Talking Teaching and Learning

A multidisciplinary group engaging in focused examination and enhancement of our teaching practice since 1994

TTL History and Background (a sample)

	Original TTL Group	Metaphor Group	Community Building Group
stimulus	Fenstermacher's (1994) practical argument	"When I am teaching at my best, I am like …." Drawn from Palmer (1998) and Bullough and Gitlin (1995).	The development of a community of shared knowledge and practice. Authentic learning, assessment / practice, etc.
meeting format	Read and discussed journal articles identified as useful or member texts such as, "My best teaching experience" or "Learning is …." Inquiry based on practical argument.	Each member identified and wrote about her metaphor. Meetings were spent exploring a member's metaphor and what it might mean for her teaching.	Over two years the group read and discussed pivotal scholarly articles such as: "Ersatz Learning "(1992), "But I Have to Have an 'A'" (1995), and "From Teaching to Learning" (1995).
outcomes	One publication and two presentations.	Two publications and three presentations.	Two publications and three presentations
members	**College of Education**: Curriculum & Instruction; Educational Psychology; Teaching. **College of Humanities and Fine Arts**: Art; Communication Studies; English. **College of Natural Sciences**: Computer Science; Mathematics; Mathematics Education. **College of Social and Behavioral Sciences**: Design, Textiles, Gerontology, & Family Studies; Psychology. **Student Services**: Academic Learning Center.		

2008–2009 TTL Focus

A process described by Paul Savory, Amy Nelson-Burnett, and Amy Goodburn (2007) in *Inquiry Into the College Classroom*.

REFLECT on course history and background.
IDENTIFY an issue to investigate and define an inquiry hypothesis.
DEVELOP an investigative plan; seek institutional approval (if necessary).
IMPLEMENT the Plan, incorporating it into classroom practice.
INTERPRET data and evaluate findings.
REFLECT on and incorporate the experience into future planning.

Talking Teaching And Learning

In 1994, a group of UNI instructors started meeting to discuss their teaching. That group, with changing membership, is still active and still talking about their teaching and learning—theirs and their students'. Initially, the group consisted of faculty (tenured, tenure-track, and adjunct) from the College of Education at the University of Northern Iowa. Before long, however, and since, the group has had an interdisciplinary mix of people interested in understanding and improving their teaching practice and teaching and learning more generally.

The group has always had multiple purposes. With the primary goal of enhancing the practice and understanding of teaching and learning, each group has also spent considerable time and effort in supporting group members in their professional lives as faculty members and teachers.

Research methodologies have been qualitative in nature—generally self-study and action-research or variations of them. Group processes are usually one of:
- a common foci is selected and individuals read, reflect, and/or perform specified tasks and the group discussion examines results, reactions, and insights arising from the activity
- group members work independently and report activity and results to the group for discussion of evidence of and possibilities for improved instruction and understanding (of teaching and learning)

Much scholarly activity (publication and presentation) has been produced by the group or a subset, but individual, independent papers have also been produced. The group is open to and welcomes participants from all academic disciplines who are interested in enhancing their teaching and their students' learning.

This handout accompanies a poster presented at the UNI 2009 Interdisciplinary Research Symposium, Friday, February 13, 2009. The previous (first) page duplicates much of the poster. This page provides some overview information about TTL. Thereafter comes some historical information about TTL:
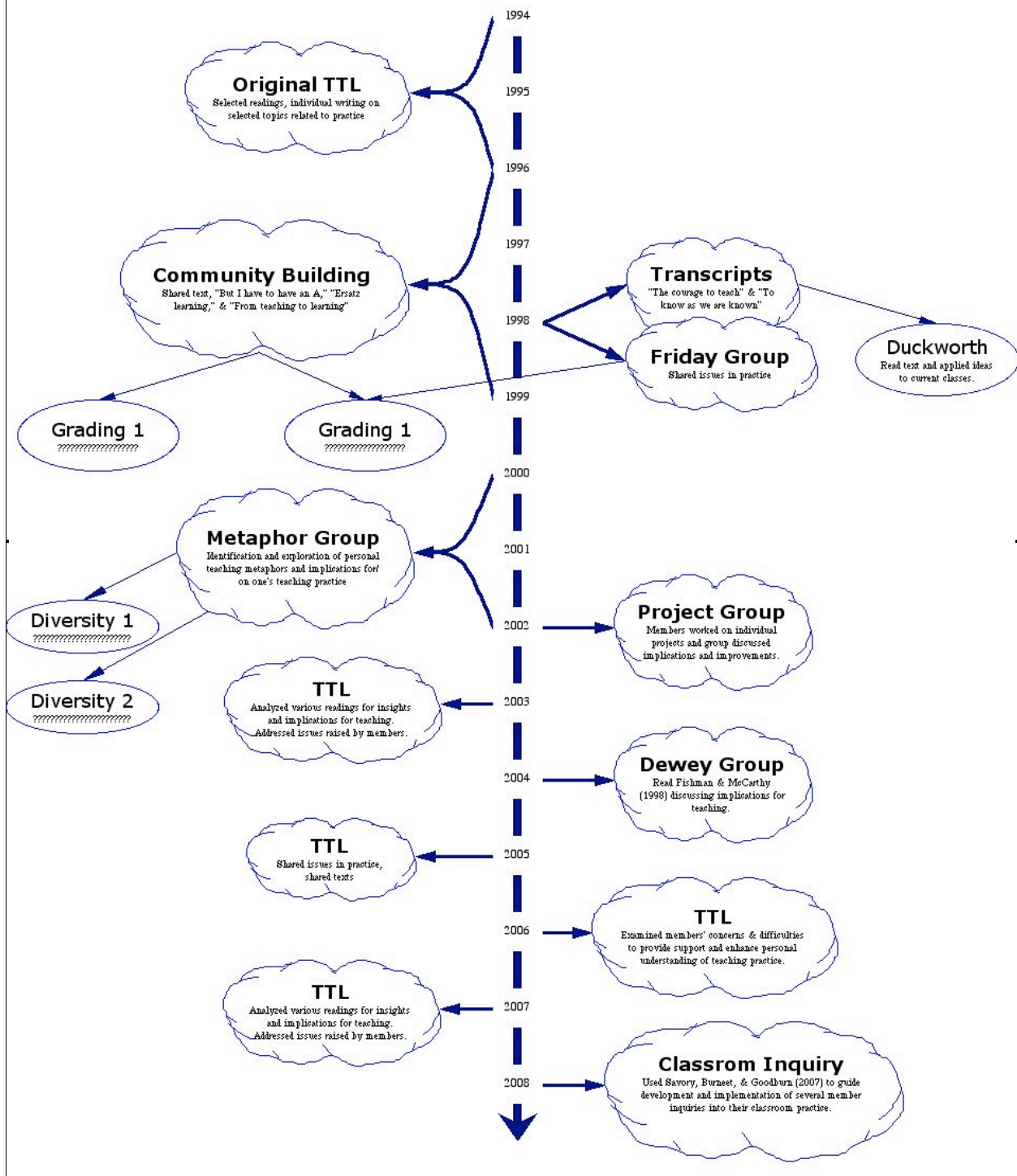- a time-line showing the main group's activity and spinoff groups
- a bibliography of some of the publications and paper presentations coming out of group activity (many presentations were made at national and international conferences but are not included)
- a bibliography of many of the readings used to focus group activity

The final two pages of this handout provide insight into the current group's focus in which two members are in the process of formally inquiring into their classrooms. (Similar material appeared on the poster with the first page material.)

Those currently participating in TTL (and in this poster presentation) are:
- Erica Duffy, Department of Art
- Katheryn East, Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations
- Philip East, Department of Computer Science
- Phil Fass, Department of Art
- Linda Fitzgerald, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
- Bill Koch, Department of English Language and Literature

TTL Timeline

1994

1995

Original TTL
Selected readings, individual writing on selected topics related to practice

1996

1997

Community Building
Shared text, "But I have to have an A," "Ersatz learning," & "From teaching to learning"

Transcripts
"The courage to teach" & "To know as we are known"

1998

Friday Group
Shared issues in practice

Duckworth
Read text and applied ideas to current classes.

1999

Grading 1
??????????????????

Grading 1
??????????????????

2000

2001

Metaphor Group
Identification and exploration of personal teaching metaphors and implications for/ on one's teaching practice

Project Group
Members worked on individual projects and group discussed implications and improvements.

2002

Diversity 1
??????????????????

Diversity 2
??????????????????

TTL
Analyzed various readings for insights and implications for teaching. Addressed issues raised by members.

2003

Dewey Group
Read Fishman & McCarthy (1998) discussing implications for teaching.

2004

TTL
Shared issues in practice, shared texts

2005

TTL
Examined members' concerns & difficulties to provide support and enhance personal understanding of teaching practice.

2006

TTL
Analyzed various readings for insights and implications for teaching. Addressed issues raised by members.

2007

Classroom Inquiry
Used Savory, Burneet, & Goodburn (2007) to guide development and implementation of several member inquiries into their classroom practice.

2008

Many (not all) UNI TTL-related publications

Boody, R., East, K., Fitzgerald, L. M., Heston, M. L., & Iverson, A. (1998). Talking teaching and learning: Using practical argument to make reflective thinking audible. *Action in Teacher Education*, *19*, 88-101.

Canning, C., Fitzgerald, L. M., Miller, C., & Johnson, J. (2007, April). *Take two -- Meaningful collaboration that is not consensus or even consensus-seeking: A self-study of professional learning*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.

East, K. (2005a, April). *Collaborative inquiry: Whose voice counts?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.

East, K. (2005b, April). *Text-based collaboration*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.

East, K. (2006). diversity: One teacher educator's journey. In D. Tidwell & L. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Self-study and diversity* (pp. 153-172). Rotterdam: Sense.

East, K., & Fitzgerald, L. M. (2006). Collaboration and community over the long term. In L. M. Fitzgerald, M. L. Heston, & D. Tidwell (Eds.), *Collaboration and community: Pushing boundaries through self-study*. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England (pp. 72-75). Cedar Falls, IA: University of Northern Iowa.

East, K., Fitzgerald, L. M., & Heston, M. (in press). Talking teaching and learning: Using dialogue in self-study. In D. Tidwell, M. Heston & L. M. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Research methods for the self-study of practice*. Berlin: Springer.

East, K., Fitzgerald, L. M., with Manke, M. (2008). Same forest: Different path. In M. L. Heston, D. Tidwell, K. East, & L. M. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Pathways to change in teacher education: Dialogue, diversity and self-study*. Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England (pp. 103-108). Cedar Falls, IA: University of Northern Iowa.

East, K., & Heston, M. L. (2004). Talking with those not present: Conversations with John Dewey about our educational practices. In D. Tidwell, L. M. Fitzgerald, & M. L. Heston (Eds.), *Journeys of hope: Risking self-study in a diverse world*. Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England (pp. 94-98). Cedar Falls, IA: University of Northern Iowa.

Fitzgerald, L. M., East, K., Heston, M. L., & Miller, C. (2002). Professional intimacy: Transforming communities of practice. In C. Kosnik, A. Freese, & A. P. Samaras (Eds.), *Making a difference in teacher education through self-study*. Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Self-study of Teacher Education Practices, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England (Vol. 1, pp. 77-80). Toronto, Canada: OISE, University of Toronto.

Heston, M. L., & East, K. (2004). You're wrong and I'm not! Private rules and classroom community in the presence of diversity. In D. Tidwell, L. M. Fitzgerald & M. L. Heston, (Eds), *Journeys of hope: Risking self-study in a diverse world*. Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (pp. 145-148). Cedar Falls, IA: University of Northern Iowa.

Heston, M. L., East, K., & Farstad, J. (2000). *A waltz with Eleanor, a polka with Parker: Using text as a tool for self-study*. Paper given at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Heston, M. L., East, K., & Fitzgerald, L. M. (1998). Using practical argument to create communities of conversation. In A. Cole & S. Finley (Eds.), *Conversations in community*. Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England (pp. 195-199). Kingston, Ontario: Queen's University.

Heston, M. L., East, K., Fitzgerald, L. M., Boody, R., & Iverson, A. (1997, February). *Talking teaching and learning: Using practical argument to make reflective thinking audible.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association of Teacher Educators, Washington, DC.

Heston, M., Tidwell, D., & Fitzgerald, L. M. (2008). Creating an international learning community for teacher education scholars. In A. Samaras, A. Freese, C. Kosnik, & C. Beck, (Eds.), *Learning communities in practice* (pp. 165-177). Berlin: Springer.

Miller, C., East, K., Fitzgerald, L. M., Heston, M. L., & Veenstra, T. (2002). Visions of self in the act of teaching: Using personal metaphors in collaborative selves study of teaching practices. *The Journal of Natural Inquiry and Reflective Practice, 16*(3), 81-93.

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Tidwell, D., Heston, M., & Fitzgerald, L. M. (Eds.) (in press). *Research methods for the self-study of practice.* Berlin: Springer.

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Barr, & Tagg, (1995). From teaching to learning: A new paradigm for undergraduate education. *Change, 27*(6), 13-25.

Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bruffee, K. A. (1993). *Collaborative learning: Higher education, interdependence, and the authority of knowledge*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Bullough, R. V., Jr., & Gitlin, A. (1995). *Becoming a student of teaching: Methodologies for exploring self and school context*. New York: Garland.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1996). Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes: Teacher stories—stories of teachers—school stories—stories of schools. *Educational Researcher, 25*(3), 24-30.

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Fenstermacher, G. D. (1994). The place of practical argument in the education of teachers. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Teacher change and the staff development process* (pp. 23-42). New York: Teachers College Press.

Fishman, S. M., & McCarthy, L. (1998). *John Dewey and the challenge of classroom practice*. New York: Teaching College Press.

LaBoskey, V. K. (2004). The methodology of self-study and its theoretical underpinnings. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (pp. 743-784). Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Loughran, J. (2004). Informing practice: Developing knowledge of teaching about teaching. . In D. Tidwell, L. M. Fitzgerald, & M. L. Heston (Eds.), *Journeys of hope: Risking self-study in a diverse world*. Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England (pp. 186-189). Cedar Falls, Iowa, University of Northern Iowa.

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Martens, M. L. (1999). Productive questions: Tools for supporting constructivist learning. *Science and Children*, *36*(8), 24-27, 53.

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Do improved critical reflection and assessment (critique) skills correlate with improved student artwork?

Erica Duffy, Assistant Professor, Department of Art

Critical Inquiry Brainstorming

The development of critical thinking skills is one of the primary goals of Three-Dimensional Concepts. The ability of students to think critically about their own artwork and creative process will aid them in identifying specific issues within the work and in resolving these issues effectively. However, developing these critical thinking skills can be a challenge at all levels of teaching art studio. Some students view the assessment of art as entirely subjective and lack the knowledge or skills to apply a critical framework to their own work or the work of others.

Critiques, that is, group discussion of students' work, are the primary format for developing these skills. Various methods for critical reflection are employed, which necessitate that students slow down their thinking process as they reflect on and analyze their own work and the work of their peers. We also read and discuss articles about specific artists and art philosophies to further the development of critical thinking.

It is important to have an understanding of the level to which students learn to think critically in 3D Concepts. The investigation of this issue will help me to determine how well my current projects and activities meet this goal. Once a baseline is established, I can then apply the inquiry process to new projects or activities and can see how they change the outcome of this learning goal in the class.

Course

Three-Dimensional Concepts is a foundation-level course for first year students in the Department of Art. Foundations courses lay the groundwork for future learning in Department of Art classes by focusing on the basic principles of art and design, design process, and the ability to think critically about their own work and the work of others. Students also form an understanding of the context of their work in the contemporary art world, and begin developing a professional attitude towards their work.

Course History

I have been teaching 3D Concepts in different capacities since Spring 2003—just over six years. I have been in UNI's program four years.

Over time, I've developed a three-pronged approach to teaching 3D.
1. Reading: the textbook focuses on formal principles and ideas; articles focus on conceptual development and critical theory.
2. Lectures: we look at many images that illustrate the principles from the text and discuss them.
3. Projects: students actively <u>do</u> the principles/concepts we are studying.

This engages the ideas we're learning on multiple levels and will ultimately lead to deep learning (although this may not be apparent in that same semester). Students have the opportunity to utilize diverse materials and to develop their individual direction.

Defining an Inquiry Hypothesis

Critical reflection and assessment (critique) skills will be measured by the use of specific visual vocabulary evidenced in written student self-reflection of artwork. I will look at both the quantity and quality of the use of specific language. Quality will be evidenced by the successful and meaningful application of specific language in the appropriate context as it relates to the student artwork.

This information will then be compared to the grades students receive on individual projects (three-dimensional works of art), to determine if there is any correlation between critical reflection and assessment skills and the quality of student artwork.

Can the vocabulary of PRE improve students' descriptive powers in understanding why a sentence seems unclear or clear?

Dr. Bill Koch, English Department

My Inquiry Project
I've been developing a matrix of assumptions and attitudes that I believe can help new college students become not just successful in their writing and reading assignments but that can help them evolve into fully conscious human beings, a consciousness that is a biological necessity as civilization enters its 7th millennium. And I believe Liberal Education plays a crucial role in this personal and biological development.

Based on these attitudes and assumptions, I have been developed exercises that I need to test out to see if they produce the outcomes we would expect from a fully conscious self-consciousness. One set of assumptions is contained in a list I call The Principles of Reader Expectations (PRE). When a student knows these principles and uses them he or she learns to write an effective (as well as grammatically correct) statement, AND knows why such a statement is effective. One becomes more conscious of the structure of a string of words we call a sentence, and one sees the structure as separate from the words embedded in it.

So my present inquiry statement is structured thusly:
> Can the vocabulary of PRE improve students' descriptive powers in understanding why a sentence seems unclear or clear?

The Course
I am using this inquiry in the College Writing and Research class, a course that introduces students to the kind of writing and research expected at the college level. Students are to leave this course with competencies in writing expository and argumentative papers at a college level, along with college level research and writing competencies.

The Problem
It has been my impression that students arrive at college with a set of assumptions about the nature of verbal language that hinders their willingness to develop college level verbal competencies. For example, they do not know that as they approach a written text, they have expectations as to what makes the text clear or not. My particular activity focuses on the student's grasp and use of these expectations. When they understand how a sentence has a structure apart from the words embedded in it, they have another tool to unpack difficult or dense texts. They can realize that a text unclear to them might be due to poor writing, not due to their intellectual acumen. Eventually, this knowledge helps them in the revision of their own writing, and it helps them think in a more disciplined and imaginative (that is realistic) way.

The Process
Before I give the students the PRE, I will give them a list of statements that they are to identify as clear or unclear, and then they are to explain why it is clear or unclear to them. It is doubtful that they will identify those features that are illuminated by the PRE, but after they gain experience with the PRE, I will return the same list of statements and they will attempt to explain again why a sentence is clear or unclear. I hypothesize that the vocabulary of the PRE will make them more conscious of the nature of clear and unclear writing and they will be able to articulate these conditions.