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Engage, Challenge, Motivate, Nurture, Part Two: My Great Teachers

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Engage, Challenge, Motivate, Nurture, Part Two: My Great Teachers

I wrote last week about the sequence “engage, challenge, motivate, nurture,” and the way those concepts can help us focus our teaching. I have since thought back to the teachers I remember as having the most influence on me and the ways they embodied those concepts.

To go way, way back, Miss Ward in the second grade did not have to engage or motivate me: at that early age, I was still on fire to learn, the pure joy of learning not yet hammered out of me by a sometimes brutal educational system. I was such a voracious reader that I had nearly made it all the way through the second-grade books before Thanksgiving. Miss Ward knew that I needed a challenge. She sent me and a fellow classmate (I think his name was Tom Fitzgerald) to Miss McKeon’s third grade class to read their books. I remember in particular a set of brown-covered books, biographies of famous Americans. I remember living with

Daniel Boone and Thomas Jefferson and Booker T. Washington, and a love of reading biography was instilled in me at that early age, a love that continues today.

I ended up in Miss McKeon’s class for third grade. I had read many of the books in her class, of course, so she challenged me by sending me to the library. Miss Moore, the librarian, tolerated my constant visits, even though she had thrown me out of the library when I was in first grade for laughing too hard and too loudly at *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*. I remember very well the challenging rule that Miss Moore imposed on us: you could never give up on a book until you had read at least 40 pages of it. Many times since, I have started a book, thinking I did not like it, and was tempted to stop reading. But I remembered Miss Moore’s rule, read at least to page 40, and found myself hooked. I have read many great books

that I would have given up on, had it not been for Miss Moore’s excellent rule.

I can’t remember my elementary school band director’s name. I went in wanting to play the trumpet, but she looked at my fingers and decided I was a clarinet player. I tooted and squeaked along on the clarinet in the fifth grade, quite undistinguished, until she told us that we must practice 30 minutes a day, and then she gave us a card to fill out, charting our practice. That challenge and motivation was just what I needed. I went from a sporadic player to a regular, conscientious practicer, duly putting in my thirty minutes a day, bringing that card in to be signed. She had tapped into my competitive nature, and the results of her challenging engagement, her nurturing motivation, were astonishing. I climbed steadily up the ranks of the clarinet players, challenging those ahead of me in the play-offs she

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instituted, until I sat proudly as first-chair clarinetist, an awesome pinnacle, a perch I never surrendered. I made all-county band the next year, thanks to an inspiring teacher whose name I cannot remember. In later life, I carried her lesson into my other musical adventures, and to this day, I still try to get in my 30 minutes, if not more. What a difference it makes!

Also in the fifth grade, Mrs. Hathcock challenged me to keep up my high academic standards as the toil of five years of schooling began to wear on me. She engaged and nurtured me and the whole class by reading aloud Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, a few chapters at a time, every Friday afternoon, my introduction to the writer who is the center of my scholarly life to this day. The next year, Mrs. Frick engaged us with her constant stories of her life in Bangkok. Mrs. Frick, wherever you are, I will someday fulfill my goal, established then, to travel to Thailand.

In the seventh grade, I encountered my first male teachers, and two of them, Mr. Neel and Mr. Mauldin, were the best teachers I ever had. Rayfield M. Neel was the band director, and

to say he engaged and challenged me is an understatement. A short, solidly-built man with close-cropped hair and dark circles under his eyes, Mr. Neel was like a teddy bear and a drill sergeant rolled into one. He whipped a rag-tag group of young people into a first-rate band, and he entertained us constantly with his antics: firing pencils across the room with shouts of "Mark it!"; once throwing a stool into the back of a piano so hard that he broke the stool and cracked the piano back; stopping the whole band in mid-phrase so he could apply Chap Stick, then starting us up again. He was also an amazing musician: every now and then, he would take someone's trumpet, pull his Bach 2C mouthpiece from his pocket, and demonstrate what we were supposed to be playing. His music could even soothe the savage breasts of rambunctious teenagers. He was my band director through the tenth grade. I saw him several years after I graduated, when I was a semi-professional musician, and I thanked him for all he taught me about music, about discipline, about life. He died a year or two ago. I never got the chance to thank him for what he taught me about being a

teacher.

Finally, Mr. Billy E. Mauldin left an impact on me that I will never forget. He taught me a combined social studies and language arts class; I was with him for almost half the day each day in seventh grade. He seemed ten feet tall to me, although he was probably about 6'3" or 6'4", thin, with sandy hair and thin lips that he pursed in a certain way when he was about to punish, that curled into a devilish smile when he was about to tell a joke. Mr. Mauldin challenged me with his presence and his knowledge, he engaged me with his wit and intellect, he motivated me with his innovative teaching methods, he nurtured me and propelled me, eventually, into a life as a teacher myself. I have never known a teacher who had everything so in balance, all the time, so seemingly without effort. I was very fortunate that he was my teacher at that time, in that place. He died a few years ago, too. I never got the chance to thank him for all he gave me, but I think of him often as I try to emulate him. Thank you, Mr. Mauldin!

So, who engaged, challenged, motivated, and nurtured you?

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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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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BLOG POSTS

- NEW POSTS ON THE RENOVATIONS**
Posted by [Mark Y. Herring](#) on June 5, 2012 at 2:05pm
- CORE VALUES**
Posted by [Mark Y. Herring](#) on June 5, 2012 at 9:41am
- PLAYING TO TYPE**
Posted by [Blaiz 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**
Created by [Jo Koster](#) Mar 14, 2012 at 11:24am. Last updated by [Jo Koster](#)

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Thought
for
The Week

*"It is noble to teach oneself, but still nobler to teach others--and less trouble."
--Mark Twain*