my students to be critical learners, and to realize that I am honor-bound, professionally-bound and contract-bound to meet their expectations, as well. By making the "expectations" issue bilateral rather than uni-directional, I get more respect, more compliance, more interest from my students--and they learn how to handle themselves in later, life-long learning, as well.

Primary grade teacher / now full-time Grad student (Counseling)

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From: PHavholm@acs.wooster.edu (Peter Havholm)

In teaching English literature, I find that getting students' essays back quickly -- with lots of comments -- tends to encourage them to meet my expections about being thorough and prompt with their reading and writing assignments. I find this difficult to do but \_always\_ worth the effort.

Peter Havholm The College of Wooster   
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From: mks@fireant.ma.utexas.edu Martha Smith amte   
Sender: amte@csd.uwm.edu

I have some comments regarding Ted Panitz' comments below.

Certainly, explaining one's rationale for doing things is something every teacher ought to do; it doesn't take too much time and effort, and is definitely worth it. The students have a right to know this information -- and since we're asking them to justify their conclusions, we need to do the same.

Asking for and responding to student feedback is also in the "reasonable and important" category.

But how much can one effectively give personal attention of the sort Ted describes? In one class a year, of about twenty students, I have students write journals, which I read and comment on regularly. I also talk a certain amount about my own experiences. I certainly can be a mentor, within limits, to this many students, but I can't be their friend. That is overwhelming to me. It leads to burnout pronto. I need to set boundaries in order to avoid burnout. Undoubtedly this is partly a matter of personality. I admire teachers who can be their students' friends, but I am personally not capable of giving in this way.

I also find the prospect of giving the amount of personal attention I give to this one class to all my students overwhelming. I do learn the names and majors of all the students in small classes, and make an effort to learn as many names as possible in large classes (a hundred or so students), but never learn them all. I try to make encouraging remarks on exams, but even this gets overwhelming in large classes.

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From: Mike Kvenich <KVENICH@ADMIN.HUMBERC.ON.CA> EDSTYLE

If you are going to talk the walk then you better be ready to walk the walk. Many teachers will provide lip service to the principle of HIGH EXPECTATIONS. But will not follow through on what it takes to service high expectations. Ways that I communicate high expectations.

1. A paper is received and the work is substandard. The paper is returned with a list of the standards required. No marks lost   
just a lot of time used up by the student. Soon the message gets through do it right the first time by following and using   
the standards. A paper going back the first time with no loss in marks may seem tooeasy on the students, but if the standards   
are still not met by the 3rd or 4th time the student begins some serious reflection on the objectives of the paper.

2. There are some consequences for papers being returned 1st time, 2nd time include an outline, 3rd time provide an outline, bibliography before rewritiing plus a meeting with me to review the objectives. 4th time student must go to the writing lab and show evidence of work on areas of weakness identified beforehand.

3. One of the best ways to communicate HIGH EXPECTATIONS is not to accept work that is unacceptable. In Mastery Learning the standards must be absolutely clear. A problem with this approach is that teachers can end up doing remediation, more than they wish to do.

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From: Suzy M Hill <SuzyMHill@AOL.COM> TCC-L USCS/GTC/Converse colleges

I have found that setting a higher grading scale encourages them to work harder to make their grades. I also hold five points for -class participation, and quality work.

If they want them, they have to do a bit more. This isn't perfect, somtimes they complain that I am hard. My answer is to the effect that they should put forth more effort, and they usually do. I teach Geography, so there is leeway in their answers as long as they can support them. I try to get them to think rather than to memorize. I am always amazed that so many of them will do it if we give them the opportunity.

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COM> tcc-l

I find two systems work for my students, depending on the nature of the course. For courses that lend themselves well to objective grading, I offer a standard grading distribution system and advise that everyone can get "A's" .. pointing out that there is no competition in such a system (I explicitly state in writing that I will not apply a curve to anyone's detriment). I then encourage students to study together and help each other succeed in the course. I also point out my strictnesses/particular requirements, such as no make-up quizes, clearly in writing in advance. I regularly try to make the course interesting and offer lots of encouragments (as some students do seem to respond well to it, other students of course don't need it). I have I think the highest student success rate (and lowest attrition) around, and regularly draw students from areas served by other colleges. At any event, that is for the

objective style courses.

For courses requiring students to write essays or research reports, I set a very high standard, point out that getting an "A" requires genuinely excellent work product (as i put it also, "publishable")... again point out that I will not apply any curves to anyone's detriment... encourage a great deal....circulate some exceptionally high quality examplar reports as inspiration/targets.... all with excellent results for the students. I get some grumbling about standards being too high, or work expectations being too great (I do usually "compromise" on workload involving small assignments after midterm, so the students' appeals DO get recognized and positive response.... and so they can concentrate on producting even finer major research papers in the last few weeks of the term (in other words, I sacrifice some of the smaller assignments with students' explicit attention drawn to how this should enable them to do even better

work on their major reports). This works nicely: most of the students do put in more effort on producting better major reports.

When it is all over, or nearly so, we have a nice potluck party with the professor popping for pizzas... and everyone is happy to have succeeded so well (or so it seems; perhaps they are just glad to be getting the hell out!?) ... ha! Seriously, students come up to me on the streets of towns three thousand miles from home, and thank me for having given them such really superduper courses .... ten or twenty years ago! ... I

somehow manage to avoid showing how I've totally forgotten these fine folks in the intervening decades, ha! If it does slip out, I just excuse myself by explaining how Alzheimer's is an occupational hazard of the teaching profession.

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From: kjuarez@Metro.NET (Kathy Juarez)

In our learning community (a mini-school of approx 220 students within a larger 9-12 high school), we use rubrics as one way of communicating high expectations. In planning a humanities or sciences unit, we discuss at length what we want students to know, do and understand at the end of the unit. We then invent what we currently call an Exhibition and through which we imagine that we might know whether students have in fact learned what we hoped. Students are presented with an overview and a more detailed description of the exhibition which will conclude the unit at the very beginning of the unit, so that they know where we are heading, how we hope to get there, and what will be expected of them along the way and at the end.

At some point fairly early in the unit, we usually engage students in a conversation or brainstorming session about what a quality exhibition would look like. Adding their input to that of the teachers, we construct a rubric which describes as carefully as we can the characteristics of an exhibition which reaches "Mastery" (grade of B) and "Distinguished" (grade of A) and distribute it to students. Thus they know at the beginning the answer to the question: How do I (pass/get an A/etc) in this class? Work which does not reach the Mastery/B level is returned to the student with a

temporary grade of Incomplete and instructions about what they still need to do to bring the work to the acceptable level. We find that students often get lots of Incompletes at first, and some have to redo work more than once, but eventually most learn to raise their own standard of work as time goes on so that they more regularly submit gradeworthy stuff the first time.

We try to calibrate (and eventually raise) our standards by sitting down together with some student work, applying our rubrics to it, and discussing the quality of their work...and of our own. We don't do this as often as we'd like, unfortunately.

If you are interested in seeing an example of an Exhibition Call (the overview/instruction sheets) and an accompanying rubric, let me know.

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From: bill mullin <BMULLIN@UNB.CA>

I tell my students, in behavioural objectives whenever possible, the standards I have set both for them AND for me. I stick to my end of the "deal" and thus serve as a role model.

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From: Richard Tiberius <r.tiberius@UTORONTO.CA> STLHE-L

My method is very much like Bill Mullin's. In my written course plan I detail

both student and teacher responsibilities. My responsibilities are considerable and set to a high standard. Again, I try to stick to it as an example. It seems to work.

Richard G. Tiberius

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From: Keith Engelhardt <ah376@DAYTON.WRIGHT.EDU> edstyle

I aggree with Mike Kvenich's statement "Many teachers will provide lip service to the principle of HIGH EXPECTATIONS." However, I would offer a different perspective. We far to often only focus on high expectations for the performance of the students, rather than of ourselves. In my view a more appropriate question would be: "What expectations do I have for my own performance as a teacher and how can I model them to the students?" I have attended many a class where there were high expectations for students, but not for the teachers themselves.

| Keith Engelhardt

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From: Keith Green <kgreen@WL.CC.MN.US> edstyle

As a college teacher I agree wholeheartedly!!! I have taught for 12 years, and I too have seen a range of teachers from those who do indeed "walk the talk," to those whose very classroom behavior absolutely violates what they themselves say students should be able to do. For example, we say we want students to be able to express

themselves orally, yet I hear horror stories over and over again of college teachers who just read to their students!!! We want students to be able to express themselves in writing, yet I see copies of handouts, etc., that are poorly written and are very

hard to understand.

I teach in the area of Speech Communication, so your issue is a real sore point with me. I tell students to treat any public address situation seriously, yet if they see faculty members being lazy and ineffective, yet keeping their jobs and getting paid well, the message is clear to them.

I have had several students over the past 12 years talk with me about how being able to watch me do what I want them to do models behavior for them to emulate. I'm not the world's greatest communicator, but I do try to "walk the talk."

What I think we as college teachers forget is that just as high school teachers are role models for students, we too are role models for our students. Granted, we work at a more "adult" level (i.e., it's more acceptable to let students see us as humans with vices, being "off the wall" occasionally, etc.), but I sincerely believe that a student will be heavily influenced on his/her choice of a career not based on what book they liked the best but based on what teacher "touched them," got them interested, shared his/her passion for their subject. That's where true learning happens!!!

Sorry for a long reply to a fairly short question, but we as teachers often blame those "damn, apathetic students," when at times, we first need to consider what we are doing.

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From: HEPROC Moderator <reimann@radix.net>

From: Brenda Dawe <daweb@k2.kirtland.cc.mi.us>

Carol: That is a fantasic idea. So many teachers put on the "god" mode (like in cheating on "Doom" computer game. They love the power that they probably lack in other aspects of their lives. The two way contract puts the responsibility on both for accountability.

I teach postsecondary at a small 30 year old two year college (home page at

http//kirtland.cc.mi.us...visit us) and from day one make attendance worth 15% of their final grade. I tell them that if they COME, it is up to me to see they get their investment from time and money back with interest.

I am also very conscious of the group's "mood meter reading". Since I deal with adults (average age is 35) there are times to drop preplans and wing it. It always amazes me that by the end of the semester we have covered the objectives inspite of delays, snow cancellings, flu epedemics, tardiness, etc I wonder, do you have any deaf/hard of hearing students in your class room? I am interested in finding these situations and some stategy on "teaching" (not "babysitting" them as is happening in our district. (ASL is my course subject.)

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From: Brenda Dawe <daweb@k2.kirtland.cc.mi.us>

Dr. Villaire shared very good "retake-grade improvement" stategy with us

and I can see where this will be beneficial for my grading system. Teaching

American Sign Language as a foreign language always presents a problem for

many of my students. It is not an easy class to master and for the students

that are under pressure to keep a high g.p.a., it can be disasterous. They

can't afford to withdraw and yet a lower grade makes them desperate for ways

to up the grade. I only allow one (10%) extra credit and this is often not

enough to save them. I will try this on my next major test.

I am so blessed by the networking of this group and am growing so

much...THANKS TO ALL who contribute here.

By the way...I DON'T get the big bucks, but I did get a great birthday cake,

book marker, and paper flowers from my adult "baby signers" so I am well paid

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From: HEPROC Moderator <reimann@radix.net>

From: Wendy Mobilia <wmobilia@quadra.antiochne.edu>

re: <I teach postsecondary at a small 30 year old two year college (home page at http//kirtland.cc.mi.us...visit us) and from day one make attendance worth 15% of their final grade. I tell them that if they COME, it is up to me to see they get their investment from time and money back with interest.

I find this perspective to be quite shortsighted and perhaps an unhappy product of the egocentric focus that has become pervasive in our culture. Learning is the exclusive province and responsibility of the learner. Teaching is a mediation, facilitation, coaching function. If "showing up" is the extent of student obligation - with the bulk of the responsibility falling on the "teacher," one has set very low expectations for students indeed. Education is a shared and social process, with shared responsiblity for levels of engagement and commitment to quality. However, the elements to which a teacher commits and those to which students must commit are quite different. Without clear standards of quality - standards for products,

processes, and for a depth of understanding, and without clear accordance of

responsibility for meeting these standards resting squarely on students' shoulders, one is engaging in mere entertainment. Students should fully participate in setting quality standards and fully participate in holding themselves accountable to those standards.

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From: Mr 'G' Man <sgass@GJ.NET> altlearn

In setting high expectations, I would suggest that persons I know who claim this as a goal often confuse whether they mean it for their students, or for themselves. If the immediate response is, "What's the difference?," well, I would suggest there is cause for concern. Over-ambition of an instructor is often linked (in my experience)

to a personal desire to live out one's personal goals through another's acheivements; sometimes to make up for what one didn't do earlier in life.

Simple test: Am I pushing this issue for myself, or for the student? Can I realistically say the latter, when I DON'T actually know the student so well... After all, how long have I actually known this person ?... Did I create this goal, or did the student ??

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From: Olle Kjellin <olle.kjellin@HUM.HV.SE> altlearn

In teaching Swedish to refugees, immigrants and other foreigners in Sweden I set out by giving them my "efficient language-learning philosophy" summarized in a "six-step program for (second) language learning". In virtually the same breath I guarantee them that "You will be able to pronounce perfect or almost perfect Swedish - if you want to; I can't teach you Swedish, only show you how to learn it; and if you want to learn to speak (=pronounce) it perfectly or almost perfectly, I garantee you that

you will be able to; but you yourselves must want to." Usually most of them want to, when I put it that way. So, in effect, the students create both that goal and the high expectations that will help them achieve it.

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From: "COMPTON, PHILIP W." <p-compton@onu.edu>

I will always remember a college professor once saying that I should not be

studying to pass a test, but I should be studying to become competent in a

career. Maybe if High School teachers took this approach it would help.

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From: lmaitlan@nylink.org (Laura)

High school teachers are not in the position to motivate students by alluding to a career. For young-middle adolescents, that's too far off for most. What we need to do is motivate them for next Tuesday or next year. Most of my students are not intrinsically motivated. I'm amazed at the scores even the valedictorian earns on the need for cognition questionnaires! What I've found that does work is providing very tight rubrics for assignments. Students no longer believe that they deserve an A

on a project for a mediocre product. They have the rubric before they begin a project and know what A work entails. Of course this doesn't work for all, but it does work for most.

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From: HEPROC Moderator <reimann@radix.net>

From: Pat Schutz <pschutz@mesa5.Mesa.Colorado.EDU>

Perhaps the author of the first message that follows my brief response is indicating that although s/he teaches at the postsecondary level, students may not yet have learned the value of learning. Maybe the 15% attendance grade appears to be necessary at that particular 2 yr. institution and no amount of "motivating for the next session" is effective.

Personally, I do not record attendance after the first week, but students who attend AND PARTICIPATE definitely get extra points when their grades are a bit below the next highest grade in the final analysis. And I have never taught a course that had low attendance after the 3rd week of the semester.

I subscribe to my own interpretation of the androgogical model and use different techniques, to motivate for attendance and high achievement, for different courses at different levels with different student populations. It generally takes about 3 weeks

before the hair on the right side of my head begins to grow back (I scratch my head when I am confused; I am right handed), but by then a strategy for attendance motivation has been formulated and we are on our way.

Some of my colleagues take attendance and I assume that they feel that that is a productive, student oriented strategy. It's different than the way I do it, that's all. My modus operandi has always been geared toward assisting students in becoming personally immersed in our subject matter because it is of value to them, and becoming independent learners because they appreciate the pleasure of learning.

I'm still looking for that perfect way to teach, facilitate, coach, transmit, and/or profess my subjects in such a way that my students learn and use the material I uncover in my courses.

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From: Ed Nuhfer <enuhfer@carbon.cudenver.edu>

One of the criticisms that Wm. Glasser makes in The Quality School is that students so seldom produce high quality because they seldom see it. One of the things I do is to show a high quality piece of work either as a reading assignment or as even a video. A favorite is Stephen Jay Gould who is such an eloquent thinker and conveys it so well in writing and speaking. I ask students to analyze WHY this piece of work is termed as HIGH QUALITY by peers - what makes it different from their text or a newspaper article? It soon becomes evident from discussion about what one has to do to produce high quality--it's really work and a lot of learning is needed to be able to begin to work at such a level. Quality work usually is built from a central unifying concept--not just a rambling presentation of facts and detail. In quantitative work, it's not the

ability to get the right number--rather it's the ability to be aware every step of the way what reasoning must be aplied to distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable results. Attention to process and concepts really can be taught and it makes a big difference in the products.

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From: Susan Wilcox <wilcoxs@POST.QUEENSU.CA> sthle

I disagree very much with the idea that teachers should SET high expectations FOR their students. Teachers who justify this by saying that they set high expectations for their own work, thereby modeling the process for their students, are acting as though there is no such thing as power in the classroom. Setting high expectations for others (while saying -- hey, I'm keeping up my end of the bargain, so you should too) far too often sets students up for failure and allows a teacher to feel smug about the high standards they have kept. Too often, this approach means that teachers are,

in effect, expecting students to meet expectations that are appropriate for the teacher, but not necessarily for the student -- the role of modeling is twisted so that its purpose is to turn students into copies of the teacher. It can be about teachers validating themselves on the backs of their students.

Students must be allowed and encouraged to set their own expectations for their own work. I believe it is the responsibility of the teacher to support students in this process -- to help them set realistic yet visionary expectations, to help them meet the expectations they set for themselves, and to help them become better assessors of their own work. Self-evaluation is a very important part of this process. Students also need sufficient opportunities to choose what they will learn, how they will go about

learning it, and what level of performance they wish to achieve. To be effective in supporting this process, one thing teachers can do is model the process of setting and working to meet one's own high expectations. But more importantly, the teacher must find every opportunity to interact with the students in a manner that is open to their interests and needs. The teacher must WANT to really hear what it is the students expect for themselves and must be willing to start from there.The only 'standard' that motivates learning is the personally meaningful one that individuals can imagine as possible for themselves.

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From: Susan Wilcox <wilcoxs@POST.QUEENSU.CA>

Some more thoughts on this issue...

This morning I was working on 2 projects -- a) helping an instructor figure out how to improve the quality of his students' work, and b) writing a proposal for a project intended to help faculty improve the quality of their teaching. Both made me think about the problem of setting expectations -- who should do it, and how come doing it for others often doesn't work as well as we had hoped.

I turned for assistance to a great book by Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia (1993) -- Surpassing Ourselves: An Inquiry into the Nature and Implications of Expertise. I think when we say we hope learners will have high expectations of themselves it is because we think that will help them develop some degree of expertise in an area. B & S note that experts seldom exist in isolation, and suggest that the development of knowledge-building communities is the best way to support the

development of expertise (which reminds me of all the interest generated by "learning communities" on the POD listserv just a few days ago). B & S say it is a fallacy to assume that the energy needed to make a knowledge-building community must come from the individual student's thirst for knowledge. Interestingly, they suggest

that the motives for developing expertise are a) a desire for recognition from the people one regards as one's peers, b) a desire to have an impact, and c) a desire to participate in significant discourse. They then list Characteristics of Knowledge-Building Communities:

1. sustained study of topics in depth over a period of time

2. focus is on problems rather than categories of knowledge

3. inquiry is driven by students' questions

4. explaining is the major challenge (students are encouraged to produce their own theories)

5. focus is on collective goals of understanding and judgment rather than individual learning and performance (althugh educator pays attention to how individuals are doing)

6. students work in groups, each group with a different task related to a central topic (rather than students working individually, but all on same thing)

7. discourse is taken seriously (esp.responding to one another's work)

8. educator's own knowledge does not curtail what is to be learned.

9. educator remains the leader, but his/her role shifts from standing outside the learning process and guiding it to participating actively in the learning process and leading by virtue of being a more expert learner.

I think this is helpful for those of us who want to engage learners in worthwhile problems and develop their knowledge, their skills and their expectations of themselves in the process. I like it because it takes the emphasis off expectations and standards and re-emphasizes the need to support students (esp. by developing and leading a community of learners) and learn with them as they work through interesting and relevant problems at increasing levels of complexity.

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From: Erin Steuter <esteuter@MAILSERV.MTA.CA>

I'm glad this topic has come up. I have recently been engaged in an increasingly acrimonious dialogue with the student newspaper on campus over what I see as their lack of high expectations for the quality of the paper. Myself and other colleagues have tried to instructively point out grevious ommissions, errors of accuracy, plagiarism, lack of critical skills etc. The students on the paper respond to these efforts with hostility and antagonism. In the most recent round of this exchange, they claim that they have set their own goals for the quality of this paper and that they are

unequivocally pleased with the results of their efforts, and in retrospect would change nothing. Thus they have set their own standards and feel pride in having accomplished them. Any outside observer however, be it a scholar, potential employer, or member of the community would immediately recognize the distinct lack of professionalism and deplorable lack of basic communication skills demonstrated by this particular student effort.

Given this situation, does one:

- subscribe to the philosphy that there is no problem here as they have set goals and achieved them in their own eyes?

- Resign oneself to the fact that with this level of skill they will never work in an communication-based field?

-Continue to make suggestions for improvement to the unreceptive student paper staff?

-Make sure that nothing of this quality would ever receive a passing grade in your own courses?

-Join the disgruntled faculty who never expected anything better from a student paper anyway?

Erin Steuter Sociology and Anthropology Mount Allison University Sackville, N.B.

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From: Alan Wright <WAWRIGHT@AC.DAL.CA>

In an ideal world, at Ideal U, everyone (administrators, staff, faculty, students) would set high expectations for themseves. "High" in the sense that there would be a constant striving to learn, to understand, to gain new insights, to improve, to grow, to develop. This notion might even have something to do with the purpose of the university. Authentic expectations, self-developed expectations, are great expectations. That said, it is a 'cop-out' of the highest order to take, as a faculty member, a neutral stance on one's expectations for students. The "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergrad Education" handbook lists nine ways to operationalize the principle "Good Practice Communicates High Expectations". These nine emphasize

student effort,

importance of high standards,

professor clarity regarding expectations,

help for student goal-setting,

clarity regarding unfinished assignment policy,

suggested supplementary study material,

encouragement for frequent writing,

drawing attention to acheivement,

professor revision of courses and

feedback on progress during the course.

Surely, it is important to encourage students to authentically, through intrinsic motivation, adopt high standards. The talented, self-motivated students in university will do so no matter how distant, how aloof, how imperfect the prof. Others need the guidance, the clarity, the encouragement,... the inspiration of a professor who cares, provides leadership in the classroom. "Setting" high expectations is not so much a

question of 'imposing' as it is a question of 'inspiring'. If the coach doesn't believe the athletes can come up with a big performance, it is a rare team that will do so. Settling for half-hearted effort is made easy when it corresponds neatly to a self-fulfilling prophesy.

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From: Richard Tiberius <r.tiberius@UTORONTO.CA>

As with most discussions, as long as they remain at the abstract level we run the risk of using one another as whipping boys for our pet peeves. The "responsibilities" of the teacher (me), as outlined in my course plan, include: preparation of a bibliography, facilitation of the group process, creating opportunities to connect material with the experiences of the students, helping students with written projects, and so on. I

take these responsibilities seriously because I respect the students' time and I am honoured that they have chosen my course. I hope that by example, I can inspire them to take their responsibilities seriously, to work hard at them in order to

foster a fruitful learning experience for them and their colleagues. Student responsibilities include negotiating their learning contracts, responding to my comments on the first drafts of their papers if papers are part of the learning contract (in order to foster a dialogue between us rather than a master-servant relationship), courtesy to other members of the class (for example in letting me know when they will miss a class ) and so on.

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From: REDA@SMTPGATE.sunydutchess.edu (Reda, Ellena E. )

Subject: the self fulfilling prophecy

I read you letter with a great deal of interest. I am a true believer in the self fulfilling prophecy and do believe that you get what you expect fromyour students. I begin each semester by telling my students this and by telling them that I truly believe

that each of them is capable of learning waht it is I have to teach. I find they genereally rise to the occassion when they find that someone believes in them.

I enjoyed the list of things you do to put your students at ease. Interestingly enough I could have written a list very similiar. I ask all my students to write a math autobiography for me and I read and comment carefully on each one. I have used a Learning Compact with my classes. My students also do a writen analysis of their performance on a test and I ask them to think about how they could improve something before the next test. I am constantly giving them reflective questions to write about as well as questions asking for their input into a projet we may have done or soemthing I may have covered.

Ellena Dutchess Communtiy College Poughkeepsie,NY

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From: "Richard C. Harris" <harrisri@fcae.acast.nova.edu>

To: aednet <aednet@pulsar.acast.nova.edu>

Bravo!! Sounds like your're on the right track. When I was teaching at Purdue, some of the other Profs thought I was crazy when I gave out my home phone number and encouraged students to call when there was a problem. They really thought me crazy when a couple of students found themselves in the hospital for two weeks and I visited them (the students were impressed and so were their parents that a prof would be that concerned with a student). Students have a responsibility to learn, but instructors have a responsibility to teach and part of effective teaching involves

encouraging students to perform to the best of their abilities. Setting the right environment in the classroom -- one of mutual respect and cooperation -- goes a long way in facilitating the learning process. Most people respond better to instructors that show a real interest in the students. The students out there who "just want profs to answer their questions" are few IMHO.

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From: HEPROC Moderator <reimann@radix.net> From: villaire@fit.edu (N. E. Villaire)

I have been "lurking" in the background, and this is my first comment since becoming involved in the HEPROC forum. That being said, I find it interesting that the replies to the "setting standards" discussion confirm what I have learned over the last 30 years of teaching: there are many ways to solve academic problems. In reality, I doubt that any one of us has the "correct" answer to motivating individuals to do well, yet many of us do have the "correct" answer; it all depends upon who you are, your personality, the subject, the educational level of the sutdents, the maturity of the students and the motivation for taking the specific course involved. I have seen absolute tyrants motivate a class to perform far beyond any realistic standard, yet I have seen gentle, "socially sensitive", concerned teachers do the exact same thing with the same level of student studying the same subject. The first would not tolerate anything even

resembling the "contract" mentioned in earlier HEPROC replies, and the latter teacher could not possibly command the stunned fear/deference that the first teacher considers the norm, but both were very effective.

My style is probably a little of both extremes, and it has been developed over the years. I have taught at every level from elementry school through high school. My methods involve direct, personal (arms length, eye-to-eye contact) communication of each of the following:

Day 1:

-Who I am, and why I'm teaching this class.

-Who should be in this class, and why it is important to those individuals.

-Absolute fairness!!

-Clearly define the objective of the class. (That means telling them exactly what they should be able to do/know if they are successful.)

-I openly challenge the students to meet steep standards, and I set the bar as high as I can for the level of class being taught. I have found that students will rise to meet almost any standard you can set. In fact, most students work far below their capability, and a teacher who demands excellence will usually get it.

-I stake out my position as being friendly, approachable, concerned, willing to help as long as the individual is still trying to comply, and strict. I am not your mother, father, roommate, social partner, guard, disciplinarian but I will be available to give

information, and if you are in trouble, I am one of those individuals you can truly trust.

-The subject is introduced (I NEVER waste any part of any period by cheating my class out of the information and personal attention they have spent their time and money to obtain.).

-Assignment of outside homework or reading is made, and I announce that the first quiz will be over that material at the beginning of the next class. (I have found that this brings the class to a, "Study or else!; This is serious!" mode immediately. The quiz is always absurdly simple and reinforces the students' self confidence.)

I involve my students in "made-up examples" by name, ask rhetorical questions (and I do not give them the answers... someone else in the class - often with my assistance and prodding- will have to come up with an acceptable answer.), and hitchhike on their comments to introduce a new subject. Class involvement is the key!!

Perhaps some of that will be usable by some of you. For some, it would be a violation of their personality and would not work. By the way, I have one of the lowest student drop rates in the university. I still hear from my former grade and high school students these many years later, and they almost always start out with, "You were a challenge, but you always expected so much of me that I just had to do it... I learned a lot."

Unless you are teaching special education courses, which have a separate agenda, I urge you to set high standards, demand excellence, do not take sloppy work, clearly define what is required if they are to receive your approval and stick to it!! Yes, you are going to be controversial, but your reward will come many years later when your students use you as an example. It is worth it.

Dr. N. E. Villaire Graduate Program Chairman School of Aeronautics

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From: Karen Mink <KDMINK@AOL.COM> <L-ACLRNG@PSUVM.PSU.EDU>

Setting high expectations does, indeed, work. As a Title I teacher, I work solely with remedial reading students. Rather than use typical questioning strategies for remedial readers (who, what, where), I demand higher level thinking (why, what would you do, how does this apply to you). People observing my class are amazed at my student's ability to think.

I also extend wait time to a full 5 seconds for my students rather than going to the "smarter" student for the answer. This "makes" my students think rather than "coping out". From day one I expect my students to write. Parents say I am asking a lot but my kids, by this point of the year, are fabulous writers.

My reading scores, based on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test, show growths

of 2 months per every month the child is with me.

Yes!!!!

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From: Dean Mancina <DMancina@AOL.COM>

Subject: Re: Setting high student expectations

Ted, regarding high student expectations... I begin by believing my expectations are achievable! Many of my colleagues tell me that my expectations are "unrealistic for today's students." But I believe in them (the students AND my expectations) and that seems to make them happen most of the time.

For example, I begin and end my class on time, and I expect my students to arrive on time. Colleagues told me that this was unrealistic and unfair, especially for evening classes, when many students are rushing from their day jobs on the LA freeways, and faculty simply must accept that they will trickle into class throughout the evening. I don't. I tell the students what I expect on the first night, and, guess what? Beginning with week #2, my students are in their seats at 6:30pm when class begins. (And, by the way, I think NOT having the constant interruption of students arriving throughout a 3 hour class benefits all students (and me!) in my classes.)

Dean Mancina, Professor, Golden West College, Huntington Beach California

DMancina@aol.com

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From: nick herbert <quanta@MAIL.CRUZIO.COM> altlearn

I recently subscribed to ALTLEARN, and was intrigued by the issues raised in your comments on Setting High Student Expectations. I am an educational consultant in the homeschooling community, and, as such, help families set and achieve goals for family-designed education.

Much of my conversation with parents is centered around the question of who is the author of the stated goals, the parents or the children. This is an especially relevant topic for families whose children have spent some time in a conventional classroom before they make the decision to homeschool. One or the other of the parents will say "Oh, we could learn about the history of the Renaissance through art, or 19th century American literature, or the new physics, etc., etc". These noble curriculum ideas usually turn out to be a passionate interest of the parents rather than anything that tickles the fancy of the student.

Helping the parents realize this, and giving them the tools to relax and let their children find and follow their own deep interests, comprises the meat of my work. Most adults in our society have a lot of grief and recovery to do about their own educations, and finding their own motivation and goals for learning is an important part of that process.

Betsy Herbert South Street Centre quanta@cruzio

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From: Joe Macaluso <macaluso@sdenet.alsde.edu>

Alabama Adult Literacy Resource Center

Read appropriate sections in the book Management of Organizational Behavior by Hersey and Blanchard. Pay particular attention to the section on the pygmalion effect and positively reinforcing successive approximations. I realize that the book is about organizational behavior, but the principles are universal.

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From: rlaw@whe2.nl.edu (Randee Lawrence)

To: aednet <aednet@pulsar.acast.nova.edu>

In response to Joe's message, I think we need to be careful when we label principles as being "universal". Hersey and Blanchard put forth some useful ideas, however their model is extremely behavioristic, rational and linear. When you step outside of the dominant culture, it doesn't always translate. For example, the authors assume that the mature employee (who is positively reinforced), moves from a collaborative or relationship orientation to one of independence and autonomy. That would seem to

indicate that women or people from collectivist cultures are less mature. It seems to me that as responsible adult educators we need to be thinking about ways to allow for multiple perspectives and worldviews rather than claiming universals.

Randee Lipson Lawrence National-Louis University 200 S. Naperville Rd.

Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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From: Murray Meszaros <Murray.Meszaros@usoe.k12.ut.us>

To: aednet <aednet@pulsar.acast.nova.edu>

Randee Lawrence made an interesting observation on MATURITY in connection to the Hersey and Blanchard position.

>From both my readings from multiple authors and from my personal experiences, dawning MATURITY is a matter of progressing from "dependence" to "independence" and then to "interdependence." TRUE collaboration, being a part of interdependence in

my semantical understanding, is only realized inMATURE situations. Only the "mature" can be as concerned about or more concerned about the needs of others at the expense of their own. Imagine the power and capacity of individuals in such situations. Literally, 2 plus 2 equals 6+ in these situations.

Cooperation (a step cousin to collaboration) is possible in dependent and independent situations, but hidden agendas, withholding of information or contributions, etc. can still cap the power in cooperation situations. The synergy of collaboration is possible only when individuals are confident enough in themselves to drop barriers and contribute to the "common good." Often collaboration is tough to attain since all parties (in their "independent" situations) are waiting for the others to make the first move towards it.

Sometimes we hold our western culture up as the "ideal" modus operandi or standard. The independent person is deemed as the successful person and the mature person. However, we are also quickly learning that businesses that do not successfully harness the power of ALL staff lose the driving energy of those staff persons. Staff are either anchors or propellors.

--Murray Meszaros, Utah State Office of Education

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From: Eileen Quaglino <equaglin@ultrix.ramapo.edu>

To: aednet <aednet@pulsar.acast.nova.edu>

Richard, Congratulations!. I work at a college as a career counselor where many of the faculty and staff really care about the students as you describe. Yesterday I met with my dissertation chair at a very large institution I attend. I have his home phone

and address. I thanked him for being so caring and accessible during what for me was an extremely challenging and painful process. We need many more professors of the calibre you describe.

Eileen Quaglino Assistant Director, Career Services

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From: HEPROC Moderator <reimann@radix.net>

From: Carol B. Rein <crein@moose.uvm.edu>UVM Grad student / elementary teacher by trade

Loved hearing from you, Dr Vilenaire...we are basically on the same wavelength, I think. I am especially glad to see the developmental aspect addressed, which I am afraid was left out in the response made by Antioch's Education dept.--called up old apprehensions I (and many other teachers, let's face it) have about Academe--sometimes field practitioners feel we have to pay lipservice to those highly placed Education (placed close to the shell-like ear of State Ed.), while having to somehow broach the theory - vs - practice dichotomy...

Antioch's response was overgeneralized, made no allowance for cultural / developmental variables, sounded somewhat accusational and I suspect put the teacher (who had responded to my comment re: setting bilateral expectations) on the defensive. I was not clear about what I meant re: inviting student involvement in

the classroom through establishing what \*their\* expectations from \*me\*, as a teacher, should be: I tell my First Graders on the first and the last day of class, "promise me that you will never forget this. Even when you are in highschool, or college, or even if you are a grownup who wants to learn how to do something, remember your rights as a learner:

--you have a right not to be made to feel stupid for anything that happens in class. It is a safe place for you to try new things, because it is okay to make mistakes--they's how we learn. YOu also have a right to privacy; no other students should know what your grades are.

--never allow a teacher to send you to your seat to do a tas, when you don't understand how to do it--it is your right to ask, as many times as it takes, until you do. That is part of a teacher's job; that's what we are paid for

--you have a right to feel safe from physical harm. If someone hurts you, tell your teacher. If you don't feel safe, tell your teacher. If your teacher ignores it, tell your parents, or your principal. You see, the principal works for you, too. And WITH you.

--No one has a right to touch you or invade your personal space if you don't like it. Speak up, but politely. No one is allowed to hit you--not a teacher, not an aide, not a lunch lady, not a student--nobody. If a teacher says something that hurts your feelings, go to them and ask to speak to them privately, and tell them--how esle will they know? If someonehits you, tell your parents or your teacher. Keep telling until somebody does something.

--if you think you might be able to make a case for why you think an assignment was graded for less than you think it should, it is up to you to speak to your teacher and discuss this. Don't just stick it in your pocket and forget about it. You need to get involved in your schooling,and you may as well start now. YOu should always feel you have a right toask your teacher to show you your grades at any time, not just report card time, and to ask them to explain them to you. Checking on this from time to time is a good way of seeing how you're doing and getting help if you need it.

--you won't always have a teacher that you like--you might even think they don't like YOU--in all the years that you will be in school, there is chance that this will happen. Switching teachers is not possible, but learning how to deal with your feelings and decide the best way to complete the year, or the course, is an important skill to have. You will need it."

I can hear some moaning...let me tell you, young children are the most at risk, because they often go home thinking that being slapped by a teacher(omnipotent teacher!) is part of what school is--they don't think to bring it up at home. I have had first graders respectfuly ask for a private minute to tell me that something I said or did made them feel bad--and I am so happy to hear it and talk it over with them--modeling respectby GIVING it. Students trust so easily, especially the small ones, so I

am compelled to teach them scholarliness, survival skills, and what their rights as learners are--and what they have a right to expect of ME, their teacher. I have never seen this as part of any curriculum. I \*have\* seen children slapped, humiliated, and harshly punished, made compliant through intimidation, and singled out "as an example". While there are educators who will balk at my insistence on doing this,

I must respond by asking, \*do\* they or do they not feel comfortable in teaching learners their rights? IF not, why? Rights are not subject to permission--you either have them, or you don't, and if you \*do\* have them--by God, you must defend them and use them. There is no middle ground. Some might say that this speech might set up kids for unrealistic expectations, that they are being set up for a fall. Would you rather

leave them ignorant of their rights and set them up for later abuse, instead?.

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From: SHARIQ LODHI <LODHI@OMC.LAN.MCGILL.CA> stlhe-l

As a student I think that the problem of the perception of low student expectations has a lot to do with dilution. By dilution I mean that our resources are spread over so many courses (up to seven at some universities) that meaningful concentration on any one at times seems counter-intuitive.

Here at McGill a group of students and professors have banded together to devise a comprehensive alternative to the present system which expects to inspire students simply by "talking at them." We call ourselves the Atlantis Project. Our initiatives are based on small group interactive and participatory learning.

Students will expect more of themselves if teachers not only DEMAND more of them, but demonstrate that they are interested in the input of students as more that just evaluatory stimulus for the generation of a grade.

Shariq Lodhi McGill Chemistry '96

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From: frayer@duq2.cc.duq.edu (Dorothy Frayer)

To: pod@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu Subject: Re: Is everybody developable?

In response to Lynda Harding's description of the colleague who was upset with students who didn't meet his standards, I'd like to share with you an example of an active learning teaching approach used by one of our faculty in a course which has strong geography content. Recently, our Business school developed a required course in Global Economics. It is essentially geography with a strong economics emphasis.

The instructor assigns a country to each student and they must research that country using resources including the World Wide Web. Not only are maps and a great deal of descriptive information available on the WWW, but there is also late-breaking information on financial trends.

Given this kind of information resource, students can be asked to identify a major import or export of a country, look at price trends, and make various predictions. Also, there is no suitable text for the course, so some of the required readings are actually at WWW sites. Clearly, using this approach, one can set high student expectations, structure tasks that require higher-level thinking. At the same time, students find it highly engaging.

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From: dbriihl@grits.valdosta.peachnet.edu (Deborah Briihl) TIPS

For me anyway, I get the most back from students when I expect them to give me as much as they can. For my upper level psych classes, I give them 14-18 essay questions 1 week before each test that the exam is based on. To answer the questions, the students must use the notes and the book. The students in these classes will tell you that the exams are not easy - that it takes them most of the 1.5 hours they have to complete it. But they also know they can get an A or a B if they work. I tell them that in class - that they could all get an A and that's fine with me because I know they

worked hard for that grade and they know the material. Of course, it means a lot of work for me - I've got to grade 40 essay tests, I've got to be available when they don't understand something - and I don't mind (OK, I do mind when it's 80 degrees outside, beautiful, I could be working in my flower garden and I have all these papers :)).

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From: Carol Williams <cgwms@math.acu.edu> Abilene Christian University

To: nctm-l@forum.swarthmore.edu

For the past six years, I have required my students in my mathematics content courses for pre-service elementary teachers to pass each "content" test with an 85%. That is, failure to achieve an 85% on each test is an automatic F for the course. At first this strikes terror into their hearts, as most have had limited success in any math

class. However, when they hear that they will be allowed to retake a similar form of the test until that level of mastery is achieved, the pressure is relieved. I explain and they seem to understand that only mathematically prepared teachers should be in the elementary classroom. This competency requirement helps to shift the emphasis from the grade to learning. I tell the students that I will work with them and continue to make up forms of the test as long as they are earnestly trying although the general number of retests is limited to

2. They must take these tests on their own time and must have successfully have met the standard before the next test is given in class.

By and large this system has worked quite well. I have had some students who have had to take each test 3 times, but they have learned so much more than they would have in a traditional setting where they would have simply taken their 65% on a test and gone on. I have occasionally had to make up a fourth form of the test and I have had students drop the course, but overall it has been a good plan and I feel the students have risen to the occasion and have been proud of themselves for doing so. Their confidence in themselves has often risen dramatically. Incidentally, students are allowed to retake tests just to raise their grade, but the most recent score is also the one used for grade computation. This plays to their grade-consciousness but it also means they go back and restudy the material and that is good.

I should point out that the nature of these "content" tests has changed over the years as I have tried to move more toward the expectations of the NCTM Standards. I have a lot more "explain", "make up a problem that..", etc. questions. I also have other

evaluation measures that count toward their final grade in the course, such as group projects, writing assignments, presentations, etc.,but the content tests remain a major part of the class requirement.

Currently I am trying this same approach in our core mathematics requirement course but the minimal competency score is only 70%. By and large these students also like the competency requirement and the opportunity to redo tests. The down side is that it is working me to death to make-up and grade tests! Ah, well, that's why I'm paid the big bucks.:)

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IN RESPONSE TO CAROL WILLAMS:

Use of the mastery approach has a very strong impact on setting high student expectations. It places the focus on the student rather than on the testing process and encourages students to take more responsibility for their learning.

I use the mastery approach also in my elementary and intermediate algebra

classes and in engineering classes in a modified form. I use one variation in that I correct the tests (which I call mastery demonstrations instead of tests) immediately. I circle any wrong answers without comment about how wrong they are. The students then may make a set of corrections and I regrade the test. If they reach 80% then they have passed this portion of the course but I also ask them to continue correcting their papers until they get 100%. I stress in a kidding way that they are now working for themselves to get the last 20% and not for a grade or just to pass the class. This really impresses them. I suspect it is because they are used to taking a test, getting it back at the next class and having to accept the grade without any possibility or a reprieve from their earlier mistakes. It also focuses on them as learners versus test takers. If

they do not get their 80% then they must retake the mastery on their (and my) own time. Usually office hours are sufficient.

One final observation. It seems a little harsh to state that if they do not get their 85% on each test they will automatically get an F for the course. I would phrase it more positively in they WHEN they get their 85% they will have demonstrated their

mastery and then will deserve to pass. I am probably over reacting here but so many of my students report bad math experiences because they have been threatened with failure versus being offered success.

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To: heproc-teaching-learning@e55.webcom.com

From: villaire@fit.edu (N. E. Villaire)

Carol Williams of Abiline Christian University wrote about her method of applying "Mastery" to her math class. As most of you know, the military has developed mastery into an art, and it works very well. We use a similar system here in our Calculus Series, and it really does a good job.

In my NAS (National Airspace System Management) and Multimodal

Transportation Management courses, I have used yet another variation of that

technique.

I have modified mastery a little to accomplish several different teaching objectives:

1. I give the students a normal (if my tests can be considered normal..) test. After it is graded and recorded, I return the tests to the students, but I do not go over the test just yet. I give them an opportunity to improve their grade by looking up each question in which they gave an INCORRECT answer. It sounds simple enough, but there is a catch. The student must look up the Chapter, Page, Paragraph, and Sentence in which the correct answer is to be found. If the answer is not in a book, then a

handout or outside reading reference (from my reading list...) must be cited. The last item in the string of references is the correct answer in (parentheses). When those tests, with the references, are returned, I regrade the missed questions on the exam and give the student credit for HALF of all the questions correctly referenced.

2. This allows each student to improve their grade, but it prevents them from getting the high grades that the student who studied exceptionally well the first time will have received.

3. It forces them to review their weak areas, and the process of finding the correct materials accomplishes a reinforcement study of the subject material.

4. It keeps the incentive alive for studying well the first time.

5. It effectively weeds out those who are simply lazy (they do not choose to look up the questions...) from those who work hard but did not get it the first time. (They look up the answers and improve their grade.)

Here is an example:

Student "A" receives a test grade of 70.

Student "B" receives a test grade of 90.

Student "C" recreives a test grade of 75.

"A" looks up all the questions, turns them in at the next period, and the grade is adjusted to 85. (One half of the difference between 70 and 100.)

"B" looks up all the questions, turns them in at the next period, and the grade is adjusted to 95.

"C" looks up 10 of the 25 missed questions, eight (8) are correct, and the grade is adjusted to 79. (One half of the CORRECT answers submitted.) Yes, it is extra work (that's why I'm paid the big bucks too...), but the students welcome the opportunity to improve, fewer drop difficult classes, good students still get the top grades, very poor students still do poorly, but the vast majority learn a lot more, are happier with the class, and their grades on the final exam are much better.

(Note that a student that does not recive a 100 on the first exam can not obtain that grade in this process, but a student who fails the exam with a 50 can salvage the grade (course) with a 75. That is a strong incentive for marginal students!)

Perhaps some of you can use or modify this idea for your classes.

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From: "Mary Thompson, staff" <thompson\_mary@burridge.nscc.ns.ca>

To: aednet <aednet@pulsar.acast.nova.edu>

I believe that to be an instructor with any success at all, you must set high expectations. These expectations must be realistic, in tune with the students plan for learning but high.

I teach a group of adults who have been through the regular system and have been the victims of low expectations. It takes awhile for them to take the risks that allow them to try to learn. But, once they know that there is no penalty for trying, they continue to try and learning occurs. Setting high but realistic standards helps

individuals to open themselves and develop the mind set that there goals are attainable.

Most students in my program have real writing difficulties. Many can only write one sentence. It is not because they can't. They are so afraid of the idea of making a mistake and failing that they will not try. We work on writing as a process. I teach them to continue to strive to improve what they do. I have seen real progress within the first month of instruction. When I set the expectation of what is acceptable and provide skills needed to do the job, the difference is wonderful. It translates into other areas.

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From: cjones@mum.edu (Christopher Jones)

Briefly, two things occur to me:

1. Inspire students. Inspiration goes so much further than anxiety. To accomplish learning goals, I impress upon students with illustrations the great difference that knowledge of this subject makes in practical affairs. In teaching a course in tests and measurement, for example, I mention how much easier it is to teach when students are cooperative partners in the assessment process and when the goal of teaching is made clear to them in terms of student outcomes.

2. Help students to develop their abilities. The most important thing that we do to raise expectations at Maharishi University of Management is to develop student abilities--e.g., their intelligence and creativity (cf.Journal of Personality and Individual Differences, 12, 10). Particularly, all students practice the Transcendental Meditation technique to develop their learning ability. As ability develops success increases and student confidence grows. I believe that genius is build upon small steps of hope

and achievement.

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From: Gary Martin <gmartin@kimiyo.ed.Hawaii.Edu> University of Hawaii

Hello? Anyone there? Everyone on Spring Break? Guess I'll jump in here...

Regarding this "test until they pass" routine. Does that ensure that they have learned anything whatsoever? Other than memorized procedures to solve particular types of exercises? What do they really know? My guess: Very little. Give them anything off that beaten track to "mastery" and they will collapse. I find this particularly frightening with PST's because of the modeling effect; is this really what we want them to do with their children? Could anything be more antithetical to the Standards?

Finally, I would say the mastery approach does not fulfill high expectations at all, rather massive quantities of trivial expectations.

Sorry if this sounds negative, I am stressed but just could not let this pass,

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From: Daren Starnes <dstarnes@oven.ccds.charlotte.nc.us>

Subject: Re: Mastery approach to high expectations

Gary,

I must disagree heartily with you based on my personal experience with a mastery learning system. Not only have I used my "Objective-Based Grading" system in courses where algorithmic proficiency has been paramount in the past (such as Algebra I), I have also found it a breath of wonderfully fresh air in Honors Precalculus. The secret for me has been to write content objectives for each unit of study that vary in terms of levels of expectation. For instance, in a unit on Polynomial Functions, I included:

1) Use information about the sum and product of roots of to uniquely determine a polynomial.

2) Perform polynomial long division.

3) Find all rational zeros of a given polynomial using synthetic substitution.

4) Completely describe a given polynomial function. (I was referring to all roots, intercepts, symmetry, local maxima and minima, and use of Descartes' rule of signs and upper and lower bounds ).

In almost every unit, my objectives span the full range of Bloom's taxonomy. True, some problems on the re-test are strikingly similar in nature to the originals. Others test the same concept, but are put in a very different context. "Fairness" of grading has become a non-issue in my classes. Grades are absolutely defensible based on the percentage of content objectives that a student has mastered. I have given talks at several local and state NCTM conferences about my system and its merits. I won't ever go back to the old numerical system!

Daren Starnes Upper School Scheduler and Mathematics Instructor

Charlotte Country Day School 1440 Carmel Road Charlotte, NC 28226

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From: TPANITZ

I can only presume that Gary is not a practitioner of the mastery approach. This approach encourages students to keep trying problem solutions until they figure out how to solve a problem. It helps them get past the problem of their making silly mistakes that imply they do not understand a concept because they did not get the exact right answer. It demands that they keep thinking about a solution until they resolve in their minds how to complete it and it puts a great deal of responsibility on their shoulders for their success. The alternative of giving a test in 50 minutes, collecting it, without any time for student reflection, and returning it at the next class or next week with perhaps some review by the teacher is just the kind of assessment that has not worked so far, If it did we would not be worrying about NCTM standards or decreasing math abilities of our students.

Also, who says they problems they work on are rote memory types of problems. Conceptual or open or applied problems often take several attempts before they can be solved. The mastery approach fosters the search for solutions versus testing for a grade.

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From: Joan Marshall <MARSHAJH@SNYONEVA.CC.ONEONTA.EDU> lrnasst

Subject: Re: Academic motivation

It would appear that we need a starting point for a discussion on Motivation so, I will share a somewhat poorly typed set of material from Brophy, J. 1987. "Synthesis of Research on Startegies for Motivating Students to Learn,"EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP 45,2:45 Copyright 1987 ASCD All rights reserved. "Research on student motivation to learn indicates promissing principles suitable for application in classrooms, summarized here for quick reference.

Essential Preconditions

1. supportive environment

2. appropriate level of challenge/difficulty

3. meaningful learning objectives

4. moderation/opitmal use

Motivating by Maintaining Sucess Expectations

5. Program for success

6. tteach goal setting, performance appraisal and self-reinforcement

7. Help students to recognize links between effort and outcome

8. Provide remedial socialization

Motivating by Supplying Extrinsic Incentives

9. Offer rewards for good (or improved) performance

10 Structure appropriate competition

11. Call attention to the instrumental value of academic activities

Motivating by Capitalizing on Students Intrinsic Motivation

12. Adapt tasks to students' interests

13. Include novelty/variety elements

14. Allow opportunities to make choices or autonomous decisions

15. Provide opportunities for students to respond actively

16. Provide immediate feedback to student responses

17. Allow student to create finished products

18. Include fantasy or simulation elements

19. Incorporate game-like features

20. Include higher-level objectives and divergent questions

21. Provide opportunites to interact with peers

Stimulating Student Motivation to Learn

22 Model interest in learning and motivation to learn

23. Communicate desirable expectations and attibutions about students' motivation to learn.

24. Minmize students' performance ansiety during learning activities

25. Project intensity

26. Project enthusiasm

27. Induce task interest or appreciation

28. Induce curiosity or suspense

29. Induce dissonance or cognitive conflict

30. Make abstract content more personal, concrete or familiar

31. Induce students to generate their own motivation to learn

32. State learning objectives and provide advance organizers

33. Model task-related thinking and problem solving.

I came accross this list in Teaching Students with Special Needs in Inclusive setting by Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy Allyn and Bacon 1995 shortly after signing off yesterday. I can think of thousands of times that I have have consiously or unconsiously used these principles in my work both teaching and in administration. This should give a starting point for a discussion on motivation.

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From: MARSHAJH@SNYONEVA.CC.ONEONTA.EDU

We also use a form of mastery in our math class. All tests are repeatable-outside of class time after review of errors previously made and lab work in the area. 80% is required on all tests for a pass of the course. For the aritmetic section this usually kicks in after the second test (fractions) an student who have spent the first two weeks complaining suddenly realize they can't do fractions. They pick up their tests from the lab supervisor and eagerly await the retest results--after the 2nd try they are tutored by the teacher and if a third try is needed we suggest a tutor. We use Elementary Educ. majors almost exclusively for this tutorial. We also have a grade option beyond pass/fail called a pending. It is used for students who have mastered

all but one area of content and need to come in for tutorial and retest in the area to remove the pending and get a pass

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From: Annette Gourgey <FMCBH@CUNYVM.BITNET> lrnasst

I like the suggestion of using a mastery learning approach in exams and getting students to review their own work. The closest experience I have had to that was when I taught "Precise Thinking" at Upsala College, a course in thinking and metacognitive skills in reading, writing and math for developmental students. The course was conducted in a combination of collaborative-learning-oriented classroom sessions and several hours a week of "open classroom" in a tutoring lab. Grades were based on points assigned to tasks, with tasks having varying totals of points depending on difficulty. Students had to complete a total of 350 points for an A, etc. No part credit was given--the student showed the work to a professor or tutor and if it wasn't 100%, they had to go back and revise it until it was good enough to get the points. It was an exercise in student persistence and it was also the first time I ever taught a course where students who failed did \*not\* ask me afterward why they had failed. They knew--because they didn't do the work. And those who passed knew they had worked really hard.

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From: cglearn@ionet.net (bloo)

I have been deeply involved in the measurement of student expectations, and the subsequent delivery level of schools in meeting those expectations. The "SERVQUAL" methodology has been the instrument of choice in this measurement effort. It allows flexibility of design and meaningful graphic output.

The application of SERVQUAL to education is available in Performance

Improvement Quarterly Vol 7/ Number ,1994.

Bill Baker Coast Guard institute cglearn@ionet.net

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From: Michael Clarke <CLARKEMS@akerley.nscc.ns.ca>

I have found that consistent adherence to stated learning objectives is the best way to maintain high quality. Then, the the course can be directed objectively at a curriculum design stage and not from a subjective perspective. This avoids the perception of inconsistent or unfair standards and "bell curve" marking schemes. If one was to take a quality approach perspective to training, the standards for performance should be stated clearly well in advance of lectures and tests, etc.

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Phone (902) 434-2020 URL http://www.ccn.cs.dal.ca/~ab173/Profile.html

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From: Arthur Howard <ach@tenet.edu>

I read your message about setting minimal expectations, and think it's great. I teach some of the developmental studies courses (Intro & Intermed Algebra) for our local community college (adjunct). I find that the greatest barrier to demonstrated achievement is test anxiety in general and math anxiety in particular. I often have students who tell me that they are able to go home and work every problem that was on the test, but they freeze up in class.

I have read as much as I have been able to find on how the brain processes stress, so I understand that the stress is blocking their ability to show what they know. Do you have any ideas on how to help students relax enough to be able to perform well on tests? I used to allow take-homes (after mid-semester), but that is no longer allowed by the department. Presently, I allow students to turn in homework to raise

their grades. (If it's completely worked AND checked, I raise the test grade to 70.) But I would prefer that they be successful the first time. Any suggestions? Anybody else have success on this?

Arthur Howard North Harris College (adjunct) Aldine ISD (full time)

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From: wheelock@shore.net (Anne Wheelock)

I think one often overlooked aspect of communicating high expectation is the

content of the curriculum itself.

All the good ideas Ted proposes is largely wasted if the content is remedial

or meaningless or has no real exchange value in that it takes students into

situations where they have further opportunity to learn. Indeed, opportunity

to learn itself is mostly about curriculum and instruction.

For example, high expectations should lead to enrolling all kids in "high

content" courses. Consider the following: In the past, only about 60

percent of New York City's ninth graders were enrolled in the Regents

(college preparatory) algebra 1 course. Now, virtually all ninth graders

must enroll in Regents-level algebra, a requirement that has boosted

enrollment in this course to include 90 percent of all ninth graders. What

are the results? They are not great - 42% fail now, compared to 37% failing

prior to the requirement. But - and this is a huge "but," it seems to me -

thousands more students passed Regents algebra and are entering Regents

geometry, students who prior to the new requirements would have been assumed

to be unable to pass.

Imagine what would happen if we combined the high expectations of the

instructional strategies Ted and others propose with the curriculum

organization around essential questions that Kathy and others suggest with

access to valued knowledge with extra-help strategies (double doses, extra

time, "jump-start" approaches \*before\* kids fall behind)! What kind of

learning might we see???

Anne Wheelock Boston, Massachusetts wheelock@shore.net

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To: in%"k12assess-l@cua.edu"

Subj: High expectations and content

I agree with Anne Wheelock that linking content is an integral part of setting high

high expectations for students and ourselves.

All processes that set high expectations must lead toward the student's

involvement in the process, with the teacher and with their peers. The mastery

approach for example puts a great deal of responsibility upon the student to

continue working until they master they master the material and it creates

extended contact with the teacher who corrects the mastery instrument and may

make suggestions about the students approach. The process inherently assumes

the students can succeed if they make the effort. Cooperative learning is

paradigm which sets high expectations. It is assumed here that students working

together can marshal the rsources to solve any problem. In the event that an

entire group is unable to answer a question then the teacher is available to

help direct the groups towards to answer. This can be done by Socratic

questioning, modelling solution methods and even as a last resort lecturing on

the subject matter. Students will respond to these inherent high expectations

when they are used in an environment which encourages risk taking and

exploration without penalty of failure.

I disagree with part of Anne's statement that content should not be

remedial. I agree it should not be meaningless. I teach remedial math courses

which lead to students being able to take college level math. There is a

noteable difference in the beginning level of basic math (a euphamism for

arithmetic) where students have little or no self esteem through elementary

algebra where they have some confidence but tremendous math anxiety to

intermediate algebra where they finally realize thjey CAN understand math

concepts and WILL be able to complete a college level math class. Perhaps we

have an advantage in that our graduation requirements build in the suggestion

that Anne has made that we establish a higher goal in the contant area as well

as higher expectations for student performance. This is not a chicken or the egg

question of which comes first. They both go hand in hand. With older students it

is especially important to have a defined goal which is reachable and that goal

should be to reach a higher level of performance.

In looking back at Anne's post and my response I can see that I have had

a built in presumption that setting high expectations leads to content mastery

and thus higher level courses for students. I have not really seperated the

two ideas. I suspect this is because I have high expectations for myself in

being able to help students reach their potential and also presuming that all

students have the capability to perform well given the rigth circumstances and

assuming there are no physical or mental impediments beyond the student's

control.

I hope that is not too Polyannish. What do other people think about the

relationship of content to setting high expectations?

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From: "robert p. althauser" <althause@indiana.edu> CL\_News

Subject: Re: High expectations part deux

Ted,

Could you offer a short list of changes you've made in the way you taught

in response to the student surveys?

Also, how often during the semester do you give these 'mastery' quizzes?

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TED TPANITZ

Subj: RE: High expectations part deux

Bob Althauser asked for examples of how I have changed my classes based upon student surveys and how often I use them.

I survey the students after the first exam which I give after 3 weeks

generally. On the survey I ask how they felt after completing the test (were

they satisfied with their performance, did they have enough time etc.), How

they feel they are doing in the course and what they could do to help insure

their success and what I might do also. They have been working in groups

during this time in pairs and threesor fours for specific classes so they are

familiar with the group process but perhaps not comfortable with it. Some

classes have asked me to "lecture" more. After we discuss my philosophy of

their attempting the material first we often reach an agreement that they will

try more problems on their own first if they can be assured I will go over

more problems on the board. Upon further discussion they usually agree that

students can put problems on the board in addition to me as long as enough

problems are presented to make them feel comfortable. In reality this is what

we have been doing. As students work problems in groups I ask them to put their

solutions on the board and then I discuss each solution again. They basically

need reassurance that my asking them to work the material in advance won't somehow penalize them or remove me from the teaching process. I kid the a lot

and announce with great fanfare that I am about to lecture and then proceed to

give a 3-5 minute interactive lecture after which we return to working in groups.

At the mid term point, about 7 weeks, after they have had three tests I

give them a "Mid Semester Push" writing assignment. I ask them again how they

feel they are doing in the class to date, what they could do better and what I

might do to help them individually or as a class. I used to give tests covering

two chapters which geberally covered different concepts in intermediate

algebra. I noticed that during review sessions the students had trouble moving

from one concept to another. This occurs because the texts are set up to handle

one concept at a time. Even though thechpaters build on each other the practice is

accomplished by doing many problems in one particular area. When students are

given single problems from different content areas they have trouble focusing

on that topic, since the question appears to be taken out of then context of the

book. Students responded by requesting we test on single chapters. I agreed to

this approach with the priviso that students agree to complete cumulative work

sheets outside of class, preferably using their groups to work cooperatively.

This has worked very well and by the time the final rolls around they are

becoming used to seeing problems from throughout the semester and do not panic

when they see isolated problems.

Finally throughout the semester I discuss class procedures informally with

individuals and groups. This is possible because I use cooperative learning

techniques in all my classes every class. While the groups or pairs are

working I circulate and observe them, make suggestions and ask them how the

class is going.

I had a funny interplay just this week in an elementary algebra class. We are working on word problems and the class is having some difficulty. A student suggested that we reorganize the groups to insure that each one had

at least one person who knew what they were doing. The whole class responded

with acclimation for the idea. We discussed the idea and I indicated my

agreement. As we discussed the proposal I asked what would happen if there were

not enough knowledgeable students to go around? The whole class broke out in laughter as they realized that this was they case. They were all in the same boat. We agreed that they would continue to struggle together and that if there were people in

the class who could help they would circulate as well as me, providing extra

tutorials. I saw a renewed energy and willingness to work together after this discussion. As they worked they got more comfortable and the discussion gave me

an opportunity to reassure them that we would not test our mastery until I could

see that most students were ready. What I find most interesting is that the

original questioner was really asking for someone to show him/her how to solve

word problems without having to do any hard work. The discussion by the whole

class lead to the conclusion that it is necessary to work harder on word problems

but extra help may be necessary. Even though the student had a hidden agenda

it did reflect a concern that many students had and collectively we were able to

resolve the issue to our mutual satisfaction.

The process of using the student surveys is mutual. I usually have something

I wish them to do in exchange for the requests they make. It is important for

students to realize that they can have an impact on the progress of the course

but they have a responsibility also. Their requests will not simply lead to

what they perceive as being easier for them, like having the material "shown"

them in a lecture format.

In answer to Bob's last question I give "mastery demonstrations" after each

chapter and cumulative review assignments after every three chapters.

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From: Carol Williams <cgwms@math.acu.edu>

Subject: Re: High expectations and math/test anxiety

Arthur, If I had the key to reducing stress and test anxiety for

mathematics students, I'd be rich! However, I do think a few things I

do may help a little.

1) First, I always try to express confidence in the students' ability to do the work. I tell them the first day that although I am expecting a certain level of competency, I feel they each can achieve that or they would not have made it this far in college (which is true). Of course I note that some will have to work harder than others, but I am willing to work with them.

2) Second, I take out the time factor for the test. I think many students get uptight if they are slow workers, and I am trying to determinehow much they know, not how fast they can do it. I know that in the real world one doesn't always have unlimited time, but for these particular students overcoming their test anxiety is a more important consideration. I am fortunate in that my classes are 1 hour and 20 minutes long, and I give the students the entire time. Certainly when they retake tests, they may have as long as they need. Thus when they are preparing for a test, they know they will have ample opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge.

3) Third, I never post the grades or give any indication of the grade distribution for a test. In fact, if a student did poorly, I just write "retake" on the test. I think seeing themselves at the bottom of the distribution simply reinforces their perception of themselves as unable to do math and stupid.

4) Fourth, and I don't know if this really reduces anxiety, but I do not collect homework. I assign homework, but I try to assign problems for which they have the answers or else give them the answers. Then they either do them in groups, discuss them the next day in groups, or go over them with me in class the next day. Once again, I try to put the emphasis on learning and on self-responsibility. I also try to

pick problems that demand thinking and not just mindless computation.

5) I let them have a calculator and any manipulative that we have used in class. If they want to use counters to solve base 4 problems, they can use counters. Generally, the calculator and manipulatives are really not necessary, but they feel more secure with them.

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From: Arthur Howard <ach@tenet.edu>

Subject: Re: High expectations and math/test anxiety

Cc: nctm-l@forum.swarthmore.edu

Carol:

Thanks for the reply. I use a lot of the same techniques you do. I emphasize the importantce of checking too. (In fact, I use a 10-point scale for grading work that is loosely based on the 4-point scale in the NCTM yearbook on problem solving. I give up to 8 points for process, the 9th point for the correct answer, and the 10th point for the check.) I tell tham they need to know whether or not they are correct without

asking me (or the text).

I also talk to them a lot about stress and how blanking out is based on their stress level and not their knowledge level. I encourage them to come up to me during the test if they are stuck, to see if I can get them started. I know that this is not done in the courses above me, but, as a developmental studies teacher, I spend a lot of time& effort in building confidence as well as mathematical concepts.

I guess you're right. There are no easy answers, just beginnings.

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From: msouth@shodor.org (Michael J South)

Subject: Mastery approach, etc.

Just some observations on the whole test taking/retaking thing that's being

kicked around (and, in some cases, just kicked). Traditional grading and testing, as far as I can tell, was really a negative influence on my education. I learned that I could make it through with high grades with minimal effort. I thought that grades \_were\_ the point. In graduate school, I still had plenty of raw understanding ability, but

didn't really know how to study, since nothing I had encountered until then really encouraged me to dig into things and find them out for myself. I did find in grad school that the only way I knew how to learn was toexplain things to people. Apparently, when I explain things to other people, my mind is willing to work really hard to find different ways of thinking about it so that I can find a way that will work for them. Naturally, that clarifies lots of things for me--however, I haven't been

able to convince myself that I should explain things to myself the same way. I think that when I am looking at it myself, I just get an almost subconscious understanding of what is going on, and then my attention deficit peaks.

As I noted above, this is possibly only relevant to the way I learn, but I think that it is generally true that we don't understand things until we explain them to people, or at least that we don't understand them as well as we will when we do. (Parse that one...) In essense, I guess I'm saying that the standard "test performance = grade"

system and the accompanying "grade = course" interpretation that students come up with fails to serve the "high acheivers" (as measured by grade) as well as they might fail to serve those that could learn more with retaking. It is possible that retaking (or "the masery approach" although I agree with whoever said that this terminology seems to have a lot of baggage associated with it) just encourages people to slack off. In my experience, however, the normal system encouraged me to cruise through without really working. I saw no \_need\_ to work harder (good grade = mission

accomplished), perhaps in much the same way that a person that wasn't acheiving in the same manner saw no \_hope\_ in working harder (since you already have that one bad grade messing up your average).

I am impressed with the people that are putting effort into making the students realize that they are responsible for getting what they can out of a class, etc, and I am sure it takes a lot of effort. I, for one, was very socialized into believing that maximizing grades and minimizing my effort was the way to go. I wasn't doing it intentially or maliciously, really--I just never realized that there was a reason to do it any other way. I think this is part of the reason that Saxon (disclaimer--all I know about Saxon is what I've overheard as people have torn at each other's flesh over

it here) appeals to some teachers. It at least breaks kids out of the "learn it for this test and forget it" mode. (As I recall, one teacher said that his students complained when he pulled out the Saxon books because they knew that meant they had to really learn it, as opposed to just getting it well enough to perform on a test.) That is a worthwhile achievement, even if all it does is show kids that there \_is\_ something

more than test-and-forget. (Note that I'm not saying that Saxon is or is,not a good thing--I don't know if I could stand another round of that at this point.) I understand that there is value in teaching kids that there are times in life when they're just going to have to do it and do it right and there's only going to be one shot at it. But that's probably more often the exception than the rule. At least as far as actually doing real

mathematics is concerned, there is a lot more of "guess, wonder, discuss, try something else, think about your general approach" than there is of "do it now, and get it right or else."

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From: "Mansel A. Nelson" <man2@tntnet.slc.nau.edu>

Cc: nctm-l@forum.swarthmore.edu

I use student surveys on a regular basis asking for student feedback. I make modfications in class procedures based on their input. If I chose to not accept some of their suggestions, I explain to them why I am not going to make the changes they suggest. I make a point of accepting at least one of their ideas each time, if at

all possible. I am always trying a variety of activities and evaluation techniques,

then asking the students for their critique..... I feel this exchange is very important - it makes students feel lke I am interested in their opinions....

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From: MAXINE BRIDGER <MBRIDGER@neu.edu> Subject: Mastery

To: nctm-l@forum.swarthmore.edu

I have a system for making up poor work on an exam that seems a good compromise for those who prefer students to get things right the first time and those who just want them to learn the material by the end of the course. To make up poor work on an exam, the student has to redo, correctly, the problems he/she got wrong and WRITE a one or two sentence explanation of what the original error was. The student can them get back up to 1/2 of the credit originally lost, up to a grade of B (84). This make-up work can be done with the help of the text or with a teacher in Math Lab ( a Math drop-in center) or with a peer tutor. Students like this method and work on the test redos. Since an A has to be earned the first time around, there is

an incentive for hard work and competence.

Maxine, The Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA 02193

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From: Sandra L Kelley-Daniel <skelley@HAWAII.EDU> tcc-l

Leeward Community College Pearl City, Hawaii

Subject: Re: High expectations/student surveys

Yes, Ted, I do too -- in my composition classes, reading and vocabulary development classes, and study skill classes (in short, in ALL my classes).

Most often they are a means to an end = giving the students a chance to tell me what's going well, what isn't, what they'd like changed, what confused them or is bothering them, etc. I write the questions on the board under the title "Howzit Goin'?"

Just as you have discovered, these surveys have proved to be more than worth the time they take. My students like having a voice in the structure and content of the class; and I like learning what they are thinking and feeling, because with that information I'm more able to make my courses the meaningful, learning-enhancing, enjoyable experiences we all want them to be. (Of course, I've yet to reach that dream, but it doesn't stop me from trying!).

Sometimes my survey questions ask them to explain or discuss something, so I can see how well the class understands the concept or task. If they understand ... great! If not, I can reteach as needed, usually with hands-on practice following my mini-lecture. Sometimes my surveys ask the students to shift into a metacognitive state to think about the process they went through while doing a particular task. These include questions such as "What was your experience with Perl's structured freewriting activity? What was your experience with the open-ended style of freewriting? Which did you prefer? Why?". Or "Now that you've tried both, which style of notetaking do you prefer? Why?" The thinking these questions engender not only helps the students analyze what they have been doing or thinking, it also

triggers a high-voltage, insightful discussion.

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Christopher Bramfeld KPPM@MARISTB.MARIST.EDU (ednet)

In my buisness class here, I am part of a TQM (Total Quality Management) team of 4 students (including myself) and the teacher. We meet once a week with the teacher, and sometimes meet for 30 min to an hour on our own to figure out the technical stuff of who will do what and when will it get done. After the first quiz we made a survey consiting of questions that we thought the students/class peers would be intrested in and respond to. Questions included did they want handouts typed, review classes, to be a part of a study group, any computer information/resource outside of class, did they have enough time for the quiz, what did they like, what didn't they like, etc. This information was used by the teacher to make the midterm exam. Most did well.

Another class activity was that each student came up with a list of 10 things they wanted to get out of the class or wanted the teacher to do. The class was then split into 4 groups of 5 people (roughly). In the group they had to collectively come down with a list of 10 objectives and rank number them. After making copies of the 4 groups lists were pick the top 10 out of the 40 we want and make sure they are followed to the best we can for the semester. This input is vauluable to the teacher and us the TQM team.

At then end of the every course here (and at most colleges), you can rate the teacher and give inpus. Most fill in the bubbles positively or negatively and don't bother to comment futher (almost meaningless data). The teacher told the TQM team that this is the first time he is trying the TQM and incorpering it into the class (TQM is a topic that will be covered in the class). He said that no other teacher that he knows of has ever tried this. I think the students respect his efforts.

On a personal note, I usually don't do well on tests and quizes, but absorb the information good. I enjoy filling out surveys no matter what they are on. In the classroom, I think it breaks the ice to start discussions, and makes students aware that they can goto theirteacher after class to work together on deficient performance/skills

(as opposed to the student being paranoid over bad grades and not making the effort).

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From: Gordon Anderson <gander@POP3.DCC.EDU> tcc-l Delgado CC (WB)

Subject: Re: High expectations/student surveys

This is another turn on student surveys. Currently, our college uses a student survey of about 20 questions (answers available--marked on a scantron sheet--run from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Some sample questions are: does the teacher start and end class on time? Would you take another course from this instructor? Do the tests reflect the material covered in the course? Does the teacher relate the material to [real] life? (Can't remember exactly how that one is phrased, but that's the drift)

In addition, how well a teacher does on this student evaluation (over a three year period) has a strong impact on the teacher's chances for promotion. (Here 55%, I believe, of one's evalution total is based on student evaluations and supervisor evalutions.) This survery seems to me to run counter-productive to those more personal surveys being described by my colleagues on this list. I am wondering what

mechanisms are in place elsewhere (with regard to student evaluations) and how they are used?

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From: Paul Bodmer <BODMER@GWMAIL.NODAK.EDU> tcc-l Bismarck State College

Subject: Re: High expectations/student surveys -Reply

I think we may have opened another vein here, but I think it is a good one.As Gordon pointed out, there are two purposes that may be contradictory. One purpose is formative--an evaluation to inform and improve the process. The other is summative--how well DID we do. I use portfolio grading, and tell my students that the portfolio tries to cover both kinds of evaluation for them. The narratives and self-evaluations they do are a way to inform the process. Particularly because they do a midterm evaluation of their progress that I discuss with each of them. Then, at the end of the term, I place a grade on their portfolio.

The next step, and it has been done with success, is to make the faculty evaluations both formative and summative. Most of the summative evaluations we are forced to participate in are done strictly for the purpose of personnel decisions, but they almost all SAU they are to makeus better teachers. The portfolio system will work for faculty

evaluations, but there has to be a complete buy-in.

By the way, an excellent resource for classroom assessment (the surveys talked about in an earlier post) is Thomas A. Angelo, the Director of the Academic Development Center at Boston College.

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From: Rick Yount <WYount@AOL.COM> tcc-l

Subject: Re: High expectations/student surveys

We have periodic student evaluations (1 to 3 years, depending on experience and tenure) that cover 21 areas of interest. I focus more on the means and standard deviations of the evaluations for each item for each class than I do individual scores. If the mean score for an item is les than three (on a four point scale) I look at what I'm doing in the course at that point. If the vast majority of students score the items high, I determine changes on my own perceptions of course flow.

I have in the past reduced the number of assignments or increased the amount of feedback on written work as a result of student comments. I believe it is important for \*teachers\* to have the view that education is a consumer process, and focus on the needs of the students. I believe it is harmful for \*students\* to get that idea, because we begin to see an attitude previously expressed on the list: "I paid for this course, and I ought to get an "A" for my efforts."

Student evaluations can be helpful to administrators who want to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers who welcome evaluation rarely need the help, and those who balk usually do. (I love the irony of teachers who give rigid difficult tests, without regard to student feelings of unfairness or arbitrary questions -- then complain about being evaluated ("tested") as teachers because it is an arbitrary and unfair practice).

We just completed a study of 93 of our courses, using the mean scores of "overall quality of course" as the criterion and the other 21 items as predictor variables. We found six variables that accounted for 88% of "quality courses" from the students' point of view. I'd be glad to post the results to your email box or to the list if anyone is interested.

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From: SUELLEN J BAHLEDA <ANSJB1@acad2.alaska.edu>

To: aednet <aednet@pulsar.acast.nova.edu>

While I agree that adhering to learning objectives maintains consistency for the course, allowance must be made for the class that performs above even the high expectations designed in the curriculum. I teach American Sign Language, and some odd semesters ago I had a class at the ASL II level that ate up everything I gave them, and hungered for more. I threw out the syllabus, and together we planned two to three classes ahead, so that we all knew we were going somewhere, but that we did not \*have\* to go at the pokey pace (for this group) the original syllabus had dictated. Did I distort the learning objectives for this class? No, I believe they were enhanced, and as a result, the class and I had a ball!

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From: Alice Macpherson <alicemac@Kwantlen.BC.CA>< aednet@pulsar.acast.nova.edu>

Yes!

The joy of learning outcomes is that they do not have to dictate pace or methodology, nor do I believe that there is a need to limit anyone, outcomes are usually very easy to expand. I try and document the serendipitous so that I have "enrichment" material for those wonderful times that we can expand - and then my enrichment material becomes enriched.

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From: Alice Macpherson <alicemac@Kwantlen.BC.CA>< aednet@pulsar.acast.nova.edu>

Kwantlen University College phone: 599-3352 vm 9954

I use formative feedback in my continuous entry, competency based Outdoor Power Equipment Program. The format is very simple - I like ..., I don't like ..., I would like to see changed ..., Other ... This can be varied depending on what I hear in passing.

If there is a specific situation that has been brought up by the class then I'll break them into groups to work on possible solutions and bring the group back together to hammer out an appropriate compromise suggestion. I then respond to the group at large with what can be done and we collective brainstorm how to do it, as well as to what is not possible due to our resources or the organization of the college and then brainstorm possible alternatives. Mostly this works very well, as the students are

discussing their real concerns, making real contributions and see real changes to how the course is run \_and\_ I still get to meet my learning outcomes as mandated by my industry.

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From: cwilkins@felix.TECLink.Net (Cindy Wilkins)

I read your posting with great interest. Apparently we have similar approaches to teaching mathematics. I do have some questions. What age or grade level do you teach? I currently allow test corrections on all tests and return half of the points missed to the student. My lowest recorded test grade is a 50, so all students have a chance to earn at least a 75 on all tests. The test corrections must follow a certain format: copy the problem, explain where you made your mistake, explain how to work the entire problem, then solve the problem. Test corrections are due the day after we've discussed the test in class.(I teach 7-8th grade pre-algebra and Algebra I).

I'm interested in your use of the 80 grade. I don't quite understand your system. Could you give more information? Also, how do you know the students really understand the problems and did not just copy from the "A" student? With my students, that is a problem, because they will work twice as hard to avoid work as they would need to spend to just get the job done.

At the end of each unit, I give 2 tests - one traditional, in class, basic skills (this one is eligible for test corrections) and one take-home test that is open-ended and requires application of the skills (this one I know involves cooperative learning, including parents and siblings and friends, but due to its open-ended nature, I haven't had a problem with copying). Students list the names of who worked with them as part of the test, so I know to look for similarities in those papers.

I also teach cooperatively, and find the same benefits you mentioned. Since I also use manipulatives and projects quite heavily, I've found that my traditionally 'good' students do not perform as well as my 'average' students in a project setting - probably because memorization is useless in this format. I also assign weekly journal topics, one of which is always an attitudinal prompt. That way I get constant feedback as to my effectiveness, and when I make changes in my teaching, I always tell them it was from comments I read in the journals. My lessons for this nine weeks have been written based on these comments, and my students are excited to have had such an impact on the course.

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From: Crawford Kilian <ckilian@HUBCAP.MLNET.COM> tcc-l

Jon makes some good points about student evaluations. It doesn't help when the

students have to do several questionnaires on various instructors who are all up for evaluation at the same time. While I have to go through the formal evaluation process this year, I'll pay more attention to an informal process I use every semester. It's called Small Group Instructional Feedback, and it's more useful for both students and

instructors.

The basic format is simple: Break the class up into groups of four or five. Give each group a handout that says something like this:

In the next 10 or 15 minutes, identify 5 things about your instructor that you can consider "good news." Then identify 5 things that you're less happy about. If you feel awkward about identifying them, suggest 5 things the instructor should try next semester. The instructor then leaves the room while the groups get to work. One person from each group is the reporter who writes down the comments; when the

instructor comes back into the room, the reporter tells everyone in the room what his or her group came up with. The instructor can respond after each group's report, or wait until all groups have reported. In some cases all groups will mention the same things; in other cases they may sharply disagree, giving everyone a chance to talk

about the issue. In some cases the remarks may give the instructor a chance to be self-critical, or to defend a contentious policy. The instructor collects the reports for further review, and that's it. Takes maybe 40 minutes, tops, and the feedback is amazingly useful. The students like it too; they can get their feeilngs out without feeling isolated or directly identified with a particular view.

As I said, we don't use this for formal evaluations, but I wish we did.

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From: HEPROC Moderator <reimann@radix.net>

Brenda Dawe <daweb@k2.kirtland.cc.mi.us>

I shared your ideas with a few of my co-workers and they also want to know how it works out on my next test. I am surprised that more of them are not taking advantage of the HEPROC resources themselves as the address was posted to everyone on the server. Their loss! I mentioned it to a few of my "worried" students and they were all smiles.

I try another testing tecnique that takes the pressure off of them that might be of interest to you. The weekly (chapter) quiz tests for their receptive (what they see me sign) and comprehensive (learned objectives/conceps) progress. It has a consistant format (which I use for all three levels of ASL) and is graded by a "no fail" scale. If they achieve 50% or better, they get an "A". Less than 50% gets a "C" and "no shows (not allow make-ups) are "E". It always amazes me that they each strive for the elusive "A+"---0 wrong! My students usually are involved with classes that require "Miss 1: you die" attention so my method of quizzing is a welcome relief. It takes the

pressure off of them and they aren't afraid to "guess".

I give them outside assignments involving "signed" video tapes, taxing their vcrs to the max. That, plus memorizing the vocabulary, takes enough of their time so the "softee quizes" is my way of letting them know I understand.

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From: Clive Buckley <buckleyc@newi.ac.uk>

I read with interest your recent posting to "heproc-assessment-learning" regarding student surveys. This is something that I am enthusiastic about. Sometime ago, I was asked to sit on an internal task force looking at student assessment and feedback. As part of that process, I initiated a discussion via heproc asking others about feedback mechanisms - many of the responses are archived at the heproc web site (URL

http://rrpubs.com/heproc). You may find a visit to the site profitable.

I have been issuing my own questionnaire to students asking about, for example, my presentation style and ways of improving my "teaching". The results (purely for my own information) have been fascinating. One thing that seems to come across is that you cannot please all of the people all of the time ! Different client groups

(if you'll excuse the term) expect (demand) different teaching styles. First year undergraduates expect more "lectures" less interaction and more, what I would call spoon feeding. In later years, the students seem much happier with a dialogue approach with a certain degree of negotiation of learning objectives. Maybe one would

expect this result.

The other thing I find is that certain students groups will form an early impression of the lecturer - i.e. good, bad or indifferent. Once that "tag" has been given it becomes very difficult to change the students' perception of that individual. I have seen cases where the situation worsens to such an extent that it becomes almost impossible for the lecture and class to work together.

On the other hand, in some cases much like sportspeople - you are only as good as your last performance !

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From: Gordon Anderson <gander@POP3.DCC.EDU> tcc-l

> I've been teaching about ten years now and I find student surveys to be

>rather predictable. Students who do well generally like me; those who don't

>do well generally dislike me. Although this feedback was very useful in my

>early years, I learn practically nothing from it anymore.

To some extent, I would agree, though I have also find that students who

aren't doing well, when it becomes clear to them why they aren't--usually

involving on my part some individual conferencing--tend not to follow that

pattern.

> I have to question how students can judge us on qualities related to

>expertise in our field, when they have very little expertise of their own.

Yes and no here too. I think though whether one has expertise in a field or

not, or very little expertise, he or she can still make a determination.

Though I'm not a dentist, I can pick a bad one out of a crowd on Bourbon Street.

> Student surveys are used by many administrators (but not in my current

>college) as a mindless evaluation tool, often abused in order to punish those

>faculty out of favor.

This was the concern, especially for junior faculty and adjuncts, that

prompted my first post. It at times has been the case, rather than being

used to make positive adjustments in an individual's teaching.

> Surveys results are strongly correlated to student happiness with an

>instructor. Since student happiness is most often tied to the class workload,

>those who demand less will score higher. (I heard that the Univ. of Tennessee

>did a study in the past decade which confirmed this relationship. There was

>an observed inverse relationship between how much a professor demanded

>students learn and the evaluation scores.)

My personal experience, and my observations of my colleagues and discussions

with students on this issue--at least on this small campus (probably an

advantage of a small campus) says no. But I understand that the University

of New Orleans has a grade question on their student eval. and has made a

similar

correlation. I have mixed responses to the students putting their

names on the evaluations...but I will say that the evaluations we use really

are not helpful as tool to improve one's teaching. And others have said one

has to develop his own instrument to do that. I simply use dialog

/discussion (I ask, we discuss) and of course, watch what is happening with

the assignments

Gordon Anderson

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From: Magda Moustafa - 2589950 <mmoustaf@NUNIC.NU.EDU> tcc-l

Subject: Student Surveys (Forgive length,please)

I have long thought that students would actually be more responsible evaluators if they \_did\_ have to put their names on the evaluation forms. I think the necessity and validity of anonymous evaluations need to be challenged. The implication of all things anonymous is that there is a need for some form of coverup, if not for self-protection, then out of protection of one's self-interest at best and out of a negative intent at worst. Which of these motives do educational institutions assume students to have ?

I've known some instructors who conduct their own informal surveys. Last semester I subbed for a colleague on the last class meeting, and she had asked me to have the students complete the informal evaluation that she had typed up. It consisted of a very short prompt (3-4 lines), explaining to the students that she wanted to hear from them what aspects of the classthey had found helpful and what had been of little help. She explained that their comments would be of great value to her in structuring her class in the future. By way of incentive, the teacher explained in the instructions that completing this evaluation could earn students a few extra points toward their class work (I forget the exact value it had ... not much, but enough to inspire serious consideration of the class.) It was the first time I'd seen an evaluation form so simple.I admit I had doubts that the students would say very much, considering they'd just taken a test, and their fate in the class hadn't yet been fully determined. Also, the evaluation was in composition form -- i.e. they were expected to write two or three paragraphs. But they one and all pored over their evaluation forms,looking very intent and serious. I think they appreciated having the challenge or freedom to choose the points that they wanted to focus on. I took the liberty of glancing through the evaluation forms as they were handed to me at the end. Yes, there were the positives and there were the negatives. "Actually, Mrs.X, if I were you ....," said one. Another explained, "What I found most useful was the individual conferences because ... but man I just couldn't get into that reader!" There were explanations and elaborations. They all comfortably attached their names to their evaluations. I felt there was a perception of respect (Teacher respects my opinion enough to ask me for a thorough review of the class) and trust (on both sides).

> I've been teaching about ten years now and I find student surveys to be

> rather predictable. Students who do well generally like me; those who don't

> do well generally dislike me.

How can the responses on student evaluations \_not\_ be tied to student perceptions of grades and of how class should be run? It would not be logical to expect otherwise. What student is likely to objectively evaluate a teacher's professional performance when that student cannot get past a perception that the teacher has misjudged him or her in some way, or that the teacher has conducted class in a weird fashion ?

I had a student last semester who absolutely loathed being asked to work in a group to review a reading or discuss summarizing strategy or the way to make a concept map of a specific reading passage. He would make faces, heave deep sighs, grunt as he positioned himself to face the others in his group, and once just got up and walked out of the room and returned when group work was over. Other than that, he

was one of the best students in the class-- extremely motivated and generally diligent, completing assigned work to exact standards taught 90% of the time. Doubtless he would not have rated me very high on class activities or organization had I persisted in trying to get some collaborative / cooperative learning going in the classroom. He never once showed an interest in his classmates. How can a student know whether or not I taught him/her the "basics" of college writing" in the right way? May I share with him/her all the readings I've done and the literature on the value of one

teaching strategy or another?

If institutions wish to have effective and objective methods of judging quality of instructors, they should do the job \_thoroughly\_. That means they will have to invest more time and effort in the process. Instructor evaluation could be a portfolio style combination of methods including anonymous as well as signed evaluations by students (at different points in the semester), plus class visits by administrators, plus an evaluation of the class by the instructor him/herself. If technology is available, and the college wishes to make a thorough and fair assessment, why not install video cameras and watch my every class on video ? Extreme? Perhaps. My point is: if evaluating what goes on in the classroom is worth doing (and it is, for students, teachers, and institutions), then it is worth doing completely and doing well.

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From: Joan McMahon <mcmahon@midget.towson.edu>

Towson State University, University Teaching Initiative

This is one of my favorite topics! And one that raises eyebrows in faculty training sessions. My own students are rather surprised when I mention that "I will only

grade their best work." This causes some class discussion about how one gets to that point, given that the student culture is to write the work the night before it is due. I won't accept any paper that doesn't have a minimum of two marked-up computer drafts attached to it plus a one-page writing log that I devised. Our discussion focuses then on the "writing-to-learn" and "learning-to-write" concepts.

The results have been (1) that the work is always better; (2) they are proud that they exceeded their own expectations while meeting mine; (3) since I don't grade the drafts, but only see them, I HAVE IMPROVED STUDENT PERFORMANCE WITHOUT DOING ANY MORE WORK ON MY PART!; (4) I can justify to others who think I have grade inflation.

Second part to this is my conversation with the class on "My job is to help you succeed." They LOVE this one. So with the "I only want to grade your best work" and " My job is have you succeed", I find that their "resistance" to work is lowered and their desire to meet high standards is just as high as mine.

They see us as a learning team.

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From: Rick Yount <WYount@AOL.COM> TCC-L

Subject: Re: High expectations part 2

I think you're right on target. But it's due to the same old

"when-I'm-in-power" problem. Rules (or expectations) are often meant for the

"little people" (students, employees) and not for the "important ones"

(teachers in the classroom, administrators in the office).

It takes maturity and humility for a "boss" to follow the rules, to welcome

evaluation of his/her work, or to raise standards for self.

Teachers who consistently raise their own standards, who take seriously their

"model the role" position, who refuse to rest on former laurels but push on

to be better are rare treasures. They do it because of their own internal

desire to be better, because there are no real rewards (promotion and/or pay

increase) tied to that kind of behavior. About the best that can be done is

to make them administrators -- which may rob the classroom of a great

teacher, and the office of a great manager.

On the other hand, many teachers are where they are \*because\* they set high

standards for themselves and overcame far greater obstalces than they place

before their students -- yet sit and despair over student complaints at

overwork and difficulty. Teachers simply can't compete with Sesame-Street

activitity or MTV entertainment, so many students are "bored." Work ethic?

Desire to excell? Do more than the assignment requires? Hunger to know and

understand? Even among our best students we find those who take any short-cut

to an A they can get -- a McDonald's approach to educational nuitrition. It

may be bad food, but its hot, cheap and convenient.

These are two different issues, but are related.

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From: Sandra L Kelley-Daniel <skelley@hawaii.edu>

Dear Ted:

This is a belated reply to something (among many interesting

somethings) I kept in my email-to-read folder. I always enjoy reading

your posts; keep'em coming! Thoughtful and full of good ideas, good

questions, and good humor.

Where do you teach, by the way?

I shall respond where/how I would if we were "chatting" in person ...

My answer: Primarily by believing in them and being vocal about it

and encouraging them, a lot, individually and as a group; but your ideas

have given me some great ideas. Thanks!

> 1. I send my students a letter prior to class describing the cooperative

> nature of the class and my expectations. I ask them to write a math

> autobiography, get the text, read chapter 1 and work out as many problems as

> they can. I give them my home and work phone numbers just in case the letter

> causes an anxiety attack. The effect is marvelous as reported by my students.

Interesting! Sounds great. You are clearly an excellent teacher.

I too share letters w/my students (but different than yours, I think). I

ask them to tell me something about themselves (whatever is pertinent to

the course: writing history or reading history or studying/school history,

AND whatever else they want to share), so I feel it's only fair to give

them a letter from me, too. In it I talk about the course in a general

way, and our relationship, and me (supplying the specifics they usually

give me).

> 2. I collect and read all the autobiographies and respond with

personal > notes of encouragement and/or verbal responses when

appropriate.

Me, too. I respond as if we were together, talking.

> 3. I ask the students to sign a Success Contract which I sign

outlining what > I will do and what I expect them to do. I actually refer

to it throughout the > semester and remind them of their comittment to the

course and themselves as > well as to me.

I've heard of this from other colleagues, but never done this

before. Contracts felt foreign, somewhat too formal and too rigid, but

the way you describe it - mebbe it isn't that way, after all. Would you

share your contract w/me? I don't teach math, but the essence is all I

want to see, anyway. BTW, I especially like the fact that you refer to it

throughout the semester .... that's where I have fallen down, forgetting

to periodically refer to my course outline (w/goals, objectives, house

rules). As a result, some students do worse than they might because they

don't remember that I have rules for late work, etc.

> 4. I ask my students to do a written analysis of the 7 principles

as they > apply to math classes and cooperative learning. Number 6 often

receives a lot of > discussion because students are not used to hearing

high expectation expressed > about them. Again I write back explaining my

thoughts and experiences. In a way > this establishes a peer relation

versus that of student and teacher.

Hmmm. This is clearly a useful, thought-triggering, activity and

really gets the students aware of the nature of education, as you see it

and as it is. I have a copy of those 7 principles, somewhere; I'll pull

them out and re-read them. If I decide to, would you mind if I use them

in abbreviated or whole form to spark what I KNOW will be an excellent,

fruitful and fascinating discussion? I, too, like to do what I can to

establish a more than teacher relationship with my students. And whatever

will focus their attention on the nature of teaching and learning will

enhance both.

> 5. When students are working in groups I resist providing quick

answers and > encourage them to seek answers themselves by relying on the

abilities of their > members. I comment that someone in the group will be

able to find a solution and > working together they will certainly be able

to answer each members questions. > It takes them a little while to get

used to this but after they do they revel in > each group members success.

I have done this - some - but not as much as I think I could. Mind

you, I use group activities in ALL my courses, in which they work through

material following guidelines I have previously explained and/or modeled

for them; often they are asked to share the results w/the class as a

whole, and often just w/me. The difference is that I usually give them

the answers as we review the work, after all are done, I don't usually

expect them to figure out all the correct answers w/no confirmation from

me.

Perhaps I think I haven't trusted the students to be able to

figure out the answers together, but maybe that means I am designing the

activity well enough. You've sparked my thinking ...

When DO you tell them the correct answers? Or do you?

And how do you get them to work together, instead of relying on

the one or two people who seem to get the answers more quickly? I haven't

quite figured that out, though some tactics I've used have helped.

One is to put them into groups of 3 or 4 and either assign or have

them choose these roles: writer, speaker, facilitator. The writer

records what the group creates; the speaker tells the whole class what

the outcome was + explains the rationale; the facilitator makes sure

everyone is involved. If there are 4 in the group, the speaker role is

expanded into two parts, w/both speaking and adding in/explaining however

they choose. That seems to work for a lot of activities, and when I use

it I see greater involvement and higher quality results.

> 6. At the end of each exam or assignment I ask students to comment

on how > they feel they are doing and how the class is going. I also ask

if they have any > suggestions for me which might improve the class. This

is optional and not > graded.

I ask for this kind of feedback fairly often, either general or

specific in nature. Also nongraded, often anonymous. Good results if

sometimes painful (don't ask for what you don't want to hear!). My

teaching and our relationship definitely improves as a result of this

interactive evaluation process.

> 7. I provide a lot of verbal encouragement throughout the semester.

> Especially before exams when they may be nervous and after exams when they do

> well. Since I observe them working together I am in an excellent position to

> suggest where they need extra work, where they are doing especially well, or

> what strategy they might try to prepare themselves.

Me, too.

> 8. I try to learn something about each student that I can relate to and I

> discuss things with them which will help them understand my background and

> interests better. I always explain my rationale for doing things. I share my

> experiences with them and the class and encourage them to do the same. Many

> students have told me that knowing me personally sets high expectations since

> they do not want to let me down. They see me as a friend and mentor.

>

My students, generally, are quite pleased to be/have been in my

class, I think largely because I care (and they see that), I do my best to

help themn understand whatever we work on and don't move on until they do,

and I do seem to be fairly effective as a teacher ... of course, being a

bit of a ham doesn't hurt.

However, from my perspective, I wouldn't give myself such high

marks. I know how very novice-like much of my instruction is. I have SO

MUCH TO LEARN! Yes, I think I have the right instincts but not enough

knowledge of how/when/where etc. More than I did when I first started

teaching at the college level, in 1989, yet not that much more.

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