Teachers--Purveyors of Multi-Tasking--
Are you Causing your Students' Heads to Fall Off?

With the new millennium upon us and society-at-large hyperventilating more than usual, would it be wise to consider where we as teachers of young people fit into the hysteria? Are we in a position to help our students manage or are we adding to their stress? In the September 6, 1999 issue of the Los Angeles Times (E1), staff writer Mary McNamara discusses the term multi-tasking and how although it was initially created to describe the actions of a computer is now a standard human behavior. Basically, she is addressing how there is much pressure in our society for adults (parents) to do it all--accomplish numerous daily tasks--filling up every 24 hour period completely. But is this a healthy model for the children?

In the old days, McNamara cites how mother always told you...(to do) one thing at a time. However, this was while she was on the phone, checking homework, and folding the clothes, so the message was a bit mixed (E1). Once women joined the work force and they had to balance their workday with shopping for household supplies, getting the bills paid, managing their children's extra-curricular schedules, and bonding with the computer among other things, multi-tasking became a necessity to survive.

According to McNamara, in the workplace pretty soon everybody--men, women, management, interns--felt obligated to be doing at least two things at once. Eating lunch while taking a meeting. Taking a meeting while talking on the phone. Talking on the phone while answering e-mail. Answering e-mail while drawing up schedules. Anything but sitting idly by, doing one thing at a time. (E1). Of course, the technological age has made it more and more feasible to embrace multi-tasking as a way of life. There are fax machines, e-mail, answering machines, and beepers for efficient and timely communication. There are all these items plus the cell phone for convenience and expanding your work and home venues. The problem the writer feels is that all this takes its toll when jamming 20 things into a moment prevents emotional focus (E1). If you are on your cell phone checking messages while you are transporting your children to or from day care, where is the space of time for talking to your children? Those moments are lost forever on that particular day.

What about the children who are truly bearing the brunt of their parents' efficient and absorbing multi-tasking? They are in our classrooms--sometimes moody, sometimes unhappy, and often very lonesome. Older children as well as younger children are affected by having minimal quality time with their parents--for sounding out problems, sharing ideas, and engaging in pure, affectionate bonding. They, too, are living the new millennium lifestyle. As educators, how do we help? Perhaps, we can assist by not assigning work that either the average parent does not understand or that which could only be done by a parent. What is the rationale for assigning hours of work outside the classroom? Maybe, we can help alleviate stress in our students' lives by not being the perpetrators of some of it.

Certainly, the teacher has inherited numerous additional responsibilities due to all the changes occurring in American society in the latter part of the twentieth century. Teachers are now asked to be counselors, psychologists, computer whizzes, sex education instructors, etc., in addition to the facilitator of knowledge and academic skills for which they were initially trained. However, this is not reason to ignore options at our disposal to help where we can to alleviate stress in someone else's life. There is so much reporting in publications as well as via the oral grapevine wherever parents interact about how little quality time
parents have with their children-- or for themselves for that matter. Why not give them an authentic break? Keep the homework to a minimum and make it feasible to complete in a reasonable amount of time for young people and assisting adults who have very little time to spend together on a daily basis. Maybe, some of these adults will not spend more time with their children and that would be a shame, but it wouldn’t be because we did not do our part.

Help your student to keep their heads on as well as those of their parents and just maybe, your students will be less moody, less unhappy, and less lonely in class. What does it hurt to try? The hysteria and pressure of multi-tasking in the new millennium whether it be in the home or in the workplace are not going away. They will only increase. Seriously consider being a single-tasker for your students’ sakes.

---

**Faculty Footnotes**

By Kathi Bartle Angus

The Reading Program continues to experience tremendous growth. Interest in the field of reading and the wonderful work our graduates do in their schools has prompted a 200% increase in students on the Fullerton campus. Dozens of students each semester tell faculty that they want to be in this program because they know other teachers who have been through the program and who are making a difference in the way reading is taught in their schools. Is it coincidence that the elementary school with the highest reading scores in the country has seven of our graduates teaching there?

Growth of our Mission Viejo program has kept pace with the Fullerton program. We are currently offering each course on both campuses every semester. Even so we have not been able to keep up with the numbers of students who want to become reading specialists. This spring we began our first cohort in the Newport Mesa district. 45 teachers from this district are now completing reading courses that are being offered at district facilities. An additional cohort in the Capistrano district will begin in the spring and we hope to begin a third cohort in Whittier in the fall.

This growth has created the need for additional faculty. Fortunately, Dean Coley has approved a fulltime tenure track position for a new reading faculty member. The search will be conducted this semester. Hopefully this column will carry an introduction soon.

---

**Hancock Fund**

The Hancock Fund was established to honor Dr. Deborah Osen Hancock for her contributions to the field of reading and specifically to the Reading Department. The fund is solely for use by the CSUF Reading Clinic. Over the years, the fund has supplied books and technology for use by clinicians and students. REG would like to thank the following members for their generous contributions to the Hancock Fund:

Pat Irot
Melanie Haeri
Carla Thomson
Donna Padgett

Veronica Kortz
Volunteers of the Year

At the annual Concert Under the Stars held on the Cal State Fullerton Campus on September 17, eleven individuals were honored as Volunteers of the Year. Janice Blanton, whose name you see in every issue
of this REG Newsletter, was presented with the 1999 Volunteer of the Year Award from the Reading Educator’s Guild. Janice joined the Reading Educator’s Guild two years ago, and she developed the concept and format for the Reading Connection article appearing in every issue of our REG Newsletter. She has also faithfully and enthusiastically participated in numerous Board activities and REG functions. Thanks, Janice, for your creativity, involvement, enthusiasm, and commitment!

Reading Educators’ Guild Newsletter Staff

Editor: Jan Bagwell

Faculty Footnotes: Kathi Bartle Angus

The Reading Connection: Janice Blanton

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, by being a regular column writer or just an occasional article donator, please contact Jan Bagwell at jbagwell@fullerton.edu. We need all of you to help make REG great!