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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2017

Compassion's Last Stand

by Kamilah Cummings

Last month my colleague wrote a wonderfully thoughtful and informative [blog](#) that explored the roots of plagiarism. In it he opined that understanding the root of plagiarism offers educators options for addressing it (Hayes). Having spent nearly three years as a member of a committee tasked with ensuring that the University's academic integrity policies are upheld, I have often found myself suspended between shock and sadness when confronted with the options some colleagues have chosen to address plagiarism. Recently, a particularly dispiriting situation beckoned me to question the role of compassion in addressing plagiarism. Even the most egregious act of academic dishonesty presents itself as a teachable moment. To that end, if compassion has a place anywhere, it should be in the classroom.

A cursory glance at daily headlines from Washington D.C. to Chicago illuminates the reality that compassion is under siege. Even some of the most well-intentioned people and institutions appear to be forcing compassion to retreat in favor of addressing more pragmatic concerns. However, for me it is a harrowing proposition to envision a world where compassion is a casualty of war. Yet, this is the daily reality for many. Given this fact, it is troubling to witness situations where students who commit plagiarism whether unintentionally or intentionally are not only met with a lack of compassion but with scorn, belittlement, and indifference as well. I have seen compassion eschewed more times than I care to recall in these situations. However, I am particularly disturbed when these incidents occur in first-year courses with students from underrepresented groups, as research shows that two of the primary reasons that these students leave higher education are feeling unwelcomed and lack of academic preparedness.

"Integrating compassion into classrooms can strengthen the emotional, intellectual and social learning environment of a school" (Berkowicz and Myers). One need not teach compassion or design assignments or learning outcomes based on the principles of compassion to infuse the learning environment with it. One can simply model compassion in her interactions with students. Faculty can model compassion when addressing acts of student dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, by considering possible causes. For example, there are distinct cultural differences in defining what constitutes plagiarism. Having taught writing to international students from Indonesia to China, Iran, Pakistan, Mexico, and Togo, I have learned that there are striking differences in global perceptions of plagiarism.

An additional issue to consider when addressing plagiarism is academic preparedness. For example, multiple factors might affect a nontraditional adult learner's understanding of plagiarism. Some adult learners might have never been required to cite in school, while others

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may have been away from school for long periods of time and need refreshers on citation, while others might work in professions/industries that approach plagiarism and citation differently than academia. Additionally some traditional-aged students come from high schools that have failed to adequately prepare them for the rigors of university work in many regards, including working with sources. Finally various internal and external stressors might contribute to an act of plagiarism.

In essence all learning is developmental, and a compassionate response to plagiarism recognizes this. Although the University requires that acts of academic dishonesty be reported, faculty have freedom in assessing sanctions. I recommend that faculty include an opportunity for the student to learn from the incident as well. A punishable moment is still a teachable one. Yet, I have seen sanctions from zero credit on an assignment to complete failure of a course issued without any accompanying educational remedy. In addition to assessing a penalty, as an educational remedy faculty could require students to demonstrate understanding of plagiarism by completing a free online tutorial with The Writing Center or through a website such as Lycoming College's "[Goblin Threat Plagiarism Test](#)" or Indiana University Bloomington's "[How to Recognize Plagiarism](#)" test. Faculty might also have a student resubmit an assignment for a reduced grade (or no grade at all) and have the student include annotations of the revisions that were made to correct and avoid plagiarism.

Another option could be to have the student write a short reflection on the experience of committing and being sanctioned for an act of academic dishonesty with an explanation of why they committed the act and how they will avoid it in the future. Faculty could also meet with the student to discuss the situation. I am often surprised at how infrequently this option is selected, particularly in marginal situations when despite an earnest attempt at citing errors have occurred or situations when students who are otherwise performing well in a course commit an act of plagiarism. Meeting with the student could offer opportunities for faculty to reexamine course policies and expectations as Hayes suggests.

Myriad factors influence the way human beings act and react to situations and each other. The classroom can at times reflect the best and worst of this reality. However, "teaching is a humanistic profession, requiring compassion and genuine caring" (Potter, Whitener and Sikorsky). To that end, the student-teacher relationship should be neither adversarial nor apathetic. As teachers we hold positions of authority with our students, and we can use that authority to build or destroy. The classroom should be a place where teachers facilitate a learning experience that is challenging, transformative, and empowering. As such, a teacher should have the capacity to address plagiarism with compassion.

I am in no way arguing that faculty should forego sanctions for acts of academic dishonesty. As Hayes asserts, "blaming the students is the easiest strategy" (Hayes). A sanction for the act addresses the student's accountability. However, once the easiest strategy has been deployed, what next? A compassionate approach holds the instructor accountable as well. It calls for a well-intentioned attempt to assist the student in not repeating the behavior. It moves the situation from merely a punishable moment to a teachable one. After all, teaching is what we are here to do.

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POSTED BY KAMILAH CUMMINGS AT [12:44 PM](#) NO COMMENTS:  

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2017

Job Opportunity for Caring and Curious Students

The University Center for Writing-based Learning (UCWbL) is looking to hire undergraduate and graduate students as writing tutors. Tutors are provided with extensive training, including WRD 395: Writing Center Theory and Pedagogy. This class can be applied to both the L7 and H2X competencies.

If you know any SNL students who might interested, please share this opportunity.

Application materials must be submitted by April 24, 2017 at noon.

For more information: <http://condor.depaul.edu/writing/about-join-our-staff.html>

POSTED BY NICHOLAS HAYES AT [12:56 PM](#) NO COMMENTS: 

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2017

SNL Writing in Savannah, GA

The SNL Writing Program has been invited to present at the 2017 Student Success in Writing Conference. The conference, organized by the Georgia Southern University Department of Writing and Linguistics, has provided a forum for educators to discuss student success in writing since 1999. SNL Writing will be adding to the conversation by discussing the unique considerations that go into designing a writing curriculum for adult students.

POSTED BY NICHOLAS HAYES AT [4:15 PM](#) NO COMMENTS: 

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2017

Writing Group Open Mic next week!



Writers Guild, a multigenre writing group for the entire DePaul community, will be holding their quarterly open mic event, Aloud!, on Wednesday, February 15th.

See below for details and be sure to email SNLwriting@depaul.edu if you are interested in joining a writing group at DePaul.

Aloud!

Wednesday, February 15th

7-9 p.m. (open mic sign-up starts at 7 p.m.)

SAC 212, Lincoln Park Campus

Featured Reader: Michael Van Kerckhove

POSTED BY TRACEY AT [12:09 PM](#) NO COMMENTS: 

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2017

SNL Writing is Going to Scotland

The SNL Writing Program has been invited to present at the [International Higher Education Teaching & Learning Association \(HETL\) Conference](#) in Paisley, Scotland at the end of June. The conference theme is *Creating Inclusion and Diversity in Higher Education*, which is an impulse at the very core of SNL. The Writing Program's presentation "Designing a Writing Program that Meets the Needs of the Adult Student" will explore how SNL uses its writing classes and student outreach programs to address the needs of our unique student body.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2016

A Good Paper Rubric

by Kamilah Cummings

This week I began my Writing for Competence course as I do all of my courses. Because I like to create a sense of community in my classes, I use a five-question ice breaker to sow togetherness. Questions run the gamut from professional and personal interests to academic goals. Although I like to mix up the questions from quarter to quarter, one staple question I ask pertains to student goals for the course. Just as this question remains the same, so typically do the students' responses. With slight variations on the theme, students overwhelmingly express the desire to "write good papers" as their premier goal. This ultimately leads to a discussion about what constitutes a "good" paper. Despite the number of times I have engaged in this discussion, I am always slightly saddened by the misconceptions about writing that have been cemented into the psyches of so many. However, though the attributes that exemplify effective academic writing can be a mystery to students, grading rubrics can help demystify the criteria. Ultimately, the use of an established rubric to assess writing offers benefits for students and faculty.

One of the most beneficial aspects of using a rubric to assess writing is that it clarifies the criteria for effective writing. Teacher and writer Vicki Spandel argues that "when thoughtfully created and used with discretion and understanding, rubrics can be among the most useful instructional tools we have" (19). In clearly identifying and defining assessment criteria, rubrics can provide a link to classroom instruction and establish concrete goals for ongoing improvement. I have seen evidence of this in my own classes since I started regularly using the *Grading Rubric for Papers at the School for New Learning* two years ago. To aid student learning, I find the rubric is most useful when I discuss it with students in class before using it to assess their papers. Because the rubric thoughtfully lists and explains the criteria for assessing papers with clear distinctions between the elements that comprise excellent, strong, satisfactory, weak, and poor papers, there is no mystery regarding the grades my students receive on their

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papers.

Given that a cornerstone of writing at SNL is the focus on writing as an iterative process, another benefit of using rubrics to assess student writing is the role that rubrics play in revision. As Spandel asserts, rubrics “serve as a guide to revision, giving student writers an insider’s view of what makes writing work” (19). In my experience, students don’t want a rubric alone. They want summary or marginal feedback comments as well. I’ve found that combining a rubric with targeted comments not only provides students with a destination but also a map of how to reach it. By aligning feedback comments with the assessment criteria defined in the rubric, students see the standards by which their work is measured as well as the areas where their writing needs improvement.

Rubrics also help students to prioritize elements of their writing, which helps to chip away at the “good grammar equals good writing” axiom that so many people harbor. The danger in this belief is the converse, which is that “bad grammar equals bad writing.” Not surprisingly, improving grammar is the second most common goal that students in my writing courses share. However, when students see a rubric such as the *SNL Paper Grading Rubric*, they see that while grammar is important, it is not the most important aspect of writing. Students see that the merits of an insightful response to an assignment coupled with an effective thesis, logical development, effective organization and sufficient support far outweigh a properly placed comma. When the rubric is paired with samples that model the assessment criteria like those on the *SNL Writing Guide*, students no longer have to guess about what makes a “good” paper. Some critics of using rubrics to assess writing argue that they inhibit subjectivity and promote conformity. However, a rubric such as the *SNL Paper Grading Rubric* allows space for healthy subjectivity but also promotes transparency and consistency.

Rubrics offer multiple benefits for faculty as well. *A Writer’s Reference* co-author Nancy Sommers points out that the clear assessment criteria that rubrics provide “can help manage the paper load and ease the burden of grading” (33). Integrating an established rubric for assessing writing can be particularly beneficial for faculty who do not teach writing but teach writing intensive courses. Instead of expecting students to know the criteria for a good essay, the rubric lays them bare, which allows non-writing faculty to spend more time on discipline-related feedback. For all faculty who assess writing, time saved on grading can be significant. Over the years, I have worked to decrease the amount of time I spend per paper providing feedback. Although I still find myself inserting comments minutes after my egg timer sounds,

incorporating a rubric into my feedback has substantially reduced the time I spend grading.

More important than merely reducing my grading time, the rubric helps impart objectivity and consistency in my feedback. It also helps me to provide more useful and focused feedback. As Spandel suggests, “we do need to offer reasons for our reactions to writing and to show that those reasons are based on sound criteria” (21). She adds, “we must seek to make ourselves aware of how we respond to writing and why so that we can share our thinking with students” (21). In that sense, the rubric demystifies the criteria for “a good paper” not only for students but for faculty as well.

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POSTED BY KAMILAH CUMMINGS AT [10:22 AM](#)  

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THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2015

A Bit of Mindfulness in the Classroom

by Kamilah Cummings

As adults in a range of industries find themselves increasingly overextended with mounting professional and personal responsibilities, the concept of work-life balance has garnered renewed interest. For many, achieving equilibrium between work and life has become a seemingly impossible task. One often needs to look no further than the man in the mirror to find an example of this reality. However, work-life imbalance brings with it an increase in stress (Mayo Clinic Staff) along with a host of related physical maladies. Awareness of this harrowing fact led me to explore managing the stress of work-life imbalance in my own life. One way that I began to do this was to incorporate simple mindfulness practices into my daily routine. As a result of my positive experiences, I decided to incorporate one of my mindfulness practices into my classes.

Despite increased awareness through books, workshops, and even iPad apps, mindfulness is not a new concept. It is an ancient one that can be found in many Eastern spiritual and religious traditions from martial arts and yoga to Buddhism (Harris 21). Although many think of meditation when they hear the term mindfulness, meditation is just one of many ways to practice mindfulness. "Mindfulness" can be defined in a variety of different ways, but they all basically come down to this: paying attention with flexibility, openness, and

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curiosity” (Harris 21). In short, mindfulness is simply being aware in the present moment and paying attention to one’s feelings.

Researchers who have studied mindfulness and mental health professionals who incorporate it into a variety of therapies have learned that mindfulness can alleviate stress and anxiety by allowing those who practice it to view their experiences from different perspectives and gain deeper understanding about themselves. As author and psychotherapist Russ Harris states, “We can use mindfulness to . . . improve our self-knowledge – to learn more about how we feel, think and react. Considering that we require our students to do a great deal of reflection in our courses, I thought that my classes would be a perfect place to introduce students to mindfulness through the inclusion of an assignment that allowed them to write about their feelings in the present moment.

As adult learners, I know that my students have to add academic life to the work-life balancing act. Because my students usually take my classes in their first three terms, they are often still managing the stress of returning to school. Add to that that they are enrolled in a writing course, and the anxiety rating skyrockets for many of them. Therefore, given my own positive experience with managing stress and anxiety with a daily mindfulness writing activity, I thought I would create a simple weekly journal assignment for my students to share the practice with them. My hope was that they would find it equally beneficial.

I replaced the normal writing journal prompts that I used to use with what I call a “Right Now” journal. The assignment gives a brief explanation of the use of writing as a mindful practice and then requires the student to write a journal entry that begins with the prompt, “Right now I . . .” . I allow students 10 minutes to write while I play calming

instrumental music – usually Reiki, meditation, or Santana. I also invite students to start the assignment by taking a couple of deep breaths if they want. I give the same assignment every week.

At first, I was unsure how students would receive the assignment, so I only used it in a small face-to-face class. I was surprised by how quickly the students took to the assignment (and the music). Students wrote about everything from anxiety related to the class and assignments to residual feelings from disagreements with family and friends, the day at work, and the commute to class. I usually engaged in the practice along with them. I always gave the option to share their entries afterward. Sometimes we all shared; sometimes we didn't. Either way, it was rewarding to see students using the assignment to navigate present feelings about their experiences. As the term progressed, they shared how they used the assignment outside of class at home and at work during stressful situations. They also stated that starting the evening with the mindfulness assignment helped them to de-stress and focus more on the class.

In addition to the benefit of giving students practice writing in general, another benefit to the "Right Now" journal assignment for me was that it afforded an opportunity to connect with my students on a different level and to learn more about them. Because I try to take a holistic approach to teaching, I found the level of community building that occurred in the class as a result of this assignment allowed me to better understand, teach, and encourage my students.

As I previously stated, I wasn't sure how the introduction of mindfulness via the "Right Now" assignment would be received by my students, but I am happy that I chose to use it. I am currently using it in another course, and the students in that course have reacted to it the same way my previous

students did. When the course ended last term, students said they planned to continue to use the assignment in their lives. For me, that has been the greatest benefit of incorporating this assignment in my classes. Learning should be both transformative and transferrable, and my students' responses to this simple addition of mindfulness to my classes reflect this to me.

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2014

The Pleasure Principle

by Kamilah Cummings

Earlier this month I participated in a webinar presented by Dr. David Kirkland of New York University titled *A Song of the Smoke: Critical Thoughts on the Literacies of Young Black Men*. The webinar was part of Georgia State University's "Conversations in Global Literacy" series. Kirkland's presentation examined how educational bias has marginalized black male youth and created a cycle of miseducation that disengages them from the classroom at all levels of education. As part of rethinking the ways educators address this crisis, he offered thoughts on how to better engage these students and their literacies in the classroom. One of the thoughts Kirkland offered for how to do this is to replace "reading, writing, and arithmetic" as the rudiments of education with "pleasure, play, curiosity, and creativity" (Kirkland).

Although we envision the classroom as a place of inclusion, research reflects the reality that many classrooms from kindergarten to college remain places of exclusion. In the article, "Are we having fun yet? Students, social class, and the pleasures of literacy," Bronwyn T. Williams writes, "if we consider how experiences of reading, writing, and other forms of popular culture influence students' perceptions of pleasure and literacy, social class has a role to play. Intelligence and pleasure obviously have no class boundaries, but the experiences students have with different forms of texts and communication often do have them. (Williams 339-340)" Williams admits that this can be an uncomfortable subject for educators, but it is a fact that both he and Kirkland argue educators must acknowledge to better facilitate student engagement and learning. Kirkland believes a pedagogical approach that incorporates pleasure, play, curiosity, and creativity can create a more inclusive learning experience.

Certainly, Kirkland and Williams are not the only scholars to recognize the need for pleasure in the classroom. However, as they both acknowledge, the pleasure principle has all but disappeared from most college classrooms. For many educators, pleasure and learning are mutually exclusive experiences that can only unite in specific disciplines.

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Following Kirkland's presentation, I thought about ways that I use "pleasure, play, curiosity and creativity" to engage students. As much as writing teachers, or teachers in any discipline, love our subject matter we have to accept that many students do not share our love or enthusiasm. With adult learners in particular, there might be a multitude of reasons why students have been disengaged from writing. However, if we find ways to make it more pleasurable and, dare I say fun, perhaps we can disarm some of their fears and frustrations.

This reminded me of a recent class where several of the students confessed that they, "did not like writing." Rather than attempt to unpack all the reasons why they felt this way, I decided to try to make writing fun so that they could gain pleasure from it while revealing their writing strengths. So, I brought the party game "Table Topics" to class. The game consists of cards with thought-provoking questions on a range of topics from popular culture to politics. It is marketed as a conversation-starter. I used it as a form of low stakes journaling/prewriting assignment. Students pulled two cards and were allowed to decide which question they wanted to answer. I gave them 15 minutes to write a response to the question. I was surprised at how much fun the students had with the game. However, more importantly, they were surprised by how much they were able to write and how much pleasure they had writing it. In previous low stakes journaling/prewriting assignments, students sometimes struggled to write for the allotted time.

The University of New Hampshire's English Department Director argues, "We can make great claims for the future utility of writing, but if we make it a dutiful act of delayed gratification, devoid of immediate pleasure, students will not write voluntarily, and they will not really engage with the work we require" (Writing and Pleasure). My experience supported this. Playing a game delivered more benefits than I expected. I was able to use their responses to show them how they could effectively write a thesis, use narration, support points, use descriptive detail, compare subjects, and more. I learned about my students' outside interests and experiences, which I pulled from to further engage them by selecting more pleasurable future readings that aligned with their interests. I also referred to their game responses when providing later feedback on written assignments. Rather than compromise the academic integrity of the class, as some fear might happen, I felt playing the game enhanced it.

Williams cautions that "taking pleasure seriously in the literacy classroom is not about making everything a game" (Williams 341). Instead, he argues that "it is a matter of encouraging students to bridge supposed barriers between creative and critical work and to understand how pleasures in interpreting and creating texts of all kinds can connect to building pleasure in academic literacies" (Williams 341). I agree. I did not turn my classroom into game

night at SNL. However, I did find that one night of play helped me to improve student engagement in my class and yielded a more pleasurable overall learning experience.

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POSTED BY KAMILAH CUMMINGS AT [2:26 PM](#) NO COMMENTS:  

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

SNLwriting on the radio

Check out Steffanie Triller and Edward Evins on DePaul Radio this past Friday! They were guests on the UCWbL's Scrawl Radio show and talked about what makes SNL unique, how to work with SNL writers, and the Month of Writing.

<http://ucwbling.chicagolandwritingcenters.org/live-from-depaul-its-snl-scrawl-s11-e02/>

POSTED BY KATIE AT [1:25 PM](#) NO COMMENTS: 

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

Month of Writing Challenge

For more information about the Month of Writing Challenge, see our website: https://depaul.digication.com/snl_month_of_writing_2014



POSTED BY KATIE AT [7:26 PM](#) NO COMMENTS: 

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2014

Upcoming DePaul Workshops on Teaching and Learning

The DePaul Teaching Commons is offering the following workshops in September and October:

Commenting on Writing to Encourage Revision **Online: Friday, September 12, 1 - 3 PM**

Responding to student writing can be time consuming and difficult to approach strategically. In this interactive online workshop, presenters will offer guidelines for prioritizing comments, composing helpful summary notes, and avoiding over-commenting on student work.

Connecting Your Classroom to the World: Developing Global Learning Experiences

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2016

Trust – Connecting in the Classroom

by Kamilah Cummings

Trust is a word that weaves its way into countless conversations. However, it is not often uttered when faculty discuss strategies for supporting students in the classroom. At least, I had not thought about it until a colleague recently warned me that a group of students would never trust me. She followed with an assurance that despite their impenetrable distrust these students would, indeed, respect me and do the required work for the course, but she bookended her admonition with a final reminder that they would never trust me. Because I view trust as an essential element of any healthy relationship, this led me to reflect on the role of trust in teacher-student relationships.

Given the current state of higher education where high tuition and low student enrollment walk hand-in-hand at some institutions, fostering trust in students is of increasing importance. Research shows that lack of trust can negatively impact retention and recruitment based on its correlation to quality perceptions and tuition sensitivity (Ghosh, Whipple and Bryan 333). Drawing from earlier research on trust in higher education, Ghosh, Whipple and Bryan found that sincerity, expertise, and congeniality were the most popular antecedents for influencing student trust in higher education institutions (332-335). It is not an enormous leap to assume that these are also antecedents of trust in the classroom as well.

The relationship between teacher and student is a powerful one that can resonate for a moment or a lifetime. Brookfield argues that not trusting teachers results in students who are “unwilling to submit themselves to the perilous uncertainties of new learning” (163). Further, Chopra offers that an ideal relationship is one where trust, peace, and the ability to heal after a disconnect are present (Chopra and Winfrey). These realities prompted me to think more specifically about the shape trust takes with regard to student writing in my

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classroom where I expect students to lay bare their emotions and beliefs alongside their writing abilities for the scrutiny of not only me as their teacher but their classmates as well.

For many, academic writing is a compulsory seat at a table of discomfort and vulnerability. Nontraditional learners bring disparate prior academic experiences to the classroom. Unfortunately, some of those experiences have resulted in the perception of the teacher-student relationship as adversarial. Yet, “the element of trust” underlies “all significant learning” (Brookfield 163). Therefore, faculty are tasked with dismantling barriers of distrust that have cemented over time - often decades.

I know that one place for a potential disconnect or break in trust in my courses is when I provide feedback on student writing. Here, I see the need for sincerity and expertise to work together to support student success. McFarlane argues that providing feedback that is either harsh or lenient can erode trust between teachers and students (230). I can list numerous times where students and even friends have recounted with vivid detail previous experiences with teacher feedback that was awash in ridicule, condescension, apathy, and suspicion. Those experiences have left them permanently scarred. The alternative scenario is the student who holds somewhat inflated beliefs about their academic writing based on prior professional or creative writing success. Whatever the source, many students have to navigate long-held perceptions and misconceptions about their writing. For students to mine the emotions that receiving writing feedback elicits, they have to trust that the purpose of my feedback is to assist in their growth and development as writers. By providing timely feedback that is clear, substantive, and focused on improving essential elements of their work, I help to build trust.

Authenticity is another requirement for trust-building in the classroom (Brookfield 164). Brookfield suggests that to build authenticity faculty should forge connections in the classroom by sharing interests beyond the roles of teacher and student. I find this especially beneficial in writing-intensive courses. One would be hard pressed to find a student who has taken a class with me who doesn't know that I love Prince, travel, music, and dogs. Likewise, I could compile a never-ending list of the things that I have learned about my students from integrating activities that afford me the opportunity to peer into their non-academic lives. I also engage in pre-class and break-time discussions that traverse myriad subjects with students. I keep notes so that I can refer to this information when they are bereft of ideas for topics. I also use their interests to illustrate course concepts during lectures and

discussions. I find that it improves student engagement and confidence, which also builds trust.

Tapping into the wealth of diverse interests and experiences that adult students bring to the classroom in this manner allows them to demonstrate expertise and share a bit of themselves with their classmates and me. An added benefit to this is that it builds trust between students as they get to learn more about the people with whom they are sharing a transformative learning experience. I find this to be another important trust-building component because when students are required to do peer reviews or work collaboratively, they are no longer being asked to trust the input of a stranger.

Ghosh, Whipple and Bryan caution that, if faculty “accomplishments are not geared toward meeting students' needs, their actual expertise may not be perceived as such by students” (334). At this level, students rightfully assume, and can easily verify, that faculty are accomplished in their disciplines. However, they do not assume that faculty, regardless of expertise, often struggle as they do at various stages of the writing process. To further establish trust I share my writing fallibility. Rather than undermining my credibility as some might assume, sharing my own writing struggles along with the strategies I use to overcome them helps students to remove unrealistic perceptions of writing and me. I have had multiple students tell me that learning that a professional writer and editor doesn't just snap her fingers and produce high quality content was an “a-ha” moment for them. This reinforces trust by underscoring the fact that I am here to help them as writers because I understand their struggles.

In pondering my colleague's warning, I realize that without obvious awareness I have been fostering trust in the classroom. As human beings we are first in relationship t with ourselves and second with the larger human community. I view my classroom as a learning community. For a community to thrive, trust must be present. Although building trust can take time and work, it is worth it. Trust is born of humility and compassion, and I cannot think of a better place than the classroom to model these attributes of humanity (and retention).

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