



Discovering Your Best Teaching Styles

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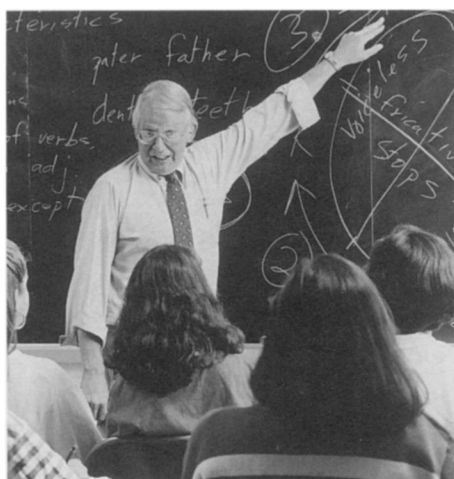
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A Special Section

Discovering Your Best Teaching Styles

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about the teaching process, as well as the underlying assumptions and principles about learning that guide and direct our styles as teachers. Of course, this process of self-examination is never complete. Every time we discover something new about

ourselves, there always will be other facets of which we are unaware.

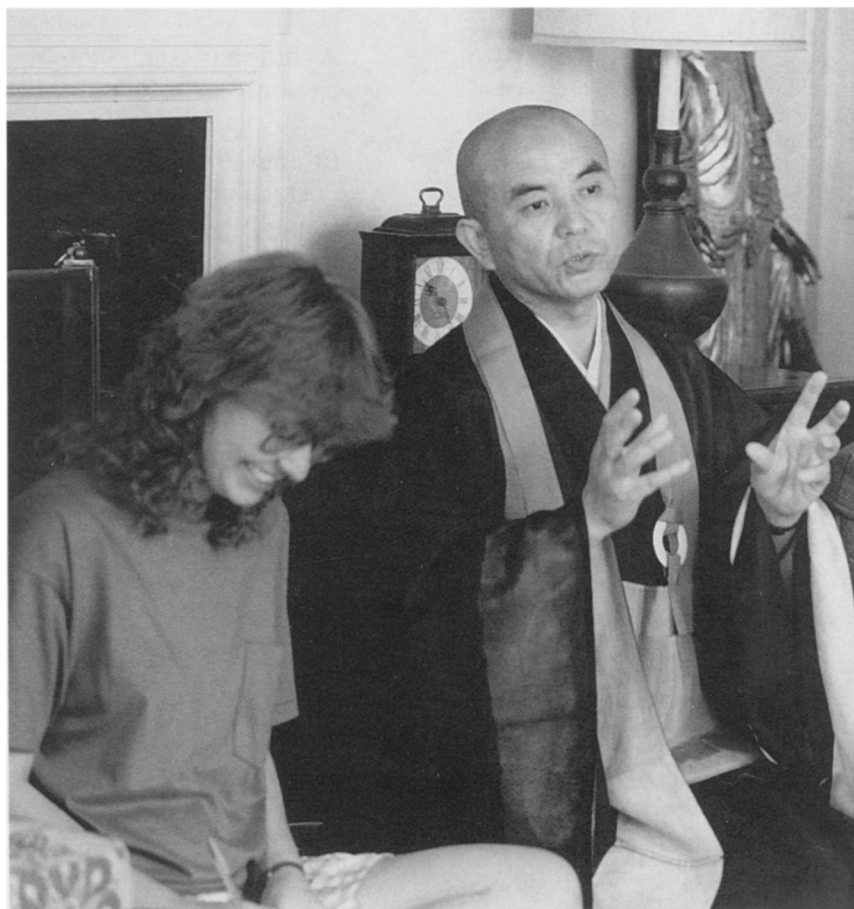
Uncovering the unexamined qualities of our teaching styles is difficult. All of us engage in defensive strategies designed to protect our preferred image of ourselves. Some

Imagine a series of clear plastic domes, one within another. You can only see them from the outside; from the inside they are invisible. You become aware of the environment—one of those domes that surrounds you—only when you can get outside of it. At that point you can see it. But you can't see the one which is now about you.

—Howard Grossard

Perspective plays an important role in understanding ourselves as teachers. Sometimes it helps to step outside of ourselves and to examine our attitudes and personal values

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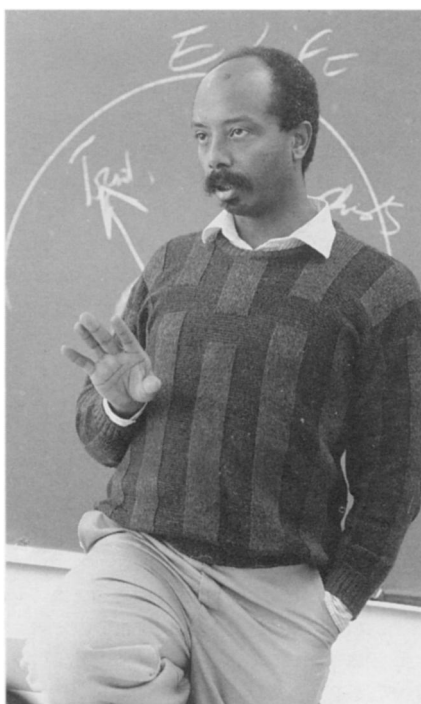
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people imagine that they possess qualities that in reality seldom appear in their actions. One colleague likened his teaching style to someone who takes novice learners on a journey through the wilderness. But several of his students reported that his courses felt more like “being lost in space.” Still others might deny that some personal characteristics play a role in their teaching. Few teachers would openly admit that their teaching lacks excitement or that their presentation of information lacks clarity and organization. Yet such qualities are a part of the instructional practices of some faculty in every college. In spite of evidence to the contrary, a few teachers also may rationalize that their disorganized lectures, for example, have a positive influence on students. “After all,” as one person told me, “students learn more when they can organize information and clarify things for themselves. Why should I have to do it for them?”

Such problems will continue unless the “domes” that surround us can be examined. The articles in this section aid our introspection by identifying different perspectives on the teaching styles of college faculty. In his article, O. Alan Weltzien pays tribute to two noteworthy professors. He describes in a very personal way the qualities of those

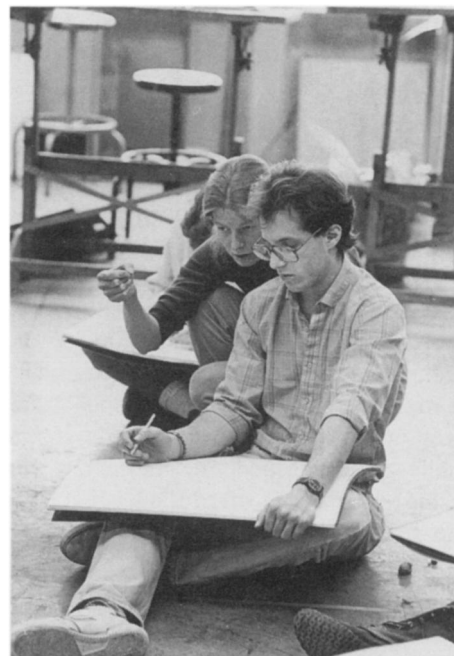
teachers who influenced him and many others. The approach that William Reinsmith uses to enhance our understanding of teaching styles is to explore archetypal forms in teaching developed from a thematic analysis of the literature. By examining the descriptions that students use for award-winning and other teachers, Joseph Lowman proposes several dimensions that underlie our styles as performers and motivators of students. The last article in this section examines teaching styles of



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expert, formal authority, personal model, facilitator, and delegator. How they vary as functions of course level, gender, and academic rank, and practical suggestions for employing them effectively are discussed.

The articles place additional domes or perspectives before us and challenge us to explore important questions such as: In what ways are the qualities identified currently a part of my style? What do I like and dislike about those qualities? Do I need to modify my teaching style?



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What positive and negative effects would any changes have on my teaching? What actions do I need to take in order to modify components of my teaching styles?

The process of self-examination that such questions stimulate is important. Ideally, our styles as teachers should reflect conscious choices among alternative possibilities for the type of person we want to be in the classroom. Examining the domes that surround us is an integral part of making such decisions.

ANTHONY F. GRASHA, Editor