If there is a single truism about human life, it is that change is constant. In technology, as in life, things move apace and shifts happen often. For members of the millennial generation, digital natives, technology and the rapid changes it represents are perhaps unremarkable; change is simply an accepted aspect of life and learning.

The rapid development of new technologies, while commonplace to some, may have far reaching ramifications for the legal academy. In the face of ever-increasing change, our institutions, classrooms and approaches must adapt or be adapted to new technology at record speeds.

At the same time, we must continue to deliver top flight learning experiences to all of the students who enter our doors.

This issue will address ideas about technology and mindfulness in the context of our classrooms and institutions and will examine the way we relate to technology as institutions and as individuals. We hope that this issue has something for everyone. Some of our authors present ideas about how best to use new technologies in the context of our courses, while others shed light on old technology-related debates that continue to merit robust discussion. Still others address teaching and learning issues that, while not directly linked to technology, do relate to the way we use and think about the basic technologies that have become part of everyday academic life.

At The Learning Curve, we believe that reflecting on the role of technology in our classrooms and our institutions is a worthwhile exercise—one that can enhance our classrooms, our institutions, and our lives. We hope that this issue will help you to think about and reflect on your own work as you begin a new calendar year and reengage with an academic environment primed to embrace new ideas.

Corie Rosen, on behalf of The Editors

“Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”

Arthur C. Clarke
Don’t Conflagrate; Contemplate!

Jennifer Carr
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When was the last time you left work at six, went home to dinner, and found yourself checking your email by 7:30? Or maybe your email is accessible 24/7, via your smartphone. When was the last time you glanced at your telephone during date night, saw the message indicator light, and checked it, only to find yourself responding to a panicky-sounding student?

Most academic support professionals are idealists. We are in this profession because we want to make a difference. We want to improve legal education, improve experiences of law students, improve quality of attorneys, and improve diversity in the legal profession. Part of that idealism likely includes being available to, and responding to, our students.

Technology brings new opportunities to connect with our colleagues and our students. But this accessibility also brings the risk of burnout. We can “meet” with students virtually rather than in person. We can respond to questions at our convenience, rather than needing an in-person meeting time. We can send out a mass email to remind students of an important upcoming event or some piece of advice that we forgot to convey in person. The downside to all this technological accessibility is that we become accessible to our students constantly. Further, students and faculty expect us to be accessible. And, because students are most likely to reach out for ASP help when they’re feeling panicky, we can feel pressured to remain constantly available.

Moreover, Millennials (roughly defined as those born 1983-2004, the generation of students most likely to be currently enrolled in law school) have grown accustomed to an almost constant ability to find information when and where they want it. This is, after all, the generation that turned “google” into a verb. Millennials consistently use real-time technologically-based forms of communication, including instant messaging and text messaging. These forms of instant communication have accustomed our students to near-immediate answers to their questions. Responding to an email within 24-hours is considered good business etiquette. Millennials are accustomed to text messaging, where a delay of more than a few hours might be considered unreasonable. Millennials may find waiting a day for an answer to a question incomprehensible. They have come to

“Technology brings new opportunities to connect with our colleagues and our students. But this accessibility also brings the risk of burnout.”
expect immediate answers to their questions. This immediacy is within reason if the answer can be found on Google. It is burdensome if the answer must come from a real live person.

If new and increased technology, combined with our high expectations for ourselves and our students’ desire for instant answers, put us at risk for burnout, the answer may be in the ancient technique of simple contemplation—being aware of this moment and fully focusing on the task at hand.

Our idealism, combined with our students’ expectation of constant accessibility, creates the perfect storm for professional burnout. Freudenberger first used the term burnout to describe the sense of stress, fatigue, and disengagement which may befall overextended professionals. Freudenberger believed it is the difference between the idealist’s hope for what her work could be and what she is actually able to do (limited by the available resources) that causes burnout. Christina Maslach continued Freudenberger’s work, focusing on the high burnout rate among caregivers—teachers, counselors, and the like. People who are idealists, and who hold high expectations of themselves, are most at risk for burnout.

A contemplative practice can be used to both prevent and remedy burnout. Contemplative practices help quiet the mind, facilitate deep concentration and encourage awareness of self. Ideally, the insights gleaned through contemplative practice can be applied to help prevent burnout. One might seek silence to contemplate which boundaries would best protect the professional, while still allowing openness and accessibility. Such contemplation might also be used to ensure self-imposed expectations remain reasonable, even when others impose unreasonable expectations.

Two types of contemplative practice may be useful in preventing burnout. First, one might adopt a practice of meditation centered around particular queries. These queries should be questions that reacquaint the Academic Support Professional with his or her purpose. For example, the professional could create a quiet space in which to meditate and then ask herself, “What about my work energizes me?” Then, time spent in quiet contemplation might give rise to personal answers to that query, reminding the professional of her ideals and purpose.

Second, the ASP professional might adopt a practice of mindfulness. “Mindfulness,” that is being fully aware of one’s feelings, thoughts, and perceptions, focuses the mind on what work is actually being done, not the work that is upcoming. Mindfulness in one’s work encourages balanced expectations by keeping us grounded in the present.

Once burnout has occurred, it is best addressed by re-balancing expectations. In other words, the idealist must get back in touch with her purpose in doing her work, and reconcile that purpose with her ability to do the work “in the real world.”

First, the mindful academic support person might focus on fully engaging with her work. How often have we typed out an email in the midst of a family dinner, being neither fully present in the dinner nor in the work? Multitasking is the enemy of mindfulness—neither task is fully attended to or enjoyed, leading to a sense of hurriedness. Second, rather than reacting to crisis, the academic support professional could take time to mindfully consider what response to whatever “crisis” has arisen is most appropriate—in other words, to act deliberately, rather than to simply react. Third, and on a larg-
er scale, the academic support person might take time to thoughtfully reengage with her purpose in entering into her profession. She might sit quietly with queries such as: “What motivates me?” “Who inspires me?” and “What nourishes me?” to refocus and remotivate herself.

To the harried support professional, the idea of taking time to regularly reflect on one’s purpose might seem laughable. When you can barely wade through your email inbox in 24 hours, taking time to reflect on what motivates and supports us might seem like an unattainable goal. However, self-reflection is a tool which needn’t take much time: a moment or two each day to consider one’s sense of wellbeing might be enough. While the convenience of responding to an email from a smartphone might seem irresistible, the sense of never fully engaging with a task may become a cost too high to bear—if it leads to burnout.

By regularly scheduling time to meditate on queries related to one’s purpose, and by adopting a practice of mindfulness, the academic support professional can utilize the accessibility technology offers, without falling prey to the burn-out risk that such accessibility carries with it.

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Dale H. Schunk, Goal Setting and Self-Efficacy During Self-Regulated Learn-
Technology: Is it Engaging Your Students?

Kathleen Dombrow Schandler
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In academic support, we stress the need for our students to engage with their law school material at the deepest level. We explain that reading the textbook is not enough to fully understand cases and be prepared for class. Unfortunately, while we spend time highlighting the critical importance of engaging and connecting with the material, this is not the same message law school gives off through its traditional teaching methodology. To bridge that gap, law school professors and instructors can use technology to better teach and engage students—and to send a message that lack of engagement in any area is never an acceptable (or useful) path to deeper learning.

The vast majority of law school professors still approach teaching subjects through the traditional lecture and Socratic Method technique. While the professor is lecturing to the class, the students are passively learning as they furiously type their notes. In this digital age, our students come to law school accustomed to using technology in their everyday lives. These students are digital natives, meaning that they have grown up in the digital world and expect their experiences to rely on and incorporate technology in much the same way that their everyday lives and social interactions always have. Most law students have even been exposed to some type of interactive technology at the collegiate level, and enter law school expecting more of the same. However, when they get to law school they often encounter a desensitized way of learning.

Many law school classrooms are throwbacks—nothing more than a professor standing in front of the room lecturing. Maybe, if they are lucky, the professor is speaking and utilizing a PowerPoint simultaneously, but for most law students, the contemporary law school classroom looks little like the world in which they live their contemporary lives.

Furthering the disconnect is the fact that, even while our students are in class, they are still interacting with their own technology while their professors are lecturing. Students are taking notes and looking up legal terms on their computers, they are checking their cell phones, managing their emails, and as much as we do not want to admit it, many of our less engaged students are surfing the web and checking social media sites.

Students will either be able to adjust to the lecture style of law school or may become disengaged. To prevent students from being disengaged, we have to ask ourselves how we can compete with their laptops and other technological distractions. The simple answer is to use teaching methods that incorporate technology to catch the attention of our students.

“To prevent students from being disengaged, we have to ask ourselves how we can compete with their laptops and other technological distractions.

The simple answer is to use teaching methods that incorporate technology to catch the attention of our students.”
your teaching is to ensure that you have a clear goal in mind. There is a great deal of technology out there and, if it is not used effectively, even educational technology can be just another distraction in the classroom. It is important to assess why you are using the technology. Are you using technology just for the sake of using it and including it in your classes? How can you develop more substantial goals? What do you want the technology to do for you and your material? To help guide your thoughts it can be helpful to evaluate technologies commonly implemented by law school professors.

Three commonly used technologies are PowerPoint, blogging and podcasts. These are rather passive ways for the student to receive the information as all of these result in the student listening to or reading the information. The information or ideas flow from the professor, the active participant, to the students, the passive participant. It does not force the student to engage or interact with the material. While these technologies are a good place to start, they do not push the student or you to actually interact with the material any differently than a traditional lecture might.

When researching a new technology to incorporate into your course, it is essential to ask yourself whether the technology will aid you in engaging the students with the material. Specifically, the best use of technology would be one that not only enables you as the professor to deliver your desired messages effectively, but also one which pushes the student to interact with the material. Clickers and other polling mechanisms are a great example of an interactive technology.

These are easily implemented into the traditional lecture, but require the student to respond periodically, thus engaging them and bringing about interaction. Furthermore, not only are you incorporating a new technology and interacting with the students through it, these technologies also provide you with an immediate assessment of whether the students are comprehending the material as well! A win-win!

Incorporating a new technology into the classroom may not always go smoothly on your first attempt. But it is important that we make the effort to bridge the gap between the traditional law school format and our students’ contemporary lives. Incorporating technology will help us speak to our students as well as stay relevant to the digital world we inhabit and they will practice in. The only way we change and evolve is by trying to fold new technologies into our current techniques. After sitting in law school classes taught in the traditional method students will appreciate your efforts to interact with them in mediums which they are familiar with, even if it does not work out perfectly your first attempt.

**REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:**


Teaching Digital Natives
How to Read Like Experts

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One of the most difficult skills for new law students to master is learning to read cases like a lawyer. It means learning how to dissect a case into its component parts of facts, issue, holding, and reasoning, then understanding how each piece relates to the whole. It requires students to go beyond the surface text to find a deeper meaning embedded in the case. What legal principle does the case stand for? How dependent is the holding on the facts of the case? What happens if the facts change a bit? Does that also change the holding?

The very purpose of the Socratic method is to train students’ minds to think about these questions as they read. We do not expect them to know all the answers at first. However, we believe that with time, patience, hard work and practice, they will develop the critical reading skills needed to decipher cases like an experienced lawyer.

But a growing body of research suggests that guiding our students to develop those skills also requires us to teach students another key habit of expert readers: using print rather than reading from a computer screen because we read print differently than we read the screen. In particular, comprehension suffers when we read from a computer screen instead of print. Comprehension falls almost another 50% when we read from a smartphone. In fact, one study showed that students performed worse on a test when they prepared by reading a screen rather than print. Expert readers intuitively know this and thus have developed a hybrid reading style that relies on the screen to skim lots of material quickly while using print for more demanding text.

Researchers believe there are several reasons why print has advantages over the screen when it comes to reading comprehension. Using eye-tracking technology, researchers have found that the eye scans the screen differently than a printed page. In screen reading, our eyes follow an “F-pattern” rather than track all the way across the page, top to bottom as we do with printed material. Thus, we do not read the screen as carefully as print.

In addition, researchers believe that print may have certain “psychocentric” advantages over screen reading that further help comprehension. For instance, the way we hold printed text and flip the pages adds a kinaesthetic component to reading. Engaging more of our senses may cause the material to become stored in our memory in ways that make it easier to recall later. For the same reason, using a highlighter and pen to annotate can make print reading a more immersive experience than screen reading. While some dedicated e-reading devices allow the user to electronically highlight and annotate, those features do not compare favorably to the physicality of a book.

One intriguing theory posits that human language may have originally emerged from physical gestures, suggesting that the so-called “haptic” responses engendered by holding a book may activate more brain circuitry associated with language than looking passively at a screen.

”[R]esearchers believe that print may have certain ‘psychocentric’ advantages over screen reading that further help comprehension.”

”[M]any surveys of undergraduate students reveal a preference for print over screen reading when it comes to intellectually challenging text.”
Researchers also theorize that print aids comprehension because the reader experiences the text in three dimensions rather than in the single dimension of a screen. It allows the reader to see how each part of the text relates to the whole which may help understanding. This can be particularly important for law students trying to learn how to read cases with multiple subparts and issues and statutes with numerous subsections.

To date, many surveys of undergraduate students reveal a preference for print over screen reading when it comes to intellectually challenging text. One of the most recent surveys shows that the majority of students still favor the ability to print and read hardcopy text over reading in a purely electronic format. Such findings tend to confirm the view that there are objective advantages to reading on paper that cannot be explained by generational differences.

Undoubtedly, e-textbooks will eventually replace traditional, heavy law school texts because of lower production costs, cheaper prices and the convenience to students of carrying to class all their textbooks on a single, lightweight device. So I’m not suggesting that we cling to heavy textbooks long after they’ve become collector’s items. That would be retrograde and impractical. Instead, what I’m suggesting is that whether you have students work from a laptop, dedicated e-reader or smartphone, help them recognize the limitations of the format and that their comprehension may suffer as a result. By understanding the differences between print and screen reading, you can help students adopt the hybrid style of the expert reader which will allow them to maximize comprehension and productivity.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:

Understanding the Procrastination Cycle

Meehan Rasch
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David A. Rasch, PhD

Procrastination is one of the enduring challenges of human existence, as well as one of the chief problems with which law students struggle. Understanding the cycle of procrastination can help law professors and advisors more constructively address students’ issues in this area—not to mention our own.

When a student puts off studying or working on an assignment, she experiences a moment of relief. It feels good to procrastinate because, for a while anyway, the procrastinator doesn’t have to face the many challenges that legal study presents; on the other hand, it also functions as a disconnect from true engagement with one’s work and present purpose. Unfortunately, patterns of putting off work are typically repeated and reinforced, and many law students procrastinate again and again, despite their best intentions.

Procrastinators may castigate themselves as being “lazy,” but that label is misleading. Laziness implies a degree of contented relaxation that rarely applies to law students. The procrastination state, on the other hand, is typically very dynamic and uncomfortable on the inside, even if nothing is happening on the outside.

Thinking of procrastination as a cycle or wheel helps one to understand how procrastinators unwittingly create and maintain certain patterns of behavior, and why they then feel unhappy and controlled by that behavior. Although each person’s cycle of procrastination is unique, several common features are included on this wheel of suffering. The more times students go around the wheel, the more they reinforce their own behavioral patterns. The steps become grooved and automatic, until eventually the wheel spins without conscious awareness.

Law students with long-standing bad habits are typically unaware of the mechanisms that control their behavior; they are ignorant of the fact that they are automatically re-enacting patterns of avoidance behavior designed to protect them from uncomfortable feelings of anxiety. Daydreaming, forgetfulness, rationalizing, confusion, and distraction are all aspects of this cycle.
Quick-fix solutions to long-standing procrastination are as effective as fad diets, especially if those solutions are part of the wheel itself (ex. self-criticism, unrealistic plans, binge writing at deadlines, internal pep talks).

Habits are resilient and efforts toward change must be carefully considered and executed in order to be successful. Law students can jump off the procrastination wheel at any point in the cycle, but it is important to respect the power of these patterns and set expectations and goals accordingly.

Law professors and academic support professionals can help students break the procrastination cycle by pushing students to examine their work habits specifically and objectively, with a spirit of curiosity and self-forgiveness. Many students shown the procrastination wheel above will recognize the patterns as their own. Professors can encourage students with procrastination issues to further notice how they behave day-to-day, considering the following questions:

- What are the things you typically do when you are avoiding your legal studies?
- Do you reward yourself for not working in any obvious or subtle ways? How?
- Do you do anything that makes your legal studying unappealing or aversive?

Advisors should encourage struggling students to begin with small steps that are only mildly uncomfortable because students are more likely to experience feelings of anxiety, overload, resentment, and dread if their goals and expectations push them too far beyond their comfort zones. Understanding the procrastination cycle offers students more power over their patterns, and every victory serves to slow the cycle.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:

Imagine your perfect class. It’s probably in a comfortable classroom with the ideal number of students, all of whom love the subject as much as you do. The students likely are engaged and contributing to a lively discussion, maintaining eye contact with you—and maybe even smiling. The scenario might differ for various professors, but one thing is certain: In a perfect class, students are not using their laptops to check email, the score of the game, their social networking news feeds, or anything else unrelated to the class material.

One potential solution to inappropriate student laptop use is banning laptops from the classroom, but that just removes the temptations of the Internet; it does not necessarily increase student engagement. By having students use their laptops to contribute to what is shown on the main screen in a classroom, however, students may become more engaged, may use their computers for something directly related to class, and may feel a greater sense of autonomy in the learning process.

Google Docs is a free online program that allows multiple users to edit the same document at the same time. Teachers and professors from elementary school to college already use Google Docs, and its applicability to legal education is similarly broad. It can be used to manipulate traditional word processing documents, spreadsheets, slide presentations, drawings, and forms. This article focuses on word processing documents.

One easy application of Google Docs in an academic support setting is to help students understand IRAC by editing an imperfect exam answer. The professor either creates a new document within Google Docs or uploads an already-existing student answer to critique. The professor then chooses how many students will participate in editing the answer and invites those students to participate simply by clicking the blue “share” button at the top of the page and entering the students’ email addresses. The students then receive a link to the document via email. (All of this can be done prior to class.) Once the students click the link, the same answer the professor shows on the main screen in class can appear on each participating student’s computer.

Breaking students down into small groups, the professor can task each group with one part of the editing process: for example, rewrite the issues to be more narrowly focused; edit the rules to be more concise; incorporate more specific facts into the analyses; or move the conclusions to their correct positions. Once the groups have discussed their strategies, the class can reconvene as a whole, with each group making edits on the main document as the professor and other students watch, comment, and ask ques-
tions. Once students are finished editing, the professor may also ask each group to highlight one recurring segment of IRAC within the document (e.g., all issues in blue, all rules in yellow, and so on) to demonstrate the repetitive structure. If the professor desires a more Socratic environment, he or she can assign editing tasks to individual students rather than to small groups.

This is only one example, and it can be easily tweaked to suit academic support, legal writing, and doctrinal courses. Because Google Docs can be used to collaborate on and edit a document in real time regardless of whether participants are in the same room or different counties, professors may also use Google Docs to assign group homework or as an assignment in a distance learning course. This feature also allows professors to involve others in the collaborative editing process—such as a bar grader or an attorney practicing in the field at issue—without asking them to physically attend the class.

There are no anonymous edits; Google Docs tracks each student’s contribution by name. This keeps students accountable for what they write, and if the work occurs outside of class it also ensures that no single member of the class or small group carries the majority of the workload. The software saves each version of the document so the professor can check progress before the final product is due.

Students are not the only ones who benefit from using Google Docs. For example, professors can use the software to collaborate on rubrics or to calibrate their grading. One professor can upload a sample exam answer, and other professors can make comments, offer suggested scores, and explain how they reached those numbers. There is no need to email documents back and forth and keep track of which version is the most recent. There is also a “chat” feature that allows document editors to make comments to each other outside of the document itself, much like traditional instant messaging services.

If you are looking for a way to increase student engagement and add assessment to your program without adding more grading work, Google Docs may be a solution. It is relatively intuitive and user-friendly, but simply entering “Google Docs tutorials” in a search engine will uncover many free resources that can help you get started or inspire you to use the program in new ways. Before long, that perfect class you imagined may become a reality.
What’s on Your Mind?  
Status Update on Use of Technology Outside the Classroom

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In an informal poll of my students this summer, I asked about technology use in the law school classroom. I was met with an unexpected and interesting response. The general consensus was that presentation technology in the classroom, such as PowerPoint®, Prezi® and ZoomIt®, helped focus a lecture and provide a roadmap for class discussion, but the true benefits of time in the classroom were the teaching and learning moments that required no use of technology and resulted from engaged dialogue between professors and students.

Students generally recognize that, just as social media sites like Facebook® and Twitter® allow individuals and communities to connect when not together, there is an inherent value in face-to-face personal interaction in the classroom. In the classroom, students are interested in engaging in dialogue with the professor and with other students through live, in-class discussion. Any use of technology in the classroom should be seamlessly integrated into the class discussion and serve to guide and enhance the classroom experience.

Interestingly, while students were relatively content with the use of technology in the classroom, several students expressed genuine interest in an increased use of technology outside of the classroom. Most professors currently communicate with students through e-mail or a course website, but these communications are generally not conducive to discussion or collaboration.

The constant connectedness of the Millennial generation has led to an interest in connecting with other students and faculty outside of the traditional classroom setting. Many of the latest technologies enable connection and collaboration, ultimately enhancing the classroom experience.

Of particular interest is the recent addition of the Facebook® application, HootMe®. HootMe® is an application on Facebook® that allows students to add classes and collaborate with teachers and classmates through their Facebook® page. HootMe® combines the social networking aspects of Facebook® with the classroom community through video conferencing and screen sharing. HootMe® can be added by students and professors as an application through their Facebook® page. Specific courses can be established on HootMe® by both students and professors, and students in the course can add the course on HootMe®. Students can also post questions and receive notification when a response is posted by the teacher or by other students.

Millennial students are
more technologically literate than any previous generation, and they also value self-expression and collaboration. HootMe® provides students an opportunity to collaborate outside of the classroom and to discuss questions, concerns, and ideas, all of which can lead to a more rich and involved discussion in the classroom.

Some benefits to an application like HootMe® include accessibility and convenience for both professors and students. Most of our students visit Facebook® several times throughout the day. Utilizing an application that meets students where they already are provides more opportunities to collaborate. Students are comfortable and familiar interacting with individuals and communities through social networking applications, and this convenience may potentially lead to an increased utilization of the application by students and professors.

While HootMe® is one example of a new technology used outside of the classroom to enhance the classroom experience, several students are using notetaking, outlining and organizational programs and applications to enhance the learning experience in law school. In an effort to encourage students to explore these opportunities, student panel discussions dedicated to the use of technology by law students outside of the classroom can provide another way for students to connect and collaborate.

“Millennial students are more technologically literate than any previous generation, and they also value self-expression and collaboration.”

“The power of social media is it forces necessary change.”

Erik Qualman
The Quiet Law Student: Developing Law School Workshops to Help Anxious Public Speakers Find Their Lawyer Voice

Heidi K. Brown
Associate Professor of Law, New York Law School

How many of us have observed hard-working law students who excel at legal writing, and genuinely care about analyzing and ruminating over legal concepts, suffer extreme anxiety when speaking in public? I am not referring to standard-issue, low-grade law school nerves; I mean heart-pounding, sweat-inducing, hive-forming, face-reddening, voice-quivering anxiety.

Judging first-year oral arguments each year, legal research and writing (LRW) professors watch as some excellent and well-prepared writers flounder at the podium. One of my most insightful LRW students burst into tears three minutes into her introductory statements! Some might quip, “She’s not cut out for litigation,” I wholly disagree; her memoranda and briefs were on par with some of the best associates I have supervised at demanding litigation firms in New York and Washington, D.C.

Additionally, students trickle into office hours and confide their anxiety regarding larger doctrinal classes taught via the Socratic Method. These students are smart, good writers, and want to be in law school, but are already conjuring the self-defeating mantra in their heads: “If I’m afraid to open my mouth now, it means I can’t hack it as a lawyer.”

Interestingly, law schools provide a plethora of resources for students struggling in other areas of the law school experience, i.e., extra legal writing assistance for sub-par writers, Academic Support programs for troubled test-takers, supplemental bar preparation courses for the lowest quartile. But what do we offer for petrified public speakers? Many good legal writers might be mislabeled (even by themselves) as “not cut out for the rigors of law” because they falter in public. Instead of helping these students, we often simply force them to perform, whether on-call in class, or in advocacy competitions, assuming practice will work out the kinks. It won’t. This is not an issue that can be overcome simply by ignoring the problem and compelling a hesitant student to perform.

Rather, law schools can, and should, develop practical workshops to provide tools for quiet law students to overcome public speaking anxiety.

“[L]aw schools can, and should, develop practical workshops to provide tools for quiet law students to overcome public speaking anxiety.”
ence, even just a little bit, we can accomplish a great deal in improving law students’ morale and stress levels, and help them enjoy and thrive in the law school experience.

The first step is for law professors and administrators to understand that not all law students and lawyers are alike, and it is not only extroverts who make effective advocates. Introverts and/or individuals who fear public speaking make up a large percentage of our general population. Author and public speaking coach, Ivy Naistadt, reports that, according to a recent Gallup poll, 40% of Americans are terrified at the thought of public speaking. Author Natalie Rogers states that fear of public speaking is the number one phobia in the United States. Dr. Laurie Helgoe recounts that introverts represent 57% of the population. It stands to reason that our law school classrooms include a good percentage of introverts—including some professors! Author Susan Cain notes that “introverts are significantly more likely than extroverts to fear public speaking.”

Introverts and anxious public speakers bring something distinctive to the law school classroom. Author M.F. Fensholt suggests that “[c]reativity and emotional sensitivity are two positive traits often shared by people who experience anxiety.” Further, Dr. Helgoe explains that “Introverts think before speaking, and need time within conversations to develop their ideas and responses…An introvert who sits back in a meeting, taking in the arguments, dreamily reflecting on the big picture, may be seen as not contributing—that is, until he works out the solution that all the contributors missed.”

It is important for law professors and/or administrators to acknowledge that the competitive landscape of law school can, of course, exacerbate anxiety for the quiet law student, via the Socratic Method and oral argument competitions. This is not to say that we should exempt fearful students from these important traditions. However, we first need to reassure students that fear of public speaking in law school will not prohibit them from becoming excellent practitioners and effective advocates. Then, just like we do with students who struggle with legal writing, test taking, and bar preparation, we need to offer practical guidance and assistance to manage their fear of public speaking and to work through and conquer it.

Importantly, telling our students to don their Nikes and “Just Do It” is not the answer. Psychologists emphasize that trite “solutions”—such as advising students simply to prepare and then push through the fear—will fail. As author Janet E. Esposito explains, “Being well-prepared and rehearsed does little to reduce the intense fear for those of us who have a much stronger case of stage fright.” Esposito further underscores, “The old advice of ‘Just be well-prepared and you will do fine’ does not work for us. It makes us feel even more alone and misunderstood.” Rogers concurs, “My experience tells me that for the person who is standing in front of an audience feeling out of control and totally embarrassed, the idea of managing or confronting your fear is meaningless.”

As Fensholt notes, “the promise of all the rewards in the world won’t eliminate the anxiety, the fear, and the uncomfortable physical changes that so often come with public speaking. It is precisely because the anxiety and discomfort are so common that they shouldn’t just be expected and accepted. They need to be understood, minimized and managed.”
The great news is: anxious public speakers can change this personality trait with the right help and support. Dr. Carol Dweck provides an encouraging approach to personal growth. She asserts that all of us are capable of changing qualities about ourselves that we once might have thought were “fixed.”

Personally, I experienced extreme public speaking anxiety throughout college, law school, and a fifteen-year litigation career—and erroneously believed it was an inherent, immutable personal flaw. I was raised as a minister’s daughter; my family was routinely on display in numerous church environments, and I was afraid to open my mouth to express any opinions that differed from my superiors.

This reticence carried through to my interaction with authority figures in law school (professors) and in law practice (partners and judges). No one in my academic or legal practice experience ever said, “Hey, it’s okay to be nervous or anxious.” In fact, law firm partners conveyed the opposite message: “Nervousness and anxiety are a sign of weakness.” I was expected to act like a tough litigator with a cocky attitude. Instead, I got sick in the ladies’ room before every deposition and court appearance—despite being prepared.

Interestingly, when I became a law professor, I overcame this fear. I finally had a safe forum—my own classroom—to express what I knew, and my confidence bloomed. I also read numerous books by authors who understood and acknowledged this fear, and emphasized that it could not be overcome by flashy one-day public speaking seminars which focus only on superficial techniques to “wow” audiences, not on the underlying root of the anxiety.

I still experience bouts of performance anxiety, but am now equipped to talk myself through the trepidation and perform at my best. This is an ongoing journey. I wish someone had offered me such a path in law school and saved me twenty years of stress. Now is the time to provide this path for our students.

Notably, public speaking anxiety is likely more widespread in law schools than professors may think. Students are often reluctant to admit to us this perceived “shortcoming.” They may confide in their friends, but rarely admit it to their professors; after all, we are the ones putting them in the “hot seat.” Law schools need to: (1) create an environment in which students feel comfortable coming forward and asking for help, and (2) develop practical programs or workshops that focus on conquering the underlying angst, not the glossy performance techniques, of public speaking. These types of workshops work.

For example, Professor Ruth Ann McKinney shared her experience in offering an oral argument peer-driven support group at University of North Carolina School of Law. Professor McKinney indicated that she “train[s] three or four outstanding upper class students every year and each of them works with about four students who self-identify as being speech phobic or otherwise wanting help.”

Professor McKinney “use[s] basic behavior modification techniques (shaping and systematic desensitization and visualization/relaxation exercises) to help students succeed. Happily, [she] often ends up with award-winning participants (student selected by their writing section teacher to win an Outstanding Oralist award) from [the] support groups.”
Building on Professor McKinney’s example, last Spring Professor Cynara Hermes and I launched an Overcoming Public Speaking Anxiety (OPSA) workshop at New York Law School. The workshop entailed a series of 45-minute sessions—based on five parts of Ivy Naistadt’s book, Speak Without Fear, over the five weeks leading up to the 1L oral arguments. To invite students to participate, we advertised on the law school website for two weeks prior to Spring Break, asking, “Do you suffer from intense public speaking anxiety?” We posted bulletin board fliers, and Legal Practice professors announced the workshop series in class. Participation was voluntary and confidential. Twenty-four students attended all five workshops.

The five sessions centered around activities suggested in Ivy Naistadt’s book: (1) characterizing individual “nervousness profiles;” (2) identifying surface myths and hidden obstacles; (3) understanding physical responses to stress during public speaking; (4) establishing new coping techniques; and (5) re-framing oneself and preparing for a specific public speaking event.

While certain students still struggled with extreme anxiety during the oral arguments, numerous participants reported a profound sense of accomplishment at beginning to work through this fear. Several students took on additional challenges of asking their professors if they could participate in more than one oral argument, and trying out for the moot court team! One participant began volunteering to argue before the Unemployment Insurance Appeal Board on behalf of pro bono clients. Another signed up for a weekend deposition clinic!

These types of workshops and programs are easy and cost-efficient to launch, and yet can achieve monumental strides in helping students to at least begin peeling back the layers of public speaking anxiety. It is important to provide students with practical tools for understanding and conquering public speaking anxiety early in their law school career so that they can graduate with enhanced confidence and enter legal practice as well-rounded advocates.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:


Increasing Our Students’ Focus, Memory, Performance, Health, and Happiness by Introducing Them to the Magic Elixir

Chad Noreuil
Clinical Professor of Law,
Arizona State University

The following is how I open one of the bar prep classes I teach to 3Ls, many of whom are at-risk for failing the bar exam.

What if I were to tell you that there is, right now, a drink on the market that is all-natural, odorless, and tasteless, and that conclusive scientific evidence has shown that this drink has many benefits for the mind, body, and soul, and absolutely zero negative side-effects? In fact, drinking this magic elixir for as little as three consecutive days has shown significant improvement in cognitive functions, such as focus, concentration, memory, and critical thinking. Moreover, the drink reduces stress, strengthens the immune system, and improves one’s mood.

So . . . how many of you would sign up to try the drink for a week? At this point, all twenty students typically raise their hands. There’s one catch . . . because of the way the drink metabolizes in the body, you must drink one ounce per minute and sit still while you are drinking. The recommended daily dose is sixteen ounces, which means you would need to sit still for sixteen minutes a day while you drink it. So how many of you would still sign up to try the drink for a week? Again, all twenty students raise their hands.

Okay, so we all agree that we’d be willing to take sixteen minutes out of our day to reap the benefits of the drink . . . but how much would you pay? How many would pay ten dollars per drink? About half the students raise their hands. When I go down to five dollars a drink, we are back to nearly everyone raising their hands. Well, what if I told you the drink were absolutely free? How many of you would run out to the store and stock up on this drink right now? Again, all of the students raise their hands.

Okay . . . I can give everyone in here a lifetime supply of this drink . . . for free. Everything I have told you is absolutely true . . . except one small detail.

“[M]editation has been shown to improve one’s immune function and overall health, which gives students less ‘down time’ and more energy to do all of things they need to do in law school.”
handful would be willing to try meditation. When we discuss why so many students shy away from trying meditation, the reasons are always the same: difficulty of meditating, skepticism of its effectiveness, and the most oft-cited reason, lack of time. Of course, the feeling that there is not enough time permeates the law school experience. I respond to this hurdle by explaining that stress can decrease how efficiently we accomplish mental tasks, resulting in lost time. Thus, by reducing our stress level, we create more time.

Because meditation has been shown to reduce stress, the best possible time to meditate is when we feel we have no time to meditate. Moreover, meditation has been show to improve one’s immune function and overall health, which gives students less “down time” and more energy to do all of things they need to do in law school.

As for their skepticism about whether meditation works, I go into more specifics on the scientific evidence. I start by detailing how certain areas of the brain react under functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) when subjects are meditating, but this ultimately doesn’t sway many of the students. In the end, I tell them that if meditation doesn’t appeal to them, then they shouldn’t try it. But . . . I tell them that whether they try meditation or not, if they want to benefit their law school experience and their lives, they should try to employ the key ingredient of the magic meditation elixir: mindfulness.

Mindfulness has been described as “a deliberate, present-moment non-judgmental awareness of whatever passes through the senses and the mind.” It has also been described as merely “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.”

Mindfulness can be developed, and as it applies to law students, mindfulness “can enhance your grades, your health and your happiness.” The great thing about mindfulness is that it can be employed every single moment of the day.

So I ask the students: Do you go through your day mindlessly or mindfully? Do you have awareness of exactly what you are experiencing/feeling in every moment, or are you in your mind thinking about things that happened in the past or things you need to do in the future? If you find yourself on “autopilot”—thinking about something other than what you are doing in a specific moment—you are acting mindlessly.

For example, when you wash your hands, are you actually feeling the water, experiencing the temperature, and being present in the task? Or, when you wash your hands, are you thinking about what you need to do next, what you are going to have for dinner, or how many pages of criminal procedure you have to read before bed? And what about walking? How often do you walk and focus on each step? How often do you actually feel your feet against the ground? How often do you feel the sun or wind on your arms while you walk? Or, when you walk, are you thinking about what you will need to do whenever you arrive at your destination?

Quite simply, the more you are focusing on something in the past or the future, the more you are acting “mindlessly”—and the more you are missing out on an opportunity to hone your focus and concentration. I discuss the importance of focus and concentration for doing well in law school (and on the bar exam), and they normally agree on this point. Next, I ask the students: How many of you have found at some point in the past month that you read several pages of an assignment in a casebook, only to find that you have no idea what you just read? At this point, everyone raises their hands, and after
some discussion, most students admit that this has been a problem throughout law school. Finally, I ask: How many of you have trouble focusing on one or more of your professors’ lectures? Nearly all of the students raise their hands, except the ones who didn’t hear me because they were Facebooking.

I conclude by telling the class that being mindful throughout the day—even if you just start by being present and paying specific attention to everyday tasks—such as washing your hands or walking—can go a long way toward increasing your attention and focus. Mindfulness can derive incredible benefits for a student’s focus, not only when reading the multitude of casebook assignments, but also during class lectures.

As one student who practiced mindfulness in law school summarized, “I am a more attentive student. Even those professors who are not known for their engaging classroom demeanor hold my attention longer. I use [mindfulness] exercises to help me stay more focused on my readings. I have found it particularly helpful with more dense subjects like federal jurisdictions where I need better focus to understand the material.” Indeed, the simple act of being more mindful throughout the day can help in every aspect of law school life.

The last decade has seen a proliferation of mindfulness courses and programs in law schools throughout the country, including courses at Berkeley, Miami, Georgetown, Vanderbilt, CUNY, Northwestern, and Missouri, just to name a few.

In truth, most of our students may not make the choice to try meditation (though several in fact do), but numerous students can (and when exposed to it, do) take up the challenge to be more mindful throughout the day. Even this small step can make a big difference in our students’ lives. We can’t force our students to take advantage of tools that will help them succeed in law school, but we can make sure they are exposed to such tools. Mindfulness is a tool that every law student should at least be made aware of. After all, who wouldn’t want to try the "magic elixir"?

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:


Talking in the Dark: Using Technology for Basic Academic Support

Ian Gallacher
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The problem is familiar: a student emails you at some inconceivable hour of the night asking what seems (to you) to be a basic question. You answer when you get the email, but that’s often hours later and the chance to deliver information exactly at the time the student needs it is gone.

Maintaining a discussion forum is one way of solving this problem. These forums allow students to post their questions and speak with each other about the issues while you monitor the discussion, stepping in to correct any misunderstanding. And if many students share the same problem, you need only reply once to address the question.

But discussion forums have significant drawbacks. Unless you’re maintaining the same anti-social hours as your students, you won’t be able to address immediately that 2:00 a.m. question and the time lag means lost learning time. Discussion forums also tend to be a little impersonal and do nothing to help the student who is too shy or too afraid of exposing ignorance to post a question.

What’s needed is a way to talk directly to any student—the shy ones as well as the assertive ones—at the time they have a question, without giving them your home phone number (a mistake I made in my first year of teaching and never made again). Technology offers a way to do exactly that. With a small investment of time and money, you can be instantly accessible to all your students at any time without being sleep-deprived.

Podcasts:

The simplest way of speaking to your students by remote is through the podcast. To record one, all you need is a computer, some simple recording software (Audacity is free, works with both Macs and PCs, and has more bells and whistles than you will ever need), and a microphone. If your computer has a built-in microphone, that will probably be sufficient for a simple podcast but even a cheap standalone microphone will improve the sound substantially over any microphone that comes as part of your computer.

Before you start recording, you should give some thought to your podcast’s function. Will it be a summary of last week’s classes? Will it be a general commentary on the role your area of the law plays in society? A musings on the law or life in general? Whatever role you want your podcast to perform, it’s best to have a clear idea of it before you start talking. You might also want to think about how detailed you want your planning to be. Because I want my podcasts to last only about five minutes, I write out a script and stick fairly closely to it when I record. For me, the loss of spontaneity is more than offset by the curb it puts on my tendency.
to ramble aimlessly.

And podcast length is important. This form of technology gives you a wonderful opportunity to talk directly to your students in your own voice, but you will only hold their attention for a limited amount of time—somewhere between five and ten minutes is the most you can hope for. If you want to talk about a complex subject, better break your podcast into multiple segments. A series of podcasts on one topic, each one clearly labeled so your students can listen and re-listen to those sessions of particular interest to them, is an extraordinarily helpful way of clarifying subjects that might not come across as clearly in the give-and-take of the classroom.

At Syracuse, we use podcasts in the legal writing program to remind students of some administrative aspects of the program and to reinforce some fundamental concepts of composition and research; things the students heard in class but might have forgotten over the course of the semester. We release a podcast a week, trying to anticipate when the students will have questions about particular topics, based on our experience of questions that students have asked us in the past, and releasing a podcast that’s narrowly focused on those topics.

Podcasts are wonderfully flexible tools, and can be recorded well in advance or finished just minutes before they’re posted. I record all the podcasts before the semester starts and load them onto Blackboard to be released at the same time each week, and if something happens during the semester to make a new podcast necessary, I can always record one and release it very quickly. But recording the podcasts during the relatively quiet time before the semester begins means that there’s one less thing to worry about once the pace of the semester picks up.

Recording podcasts can be a lonely experience. You sit at your desk and talk into the air, and it can be difficult to keep up the level of animation and flow in your voice necessary to keep a listener’s attention; there’s nothing more boring than listening to someone droning on interminably about something you didn’t understand the first time you heard it, so energy is important. And there can be the slightly disturbing feeling that you’re talking to yourself, especially if you don’t get immediate student feedback.

But you never know: this spring, a student I knew, but who was not in any of my classes, stopped me just before he graduated to tell me that he really enjoyed the podcasts when he was a 1L. He would download them from Blackboard, load them onto his MP3 player, and listen to them on the bus on his way in to school in the morning, using them as a way to prepare himself for the week ahead and remind himself of things he might otherwise have forgotten. Delayed gratification is still gratification.

Video Tutorials:

A well-produced video is a powerful thing. Far more than posts on a discussion board, or even podcasts, a video gives you a real presence any time your students need you. Although recording video is a little more involved than recording sound, of course, both in terms of preparation and equipment, the result is well-worth the investment. Once a video tutorial is recorded, your students will be able to hear from you and see you at any time they need to get information from you, no matter how anti-social the hour might be. Video tutorials can never replace in-person meetings, but they can be a powerful bridge from the classroom to the office hour, and sometimes the video
tutorial will be all that’s necessary to jog a student’s memory about a concept that’s been discussed in class but about which the student was momentarily unclear.

If you decide to record video, you should set aside all thoughts of modesty or self-consciousness. Video—and especially the high-definition video you’ll be shooting in—will expose and magnify every appearance flaw you believe yourself to have. Those flaws might or might not be evident to others who watch your recordings, but you will see nothing but them. If it bothers you to let everyone see those “flaws,” this experience is not for you.

Once past the self-conscious stage, you need to make some equipment decisions. For basic quality, a simple webcam—some computers have them built-in—will record video and sound and the software doubtless bundled with your computer will let you save and post the recording. The picture and sound quality will not be especially good, however, and the entire presentation will look poor to students who are sophisticated consumers of video images. Putting a little more effort into production values will substantially improve the final result and will enhance your credibility with your students.

At base, you need a video camera capable of recording in high-definition (don’t worry about designations like “1080p”: if the camera says “high-definition,” it’s good enough), a tripod, a lavaliere microphone (the kind that clips onto your clothes), a mirror—honest, you really need a mirror, and a basic set of lights. If your law school or university has any sort of audio-visual department, they will almost certainly have more than enough equipment to get you going. If you have to buy this equipment yourself, Amazon.com or eBay will have many options for you and none of it is prohibitively expensive (and in any case, might this equipment not be a good subject for a teaching development grant?).

You also need a quiet room that has little if any natural light and has a plain, uncluttered, wall in a neutral color. We’re used to seeing news reports with lawyers interviewed in libraries, with a backdrop of case reporters or statutes (sometimes I wonder if that’s the only use to which book-based research materials are being put these days), but a busy backdrop like that will offer too many chances for your students to let their attention wander and focus on the books behind you. If you can’t find a suitable wall, you might need to erect a simple backdrop (an unwrinkled sheet in a neutral color like beige will do, at a pinch, and might be the best use for beige-colored sheets). Try to stay away from vibrant colors like red, and flat white can be too harsh and make you like a suspect being recorded by the police, although an off-white color like cream can work well.

Setting up the lights can take some time and requires some creativity. The internet is filled with instructional videos showing you ways to arrange lights for video recording, and informed trial-and-error is probably the best approach. The best plan is to record a minute or so and then review the results on the camera’s playback screen. The resolution of the screen won’t come close to matching a computer monitor or television screen, but it should be sufficient for you to see when the lighting works and when you need to reposition a light source. Look for distracting shadows and glaring hot spots that draw the viewer’s attention away from you. You shouldn’t rely on the room’s lighting for your light source—it’s usually too harsh and flat—and you should avoid natural light.

“If you decide to record video, you should set aside all thoughts of modesty or self-consciousness.”
should avoid natural light which can change many times during the course of a day. And don’t worry if the lighting isn’t broadcast quality. The sophistication of even a simple television broadcast is far beyond the means and skill of most of us. Any attention you pay to lighting at all will substantially enhance the quality of your video for your viewers.

As for yourself, you should wear a classic style that will be in style for the next few years; you don’t want to go through this experience each year. Basic colors like blue or green are probably best. I wear a suit with a blue shirt and red tie, but I’m old and conservative. You know what would look best on you. If you prefer to stand up while being recorded, remember that the camera is fixed and try to stand on one spot. Personally, I prefer to sit down and have the camera only record me from mid-chest up. This allows the students to focus on what I’m saying, prevents me from succumbing to the temptation of gesticulating wildly, and eliminates at least some of those flaws about which I’m still painfully aware.

Once you’ve settled on your costume and your lighting, and you’ve decided how much of you is going to appear in the picture, then set up your video camera. The tripod is a crucial piece of equipment; no one can hold a camera still for long and no one will watch a video with a picture that jumps around erratically. That look might work in new wave movies, but not for law school video tutorials.

The good news is that many schools have audio visual departments, or individuals, who can help you with the technical setup. And if you don’t have that luxury, you will almost inevitably have a student or two who has some experience in video production of some sort and might be willing to help. If you need to involve yourself in post-production, and are lucky enough to have a Mac, iMovie is more than you’ll need for editing and polishing your videos. For PCs, the free Windows Live Movie Maker will probably be enough for your needs.

Just as with podcasts, though, you want to be careful not to outstay your welcome. A series of five minute videos will be much more effective than one, long, recording. And because your students can see as well as hear you, you don’t really have the option of reading a script unless you really go to town and invest in a teleprompter—something that’s beyond the range of most budgets—so shorter is better.

Conclusion:

No amount of technology can substitute for human contact, and it would be a mistake to think that podcasts or videos can substitute for quality in-class instruction or office hours. But for those times when your students have a pressing question and you’re not around, one of these simple tools can provide basic academic support to all your students—not just the ones who aren’t afraid to raise their hands, post a question, or come to see you in your office.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:

Achieving Balance Between High Tech and “Old School:” Counseling Underperforming Students in the Age of the iPhone

Elizabeth Bloom  Assistant Director, Academic Excellence Program, New England Law School

iPads, iPhones, and Android devices loading up blogs, wikis, and tweets…I am continually amazed by the degree to which law students have swapped technology for good old fashioned one-on-one human interaction. This is no less true when it comes to students seeking help with their legal studies. Students want always-on access to information, but in searching for one-size-fits-all remedies online, rather than seeking out professors in person, much is lost.

In-person teaching has a demonstrated positive impact on student retention and performance, but increasingly, our student population believes that anything worth doing can be accomplished with the Web or smartphone apps. Today’s students enter law school believing that since they rely on their laptops and smartphones to stay on top of practically every aspect of their lives, including class schedules, weather, traffic, to-do lists, finances, shopping, and communications with friends and family, they should also be able to use the internet to teach themselves the law.

Of course, this is not always true. The internet offers both accurate and inaccurate information and requires the user to distinguish between the two. It does not provide students with the nuanced feedback of a real human professor. Nor does it allow students to ask follow-up questions or to experience, both psychologically and emotionally, the power of effective guidance and feedback. And by definition, online sources offer no assistance building the crucial interpersonal skills so necessary for success in the legal profession.

Before you paint my colleagues and me as Luddites who wouldn’t know a HTML 5 app if it was staring us in the face, I should assure you that in our program, we are thrilled that students are using the internet and its wealth of online learning resources in new and unexpected ways. But we are committed to grounding their self-teaching efforts in a robust academic support experience that relies on human interaction to provide the critical components that technology cannot. We have placed renewed emphasis on the counseling portion of our academic support program to great effect. This article outlines the strategies I employ in my one-on-one academic counseling sessions to infuse my work with the humanistic quality that is so essential to the success of law students who reside in an increasingly technologically savvy world.

Building Trust
When a student contacts me in response to my initial outreach, I begin by emailing out an extensive
questionnaire which covers a broad array of topics, such as note taking, study methodologies, amount of time devoted to law school tasks, unique circumstances, and possible learning disabilities. Each student is also asked to take and report her results on the online VARK learning styles questionnaire.

Spending time responding to the questionnaire gives the students an opportunity to self-reflect and to become engaged in the important process of monitoring their learning and building self-regulation skills. It also lets the students know they are in control of much of the support process and that the process, though supported by one-on-one meetings, also has an online component.

A student’s response to these surveys helps me form an initial assessment of the student’s situation and frames important issues to address in our introductory meeting. Because the student has already given me information to synthesize and develop, by the time we meet in person, I can frame the meeting so that it is tailored to the student’s unique individual needs—a strategy that keeps our students coming back for more one-on-one academic counseling sessions.

My initial task is to work with each student to create an individual study plan that addresses the student’s unique needs. I use our first meeting as an opportunity to start building trust with my student. I ask each student to share something interesting about herself to signal to the student that I am engaged in the important process of getting to know her. What students choose to share is often quite revealing. Whether the student tells me she is the first person in her family to attend college, or that her grandfather invented the Twinkie (true story), it gives me crucial context, not to mention a conversation starter for subsequent meetings.

Establishing Routine:

Each time I meet with a student I ask her to fill out a Study Plan, complete with action steps and notes. At the end of our session, both the student and I initial the bottom of the Study Plan and write in the date for our next meeting. This tells the student that she has a roadmap for her immediate next steps and that I too am committed to the achievement of her goals.

We use the last completed Study Plan to guide the next meeting. Once students realize they are accountable to me to such an extensive degree and that I in turn am accountable to them, they are more likely to complete the work and put in the required effort—something I...
do not believe an online site, smartphone app, or internet tutoring system could achieve.

In addition, teaching students to be organized in this way helps them in all of their classes. For many of them, basic organizational skills are the root of their larger problems and spending time tweaking their overall system goes a long way toward improvement. I also find that students like knowing what to expect, and having a predictable routine in my office makes our meetings more efficient and productive. As the semester progresses, the students become more internally motivated, running the meetings and taking the initiative to suggest what they would like to address in subsequent meetings.

The common thread that runs through all of the strategies that I employ in one-on-one meetings is that I require my students to evaluate their own work critically to determine whether their difficulties are substantive or structural, and then develop appropriate action steps for improvement. The more they self-regulate, the more they are able to take what we are doing together and do it on their own as they learn how empowering it feels to be in control of their education. Consequently, their studying becomes more productive, and they are ultimately able to gauge how to use the internet more strategically to help achieve their learning goals.

Tracking Success:

Year after year, our statistical analysis demonstrates that as participation in academic counseling increases, the likelihood of academic dismissal decreases. Just as important as the statistical analysis is the feedback we receive from our students who consistently tell us just how much we have helped them. But I believe the factor that contributes most significantly to the success of my students is the knowledge that they have a direct connection to someone at the law school who is on their team and cares about them. Although these students are only directed to work with me as 1Ls, many of them become unofficial mentees and return to me regularly throughout their law school experience—always leaving their technology at the door.

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“The more they self-regulate, the more they are able to take what we are doing together and do it on their own as they learn how empowering it feels to be in control of their education.”
Repairing the Disconnect Between the Classroom and the Bluebook: An Interdisciplinary Method

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I. INTRODUCTION

The stack of bluebooks is a sobering conclusion to each term. Professors hope it contains validation of efforts to instruct, coax and challenge students to learn doctrine. Students hope it contains validation of their understanding of the law and their ability to some day practice it. If this end of the term dance is so important, why do professors report a disconnect between what they teach in class and what they read in bluebooks? Why too do students report a disconnect between what they read, brief, and discuss in class and what is expected of them in their bluebooks?

Maybe law school itself is to blame. Assuming law students arrive to law school with acceptable writing skills, those are arguably diminished when students read their assigned casebooks. Law students may write poorly because their reading diet is a buffet of bad legal writing.

Still another rationale for lackluster writing – especially among first years – is that they are novice learners. According to novice-learning theory, students entering into a new discourse community (law school) lose old skills (writing) as they struggle to develop new skills.

This paper is premised on the belief that why we see a disconnect between knowledge and writing is less relevant than the fact that we—professors, judges, practitioners—all see it. Instead of focusing on the origins of the problem, this article focuses on what we did to try to fix it.

I collaborated with a PhD of English and an Assistant Professor of English and Rhetoric at the State University of New York, Binghamton and a legal writing professor. Our collaboration produced a method that embraces a writing-to-learn philosophy that 1) teaches doctrine by using writing assignments in doctrinal classes, and 2) explains the requirements of legal writing using a common language all students can understand and apply.

II. EARLY ATTEMPTS TO REPAIR THE DISCONNECT

Students learn the law when they write it. From my experiences as a law clerk and practitioner, I believe that struggling to articulate a legal concept translates into a better understanding of the concept. My belief is not unique; law faculty, in general, agree that the act of writing advances understanding of a legal thought.

The belief that writing helps learning has pedagogical underpinnings. Education theory recognizes that composition enhances conceptual understanding. Cognitivist learning theory identifies writing as a way to make meaning—as a way to think. Both cognitivist and composition theory support the idea that applying
doctrine to written problems enhances a law student’s understanding of the doctrine. Writing the doctrine forces students to create a cognitive structure that encodes the information into their long-term memory.

Prompted by literature confirming that writing facilitates doctrinal learning, I gave my Contracts students writing assignments. I soon recognized two truths: (1) writing doctrine facilitates learning doctrine, and (2) writing doctrine does not facilitate better writing of doctrine. Why didn’t the opportunity to write a legal analysis result in a well-written legal analysis? Because I eventually realized, first-term law students do not know what it means to write a legal analysis. But with a common language, they can.

III. COLLABORATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

In our collaboration, Dr. Kinney and I sought to couple the teaching of doctrinal law with contemporary rhetoric and writing pedagogies in a way that gave first-term law students the ability to identify and embrace the characteristics of a well-written legal analysis.

Writing in doctrinal classes is not revolutionary. So too the marriage of doctrine and written application is not a new concept in legal education. What our collaboration adds is the understanding that the successful marriage of doctrine and writing depends on communication. Just like the success of any marriage – it’s more likely when expectations are communicated.

Law students are frustrated at the amorphous goal of learning to “think like a lawyer.” To clearly communicate expectations, Dr. Kinney and I developed a common language approach to use in my Contracts classroom. The goal was to draft a common language, then use the common language to consistently communicate expectations. This goal is central to rhetoric and writing studies and became central to our teaching method for law school as well.

Developing a common language resulted in our drafting “Characteristics of A, B, and C” legal writing. The Characteristics are a list of what is included in various skill levels of written legal analysis. For example, “A” writing clearly identifies the legal issue and is rich with case comparisons. “B” writing identifies the issue and may include case comparisons, but analogies are underdeveloped. “C” writing contains a legal issue that is generally identifiable, though parts of the writing may wander from relevant facts and does not use appropriate case comparisons.

The Characteristics are grade-based and meta-specific to provide new law students with a roadmap. They are a holistic rubric that describes the criteria for high, moderate, and low levels of performance. The Characteristics replace ambiguous evaluation terms with certainty, which students crave. The Characteristics also make learning visible in that students see exactly what is expected and are in line with the recommendation of many scholars, who advocate the development and application of “explicit grading criteria.”
Mindful that there is debate about the efficacy of a summative, or grade-based evaluation, the Characteristics are organized around grades for two reasons: first, new law students want to know. First-term students have nothing to gauge their potential grades upon—a fact which causes much anxiety. Second, students believe professors assign grades with extreme subjectivity, perceiving that professors base grades on the idea that they “know a ‘C’” when they see one. Providing grading criteria eases this frustration by identifying what a professor is seeking and knowledge of grading criteria provides students a certain level of peace.

In use, the Characteristics are both learning outcomes and a feedback guide. As learning outcomes, the Characteristics identify for students what they are expected to learn and do. Developing and sharing these learning outcomes is consistent with the recommendation that legal educators embrace outcome learning, and with law-school educators who universally recommend adding outcomes to legal education.

As feedback, the Characteristics are a helpful guide. Noting that a piece of writing is “conclusory” is less helpful to a new law student than noting that the writing fails to apply relevant facts to the law before coming to a conclusion.

Reviewing the Characteristics, students see that a conclusion is only one of many things a good legal analysis includes. The Characteristics give students the essentials of assessment and promote self-assessment, a trait necessary for success. Self-assessment skills will be helpful to support their writing for any class—and well into practice. Explaining criteria to students long before we assess them also enhances learning and encourages students to become reflective, self-regulated learners.

After Dr. Kinney and I developed the common language in the Characteristics, I had to implement it. Using a four-step process, I introduced the Characteristics to class:

1. present and explain the Characteristics to students;
2. use the common language of the Characteristics when responding to students’ written analysis;
3. compel students to respond to each other’s drafts using the common language of the Characteristics; and
4. evaluate finished pieces of writing using the Characteristics.

To start this implementation, I gave students a writing assignment before they had the Characteristics. They answered it. Then I gave them the Characteristics and they rewrote the assignment with the Characteristics in mind. Writing the answer again is beneficial. The recursive process of drafting and revising forms students’ understanding of the doctrine. And the rewrite encourages incorporation of the Characteristics into a thinking process rather than a formula for mindless application.

We wrote with the Characteristics throughout the term. Prof. Zech-Thelen, an experienced legal writing instructor, worked with me to identify the structural tools students would need to organize their legal thoughts. She came into our Contracts class and reviewed the structural necessities of writing – thesis paragraphs, topic
sentences, transition works, and signposting. Such explicit communication of writing tools remind students of concepts easily lost with the influx of other newly acquired knowledge.

With our common language and writing tools, they wrote again. Proficiency depends on practice. If our goal is to make students proficient at communicating a legal argument in writing, then it is necessary to have multiple opportunities to become better writers. Repetition reinforces the reasoning process and solidifies students’ abilities to develop legal-analysis skills. Students love to hate writing. And they love to write well. Consistent writing opportunities and writing expectations transforms writing into a powerful advocacy tool.

IV. CONCLUSION

This teaching method is the result of significant collaboration. “Knowledge is not a hundred different rooms inhabited by strangers; it’s all one house.” Academia tends to put each discipline in its own room, on its own floor, surrounded by its own people. Such segregation is counterproductive. Infusing writing into doctrinal classes provides opportunities for collaboration, which is also beneficial to the faculty itself. Such collaboration increases coherence and requires faculty to take a holistic view of the curriculum, allowing their focus to extend beyond their own classrooms and into other facets of student education. Failure to collaborate among and between disciplines perpetrates a false dichotomy and does not further the goals of all law-school professors, which is to teach students the law and how to analyze it. Destroying this dichotomy will benefit both our institutions and the profession. We should recognize the strong intersection between writing and thinking - and the necessary intersection of professors if we want to teach both.

Characteristics of “A” Writing

Content
- The material analyzes and applies law in a clear and coherent way.
- The legal issue is clearly identified.
- The applicable law is plainly stated.
- The law is applied to the relevant facts to analyze the issue.
- The writing is rich with case comparisons and analogies.

Organization
- The argument is clearly emphasized.
- The material contains a thesis paragraph that provides a road map of the issue and resolution.
- The discussion follows a logical outline of the issue, applicable law, and conclusion.
- Transitions between and within paragraphs are explicit, clear, and purposeful.
- Paragraphs are purposefully organized and substantially developed with the relevant facts and law.
- Paragraphs have a topic sentence that is focused and specific.
- Sentences following the topic sentence support the topic sentence.
- The opening and closing clear, succinct, and appropriate.

Style and Mechanics
- The writing style is active, engaging, and appropriate.
- Sentences are clear and logical.
- Word choice is precise, interesting, and appropriate.

“Students love to hate writing. And they love to write well.”
Characteristics of “B” Writing

Content
- The material analyzes and applies the law.
- The legal issue is identified.
- The applicable law is stated.
- The law is applied to the facts to analyze the issue.
- The writing uses case comparisons, but analogies may be underdeveloped or missing.
- The writing comes to a conclusion based on the application of relevant law to relevant facts, but this application is not as detailed as an A paper.

Organization
- The argument is identifiable.
- The material contains a thesis paragraph, but the issue and resolution may not be explicit.
- The overall pattern of the discussion is clear and sensible.
- Transitions between and within paragraphs are present.
- Paragraphs are clearly organized, but some may lack richness of detail.

Style and Mechanics
- The writing style is generally appropriate, but may occasionally be unclear, repetitive, or choppy.
- Sentences are generally clear and logical.
- Word choice and vocabulary are generally appropriate, but may not be clear to readers outside the legal community.
- The tone is generally appropriate.
- References to the law are generally cited correctly.
- Relevant references are made to case law and integrated into the discussion.
- Problems in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or usage do not interfere with communication.

Characteristics of “C” Writing

Content
- The material is reasonable, but may not fully engage the law.
- The legal issue is generally identifiable, though parts of the writing may wander from relevant facts or central issue.

Organization
- The argument is identifiable, but underdeveloped.
- The material contains a focus, but the issue or resolution are slightly off-track or unclear.
- The overall pattern of the discussion may wander or be unclear.
- Transitions are evident, but may be abrupt or mechanical.
- Paragraphs tend to lack richness of evidence or detailed examples.
- Some paragraphs do not have topic sentences.
- Some paragraphs contain sentences that do not support the topic sentence.
- The opening and closing generally support the focus, but may be unclear or off-track.

“Failure to collaborate among and between disciplines perpetuates a false dichotomy and does not further the goals of all law-school professors, which is to teach students the law and how to analyze it.”
**Style and Mechanics**

- Sentences are generally basic, choppy, or repetitive.
- Sentences are generally readable, but some may be hard to follow.
- Word choice is logical but generally lacks precision and clarity.
- The tone is at times inappropriate to the writer’s purpose.
- References to the law are present but may be irrelevant or cited incorrectly.
- Problems in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or usage occasionally interfere with communication and impair the writer’s credibility.

**REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:**


Carol McCrehan Parker, *Writing is Everybody’s Business: Theoretical and Practical Justifications for Teaching Writing Across the Law School Curriculum*, 12 J. Legal Writing Inst. 175, 179 (2006).


Gregory Munro, *Outcome Assessment for Law Schools* 113 (2000).


Leah M. Christensen, *The Power of Skills Training: A Study of Lawyering Skills Grades as the Strongest Predictor of Law School Success (Or In Other Words, It's Time For Legal Education to Get Serious About Skills Train-
Laptops and law students go hand-in-hand in the classroom nowadays. I would not be alone when I say I find myself experiencing a pang of annoyance whenever I see a laptop user in my classroom. I feel this way toward laptop users because their laptop commitment strikes me as disrespectful. I know that students rely on their computers, but what students don’t realize is that instructors rely on them, and that computers block students’ faces from the professor’s line of sight. Pedagogically speaking, teaching to laptop users frustrates the typical visual cues on which faculty rely. In effect, teaching to a classroom filled with laptop users comes close to teaching to an empty classroom, an eerie experience, or at least so it seems.

Perhaps because of this frustration, more and more faculty members are banning laptops in the classroom. Instructors who choose to enforce a laptop ban often tell students that classroom discussion is completely stymied by laptop use or worse, that students with laptops are failing to learn.

The outright banning of laptops seemed hasty since most of the reasons for doing so were anecdotal or based on student-self-reporting of misuse. In order to get an objective picture of off-task laptop behavior, I conducted an empirical study. For the entire Fall 2010 semester, in an IRB-approved observational study, six of my research assistants and I observed five different law classes where students used laptops (total population size of 95).

In the study, we observed two first-year courses, one second-year course, and two third-year courses at one law school. Research assistants sat throughout the classroom and manually timed, with special software, how often each participant went on or off-task throughout each class session for the entire semester.

Four research questions drove the study:

1. What is the actual extent of laptop misuse in class?
2. Does off-task behavior correlate to final course grade?
3. What classroom conditions promote off-task behavior?
4. What classroom conditions redirect laptop users’ attention away from off-task behavior?

The results reveal that students are off task in class; however, it is not as extensive as we thought, nor is it the population of students we thought. Second-year students were off task the most time, at 42% of the entire semester. First-years were off task approximately 35% of the time for the semester while third-years spent approximately 28% of their class time off task.

Regarding how many individual students were on-task at a given instant, roughly 82% of third-years, 69% of first-years, and 50% of second-years were NOT misusing their laptops.
Interestingly, students who had higher LSATs were off-task more than students with lower LSATs. In fact, higher LSAT students reported that they often are off-task in classrooms and only redirect their attention back to the lecture when they need clarification.

While the numbers indicate that students are off-task, my second research question sought to answer whether more off-task behavior might correlate to lower final course grade. Through statistical analysis, the results indicate that there is no correlation between high off-task behavior and lower final course grade. Nor is there a correlation between low off-task behavior and higher final course grade. Such results support the idea that students learn outside of class as well as in class and, though they may miss ideas in class due to off-task behavior, they often learn or supplement it through readings, study groups, clinics, etc.

The study is further instructive to legal educators since it also identifies some interesting statistics:

- "Students are off task in class; however, it is not as extensive as we thought, nor is it the population of students we thought."
of the conditions that promote off-task behavior:

1) Student laptop users tend to go off-task when X-(anything) occurs for 4 minutes or more…

2) When professor is engaged in Socratic method with one student, there is an increase in off-task behavior by other students.

3) When a classmate engages with professor, there is an increase in off-task behavior by other students.

4) When professor is monotone, or, overly uses one linguistic intonation style, students tend to increase off-task behavior.

5) Approximately 40 minutes into class, off-task behavior increases.

6) When professor calls on students in expected order, off-task behavior increases.

This study also measured when students redirected their attention away from off-task behavior, and yielded interesting results. According to this study, faculty can employ the following strategies:

1) “Announcing-the-Good-Stuff” Strategy: Students redirect attention away from off-task behavior when professor provides big-point summaries, rule formulations, definitions, and conclusions.

2) Using the “Rupture Strategy:” Students decrease off-task behavior when directed to an item in a book, chalkboard, digital presentation, in-class task, etc.

3) “Changing-up-the-Voice” Strategy: Students redirect attention away from off-task behavior when the professor prefaces content with signal phrases like: “This would be a good exam question...” “I want to flag for you...” “The critical idea here is...”

4) “Problem-Posing” Strategy: Students redirect attention when the professor asks a problemsolving question to the class (less so than targeting one student).

5) “Keep-the-Show-Moving” Strategy: Students redirect attention away from off-task behavior when the professor manages the duration of any X so it doesn’t exceed 4-5 minutes. For example, the professor

   a) may present info (5 min or less) - switch
   b) ask a question to the class (5 min or less) - switch
   c) direct students to book (5 min or less) - switch
   d) ask an individual a question and have student respond (5 min or less) - switch, etc.

6) “Moving-into-student’s-space” Strategy: Students redirect attention when professor moves toward off-task individuals (but surprisingly only for a short time).

Some faculty members may feel it is easier to ban laptops than to employ some of the workaround strategies offered above. Before doing so, however, I would urge faculty to recall that the study indicates that the majority (82%, 69% & 50%) of students are not misusing their laptops. In fact, students are listening.
Reflection as a Tool to Combat the Changing Practice of Law

Kimberly Y.W. Holst
Associate Clinical Professor, Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law

“When you are mindful of the moment . . . you can suddenly see things that you never noticed before; new choices become possible.”

As professors, our goal is to provide students with the tools necessary to be successful in practice. This goal is increasingly difficult to achieve because technology is developing rapidly, the law is changing, and the idea of legal practice is shifting both in terms of what clients and managing partners expect of attorneys and the skills an attorney must have to be successful in practice.

In addition to staying abreast of these changes, we need to teach students how to face change as it arises. While analysis, research, and communication are fundamental skills, promoting the use of reflection as a necessary skill for legal practice will better prepare students to adapt to the changing practice of law. In addition to helping students achieve balance and happiness in their lives, reflection helps students look outside the immediate stresses of legal practice and navigate the changing landscape of legal practice. In short, mindfulness or reflection “can help [them] do [their] job[s] better.”

Too often, attorneys move from case to case putting out fires without stopping to reflect on their work. Failure to examine processes and products will result in a failure to grow and develop as a professional, making it difficult to determine what changes are necessary to achieve a successful practice. Meaningful change is less likely to occur in the absence of meaningful reflection.

Reflection can be incorporated in a variety ways. On a macro level, encourage students to reflect on big questions like, “Why am I here (in law school)?” Reflecting on personal goals allows students to center and refocus on what is important to their success and happiness. When an attorney reflects on the big picture, she can determine changes necessary to reach her goals or fulfill a need. By looking at the larger purpose of an action, she avoids getting mired in details of things like pricing, billing, and equipment upgrades. She can better keep these tasks in perspective and recognize that these are small steps necessary to reaching her goals or achieving a successful practice.

On a micro level, law students and attorneys should take time to reflect on work being produced. Students should reflect on processes used to complete assignments or self-critiquing assignments. Examples in practice include examining the process used to attract clients or reviewing a strategy used in a trial or negotiation. This will keep the attorney focused on improvement rather than failures and will encourage the attorney to make meaningful changes to her overall practice rather than simply making reactive.
changes to the fires that need addressing on a day to day basis.

Finally, it is important to be mindful of the present. The skill of reflecting on what is happening now and not getting stuck on what happened yesterday is a powerful tool. It allows you to “free yourself [so you can] see more than you otherwise would.” In law school, it means reflecting on things like balancing projects and time management.

In practice, this leads to skills that will help the attorney prioritize cases and bring clarity to the process in which she is engaged.

One example of incorporating reflective practice into legal writing classes is to require the students to write each class period for a short “free writing” exercise. At the start of class, provide the students with a writing prompt and five minutes to write. The prompts should vary from week to week, but should incorporate an explicit reflective purpose.

Ask the students to reflect on their goals after law school, require students to reflect on strengths and weaknesses of a completed assignment, or require the students to reflect on a specific skill (like writing a clear thesis sentence or eliminating wordy phrases) and demonstrate it in the free write.

While we may not be able to provide students with all of the information they will encounter in practice, we can teach them to be open to the inevitable changes they will face as lawyers and help them use reflection as a tool to recognize these changes and adapt in a way that will make them happier and more successful practitioners.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:


“*The skill of reflecting on what is happening now and not getting stuck on what happened yesterday is a powerful tool.*”
Parting Thoughts:
Transferring Optimism

Corie Rosen  
Arizona State University, Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law;  
Executive Editor, The Learning Curve

The issue you are reading will be the last Learning Curve on which I will work as an editor. When Hillary Burgess and I revived The Learning Curve some years ago, we decided that it made the most sense for editors to cycle off every few years, much as AALS section officers do, so that everyone would have a chance to participate and so that no one single editor would end up shouldering the full burden of creating more than three issues.

As luck would have it, my cycling off of The Learning Curve coincides with a move into a new job and, as transitions often do, this move has given me occasion to think and to reflect. If I had to share one big idea that will follow me into the next things that I do, the one huge thing I have learned from working as an editor on this publication, it would be this: we can be more. No matter where we are, no matter what we teach, we can always do more, learn more, and find ways to be better. The articles I have worked on and the time I have spent on The Learning Curve have helped me to get to know you as a community and have allowed me to see that idea, that we can be better, unfold in a myriad of ways, in a chorus of ideas and a cascade of voices.

Every issue of The Learning Curve is devoted to exploring new ideas or to revisiting old ones in a meaningful way. But in taking a step back and looking at the all of the issues I have worked on, I can see that beyond the overarching theme of each issue, the entire Learning Curve project has a single notion at heart—the idea that our work, and the work of our students, can and will improve over time because we care about what we do and because we are thoughtful, kind,

and diligent teachers, colleagues, and scholars.

Editing The Learning Curve has been a pleasure and a privilege. Not only have I had a chance to sit and think deeply about your articles, I have also had the rare opportunity to read not just what the Learning Curve publishes, but also to read all of those excellent submissions that we were unable to publish (or have not yet had the opportunity to print). Every article I have worked on has been a treat; I thank you for a wonderful three years and look forward to reading your work in future issues.
The Learning Curve invites submissions of brief articles treating theoretical or practical ideas related to student support and teaching excellence. Please ensure that your articles are applicable to our wide readership.

Principles that apply broadly, i.e. to all teaching or support program environments, are especially welcome. While we always want to be supportive of your work, we do discourage articles that focus solely on advertising for an individual school’s program.

We are considering articles for the January 2014 issue now, and we want to hear from you! Are you new to ASP? Do you have an innovative take on technology? Can you tell us something about the history of ASP teaching? Are you doing something innovative in your classroom?

Articles should be 500 to 2,000 words, with light notes, if appropriate. Please note that Publisher does not support footnotes that run with text. End notes or references lists will be used in publication and are strongly preferred in manuscript submissions.

For more information, or to inquire about the appropriateness of a topic, contact Jennifer Carr at Jennifer.Carr@unlv.edu.

Include “Learning Curve” in the subject line of your inquiry or e-mail submission. If sending a manuscript, please attach it to your email as a word file.

Please do not send hard copy manuscripts, and please do not paste a manuscript into the body of your e-mail.

We look forward to learning from you and to reading your work!

“Inspiration is not the exclusive privilege of poets or artists. There is, there has been, there will always be, a certain group of people whom inspiration visits. It’s made up of all those who’ve consciously chosen their calling and do their job with love and imagination. It may include doctors, teachers, gardeners—I could list a hundred more professions. Their work becomes one continuous adventure as long as they manage to keep discovering new challenges in it. Difficulties and setbacks never quell their curiosity. A swarm of new questions emerges from every problem that they solve. Whatever inspiration is, it's born from a continuous ‘I don't know.’”

Wisława Szymborska
Save-the-date!

The Association of Academic Support Educators (AASE) is pleased to announce the inaugural AASE conference will be held May 28-30, 2013 at UNLV William S. Boyd School of Law in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The AASE is a new national professional organization for law school academic support educators.

We invite fellow academic support educators, interested faculty, administrators and friends to join us in Las Vegas to:

- Learn about innovative academic support and bar pass programs from around the country;
- Discuss the latest academic support research trends;
- Engage in professional development topics including publishing, teaching skills development, social media, and effective communication strategies;
- Network and share ideas with academic support colleagues;
- Celebrate another successful academic year for our members; and
- Most importantly – help build the foundation necessary for AASE to be the great national organization we all know it can be:
- Discuss and vote upon our mission and by-laws; and
- Elect our inaugural executive board and regional representatives from the membership.

A call for proposals and additional conference details coming soon.

For more information see:

The Learning Curve is a newsletter reporting on issues and ideas for the AALS Section on Academic Support and the general law school academic support community.

The purpose of the newsletter is to share teaching ideas and early research projects—we are especially interested in discussions of models and learning environments that have created positive learning experiences for law students.

If you would like more information about The Learning Curve, its content, editorial, and selection processes, write to Jennifer Carr at Jennifer.Carr@unlv.edu.

Welcome New Academic

Are you new to ASP? Do you know someone who is?

As part of an ongoing effort to create a national community of academic success professors, The Learning Curve will introduce new Academic Success faculty whenever possible.

If your school has hired a new Academic Success instructor or administrator in the 2012-2013 school year, please email that information to Jennifer.Carr@unlv.edu and include “Learning Curve” in the subject line.

We look forward to getting to know each of our community’s new members.

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