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Getting In Touch With Our Students' Inner Teachers

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Getting In Touch With Our Students' Inner Teachers

Two weeks ago, I wrote about an ebook that I found in the Dacus Library online collection: *Teaching and Learning From the Inside Out: Revitalizing Ourselves and Our Institutions*, ed. Margaret Golden, Wiley Periodicals, 2102. This collection of essays applies something called the Circle of Trust Approach to teaching and learning, from an organization called The Center for Courage and Renewal. The first chapter lists seven principles, which I listed in issue 4. Here are the two I want to focus on today:

- Everyone has an inner teacher.
- An appreciation of paradox enriches our lives and helps us hold greater complexity.

Here is what they say about the inner teacher:

Every person has access to an inner source of truth, named in various wisdom traditions as identity, true

self, heart, spirit, or soul. The inner teacher is a source of guidance and strength that helps us find our way through life's complexities and challenges. Circles of Trust give people a chance to listen to this source, learn from it, and discover its imperatives for their work and their lives. Creating the conditions that encourage the "inner teacher" to make an appearance or to be invited into dialogue in classrooms, lecture halls, and even small group seminars is not the usual fare—for students and teachers alike. In fact, in many settings such a thing would be suspect and seen as taking away from the rigor and focus on the mastery of knowledge. As teachers it asks us to trust that students have some of their own answers inside, waiting to be discovered. (Golden 7)

This idea resonates with me, in my experience as both a student and a teacher. Over and over in

my life, many of the things I have learned most deeply and enduringly were things that I taught myself. I find this to be especially true in regards to music. I have learned much from others about playing the mandolin, the instrument I am most devoted to, and I appreciate what I have learned. But the tunes and licks and solos that I have figured out for myself, following my inner teacher, have stuck with me most deeply and seem to express my own style more clearly and fully.

I remember from my student days, long long ago, the feelings of discovery and joy I had when I allowed what Golden and her colleagues are calling "the inner teacher" to express itself in the classroom. I remember being astonished at some of the ideas I thought and expressed.

Many of us have stopped

“Another way to think of this is to recognize that as teachers, we often feel we are learning the most. If that is true, then we are the students—and our students must be the teachers. If our students were allowed to see themselves as teachers, as being guided by their inner teachers, perhaps they would have this same experience that we teachers share.”



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trying to be the “sage on the stage” all the time in the classroom, the person who does all the talking (and most of the thinking). There are times, of course, when we must play that “sage” role, but we know from reading and experience that the person who talks the most learns the most—so it is good to allow the people we want to do most of the learning to talk, and thus, to think. The concept of the inner teacher carries that idea even further, I think. Even if I turn much of the talking and thinking over to the students, if I continue to think of them as “students,” I will unconsciously be hindering them in their full growth.

I am going to try to begin to think of my students as teachers—or as individuals who have inner teachers. I think this is the kind of circle of trust this organization is talking about. Do I have the faith in my students’ potential to think of each of them being guided and led by an inner teacher?

Such a shift in thinking can have a big effect, I know from experience.

But another part of me realizes that there are times when I have to be the teacher, and they have to be the students. What to do with that paradox? Fortunately, their fifth principle addresses my question, saying that “paradox enriches our lives and helps us hold greater complexity.” Again, I quote from the chapter:

The journey we take in a Circle of Trust teaches us to approach the many polarities that come with being human as “both—ands” rather than “either—ors,” holding them in ways that open us to new insights and possibilities. We listen to the inner teacher and to the voices in the circle, letting our own insights and the wisdom that can emerge in conversation check and balance each other. We trust both our intellects and the knowledge that comes through our bodies, intuitions, and emotions.

We hold open the possibility that when looked at more deeply some things that appear to be opposites hold something in common that connects them to a larger whole. In this way, we enlarge the territory of exploration and inquiry. By

creating the opportunity to explore such things in dialogue with ourselves and others, we help students develop the capacity to hold the tensions inherent in their current understanding of a given subject or of our world with creativity and compassion, rather than cynicism and fear. We learn to create bridges between and among disparate ideas rather than fanning the flames of increasing polarization that is so prevalent in our world. (Golden 7)

Another way to think of this is to recognize that as teachers, we often feel we are learning the most. If that is true, then we are the students—and our students must be the teachers. If our students were allowed to see themselves as teachers, as being guided by their inner teachers, perhaps they would have this same experience that we teachers share. I am going to spend the next few classes consciously making this mental and emotional shift: when I walk into my classroom, I will be encountering not students, but people guided by inner teachers. My inner teacher is going to walk into their circle and listen to their inner teachers. I am interested to see what difference that makes.

XXITE 2.0 ----- The Virtual Gathering Place for WU (The Reboot!)

Jo Koster and I invite you to join XXITE (Twenty-first Century Teaching Excellence)—or if you have already joined, to check it out again as it grows and develops. Maybe you have not been there in a long time—if not, you will see many changes in look and content. For example, XXITE now has groups dedicated to HMXP and CRTW, with

those of us who teach those courses sharing ideas and materials. Talk to Jo about setting up your own interest group. Jo is particularly interested in recruiting a few people to blog regularly about their teaching.

Jo set up this interactive site to give Winthrop faculty a virtual gathering space to share ideas about teaching and

technology. You'll find blogs and discussion forums on various topics—and we urge you to add your own ideas. Visit again at <http://wuxxite.ning.com/> Or email Jo Koster for an invitation to join: kosterj@winthrop.edu The TLC website also has links to navigate your way there or to join: <http://www2.winthrop.edu/tlc/>

A New Service From the TLC: Teaching Consultation

The Teaching and Learning Center is offering a new service: teaching consultation. At the instructor's request, I (or another agreed-upon person) will visit your class to observe and consult with you afterwards about your successes and challenges. This consultation has nothing to do with the tenure and

promotion process, and no reports will be made to department chairs or deans (unless you so request). The invitation to the consultant can only come from the instructor, not from a dean or chair or any other person. All conversations will be private and confidential. If you don't want me to visit your class and observe your teaching, we could

just meet and talk about your teaching. If I am not available to visit your class because of my schedule, I will find a qualified person to do the consulting. So please let me know if you would like to invite me into your class or for a consultation. Call or email me at (803) 323-3679 or birdj@winthrop.edu.

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and Open Educational Resources. Within each category, you will find a number of excellent and informative videos. The Office of Academic Affairs has provided us a one-year subscription to this service.

People often tell the TLC that they would like to go to sessions, but they don't have the time or they can't

at the times sessions are offered. With Go2Knowledge, you can attend sessions on demand, anywhere, 24/7. The TLC will also have frequent Go2Knowledge Groups, where we meet to discuss a presentation. Log in here: <http://www.go2knowledge.org/winthrop> See you there!

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- CORE VALUES**
Posted by [Mark Y. Herring](#) on June 5, 2012 at 9:41am
- PLAYING TO TYPE**
Posted by [Blair C. Harding](#) on May 25, 2012 at 10:22am
- TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING IN THE CLASSROOM**
Posted by [Amanda Hiler](#) on March 15, 2012 at 12:11pm — 1 Comment
- GONE WITH THE WIND...**
Posted by [Jo Koster](#) on March 6, 2012 at 10:33am — 2 Comments

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NOTES

- DO COLLEGE PROFESSORS WORK HARD ENOUGH?**
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 25, 2012 at 1:34pm. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)
- WHO OWNS YOUR COURSE?**
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 19, 2012 at 12:07pm. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)
- STUDENT OWNERSHIP OF TABLETS INCREASES, PREFERENCE FOR GROWING**
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Thought
for
The Week

*"Supposing is good, but
finding out is better."*
--Mark Twain