

# Purposeful Pedagogy

Some Reflections and Advice

Nick Michelli  
Presidential Professor  
Public Policy  
Urban Education

March 7, 2014

# Who are you anyway?

- Teaching experience?
  - Taught in P-12 schools?
    - How long?
    - Taught at college level?
    - How many courses?
  - What “kind” of CUNY college will you teach at?
    - Community college?
    - Comprehensive?
    - Four year?



# Who are you anyway?

Why are you doing this? 😊

- GC fellowship?
- Income
- Some other reason?
- Are you hoping for an academic career?

# Who are WE anyway?

- What do you know about CUNY?
- Some salient points
  - Origins—not really the 1840 with the Free Academy that became CCNY.
  - Created in 1961 with university status and joining formerly independent city colleges into one academic unit with a single board.
  - It is huge—the largest urban university in the world with 400,000 students (depends on who counts and who you count)
  - 25 “campuses” again depending on who counts
  - The '70s experiment with open admissions
  - Institution Adrift report and response during Giuliani’s time



# Who are WE anyway?

- The end of open admissions, but CUNY denies it officially.
- What ended was remediation at the four year colleges. If students need remediation, they must attend one of the community colleges (our 2 year Associates degree institutions).
- What has that meant for the community colleges?

# Who are WE anyway?

- The Community Colleges:
  - BMCC
  - HOSOs
  - LaGuardia
  - Queensboro
  - Kingsboro
  - Bronx Community College



# Who are WE anyway?

The Community Colleges: 5 year Graduation Rate in 2007

# Who are WE anyway?

The Community Colleges: Associate Degrees  
1997 5 year Graduation Rate

BMCC 24%

HOSTOs 26.4%

LaGuardia 32.8

Queensboro 33.6%

Kingsboro 33.6%

Bronx Community College 18.8%

Is that bad?



# Who are WE anyway?

The Community Colleges: 1997 5 year Graduation Rate

BMCC 24%

HOSTOs 26.4%

LaGuardia 32.8

Queensboro 33.6%

Kingsboro 33.6%

Bronx Community College 18.8%

National average 14.2

# Who are we anyway?

- Community college students who ignored a remediation requirement and went directly into a college level course had slightly lower success rates than those who were not required to do remediation; relatively few students who entered remediation ever went on to attempt a college level course.
- Columbia University Center for Community Colleges



# Who are we anyway?

## 5 Year Graduation Rate

- Comprehensive Colleges ( Offering both Associate and BA Degrees and some Masters degrees)
  - John Jay 64%
  - Medgar Evers 8.2%
  - NY College of Tech 20.3%
  - College of Staten Island 36%

# Who are we anyway?

## 5 year Graduation Rate

- Senior Colleges—only Baccalaureate or higher
  - Baruch 60%
  - Brooklyn 44%
  - CCNY 32%
  - Hunter 42%
  - Lehman 30%
  - Queens 46%
  - York 19%



# Not to mention

- The Graduate School and University Center
- The School of Journalism
- The School of Professional Studies
- The Law School
- Macaulay Honors College
- Guttman Community College
- Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education
- School of Public Health

# Who are we anyway?

- Diversity?
- Overall:
  - Native American .2%
  - Asian 18.4%
  - Hispanic 27.7%
  - Black 25.0%
  - White 28.7%



# Who are we anyway?

- The range:
  - Asian: Baruch 38%
    - Medgar 2.3%
    - Lehman 7.4%
  - Hispanic Lehman 47.5%
    - Medgar 6.5%
    - Brooklyn 12.5%
  - Black Medgar 88.9%
    - Queens 8.1%
    - York 49%
  - White Staten Island 61%
    - Medgar 2%
    - York 8.1%

# I thought you might ask about The Graduate Center

- Asian 12.6%
- Hispanic 10.1%
- Black 7%
- White 70.3%



# My Advice about Teaching

- Ask yourself this question periodically, “Why do we educate in a democracy?”
- Be in touch with your department mission AND your own philosophy
  - For me, I believe we should work toward preparing students who understand knowledge and its creation, who develop democratic skills including critical thinking, who develop a commitment to social justice, and whose possibilities are expanded.

# My Advice about Teaching

- Do your best to find out where your students are:
  - What do they know? Probe often for readiness for what you will teach.
  - What are their aspirations, hopes, fears?
  - Help them navigate college. Let them know demonstrably that you care about their success.



# My Advice about Teaching

- Students learn only when they “interact” with content
- Lectures may be efficient, but they are not effective
- Find a way to provide necessary background knowledge
- Then have students work with the content and own the most important ideas: community of inquiry, questioning critical pedagogy, debates
- Enhance their imagination! Ask them why and how questions and possible answers.
- Make it fun!!! We want lifelong learning and attraction to learning and our disciplines.

# My Advice about Teaching

- There is evidence that students learn better when teachers help them understand the importance of what they are studying.
- How much algebra do you use on a daily basis? Remember algebra? Did your teachers explain why it is important?
- Ask questions as a methodology and WAIT for students to respond—it is actually called wait time. Most unprepared teachers wait less than 5 seconds.
- Silence may be a sign of thinking—learn to tolerate it.



# My Advice about Teaching

- Most importantly, I think, have high expectations for students and communicate to them that you believe they can learn
- Adjust your goals based on feedback.
- Assess your students during your teaching (formative) and not just at the end of a segment, but not necessarily by formal testing.
- What did they learn? What do I have to re-teach?
- Remember, you can't say "I taught them but they didn't learn."

If they didn't learn, you didn't teach them!

- I mentioned letting your students know you care about their success—that you have something invested in their success. We all do, by the way, they are our future.
- In all the research I have seen following up on students who leave and those who stay at any level, the single most important factor that we have control over is having them know that their teachers care about them and are on their side. It makes all the difference.



# Scratching the Surface

- We have identified and will identify today what I think ideas that are important for you to know and use.
- And, I mentioned some are pedagogical skills you need to master for to succeed in CUNY's colleges, but what about tomorrow and after that? after today,
- Form support groups within programs or between programs.
- Get together on a regular basis to discuss your success and concerns. Get a faculty member who knows something about teaching (there are some) ☺ to join in on occasion or to discuss a particular issue of concern that emerges
- NOW:
- What are you worried about? Questions?

PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH!! Ask if you think I can  
help—a safe refuge!!

NICK MICHELLI  
CUNY GRADUATE CENTER  
NMICHELLI@GC.CUNY.EDU  
4116.08 Luso Brazilian Studies Suite

