

It's About Priority . . . and Staying Alive Professionally

University classrooms can be lonely places. The rigors of working with adult learners of wide age spans; of planning class sessions that are relevant, challenging, and even entertaining; and of handling the day-to-day stresses of a university culture can weigh us down, impeding the professional conversations that we may crave. Additionally, as much as we value time to immerse ourselves in professional journals and books, listen to stimulating guest lecturers, and reflect on our practice, the demands of our daily work often make those moments drop to a low place in our priorities.

Many of us chose a career in the academic arena because of the great deal of freedom it offers, allowing us to work purposefully and creatively. While many of us are facing more constraints set by outside circumstances such as budget cuts, we must guard against letting our circumstances control us by dictating our priorities. Once that happens, it is easy to lose our professional enthusiasm, energy, and motivation. We need to remind ourselves that the freedom we have to set our priorities is perhaps the greatest power we have. We owe it to ourselves to use this power, to use it consciously and wisely, if we want to realize our potential as professionals. Without such a conscious choice, it is difficult to stay professionally alive.

In the last issue of the *Journal of Industrial Teacher Education*, I encouraged you to make it a priority to submit an article to *JITE* for Volume 43 or to assist a new scholar in converting his or her dissertation into a research article. This current issue of *JITE* resulted from that challenge. Two of the three feature articles are parts of doctoral dissertations. All three pieces went through revisions and would not be here without the assistance of professionals who set a priority to mentor a new scholar through the publication process. The two "At Issue" pieces in this issue are written by doctoral students under the guidance of university professors who took the time to encourage and promote new scholarship in our profession.

Keeping with the theme of priorities, I would like to suggest that you consider attending the annual NAITTE events in Atlanta, Georgia this November/December. There are numerous reasons to make going to our national meetings a priority. The reasons may be as different as each of us. For example, I am eagerly anticipating mingling and musing with others who love their subject matter and students as I do. I have been pondering many questions this year and I am looking forward to networking with others in our profession who share my questions. I want to hear what fellow researchers and writers are thinking about currently. And I know that when we get together we will project change.

How do you choose your priorities? Have you set your own priorities on the basis of reflection about the kind of professional life you desire? Or have you let your work circumstances, others, or simply convenience determine how you spend your professional time? Choosing or not choosing priorities for yourself will influence the quality of your professional life. In reflecting on his own life, psychologist Carl Jung (1961) noted that the world will ask you who you are. And if you do not know, the world will tell you. Won't you make it a priority to join us at the NAITTE sessions in Atlanta? Your professional life will never be exactly the same!

In This Issue

This issue of *JITE* contains three feature articles by three new scholars. I would like to introduce the authors, as well as their articles. The first author, Lowell Berentsen, worked in Alaska for 23 years as a mechanic on airplanes and helicopters before joining the faculty as an assistant professor at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. Berentsen's conceptual piece examines the use of aviation concepts and projects as a vehicle for the instruction of core curricula in secondary education. He contends that the knowledge and skills students acquire through aviation-concept teaching is readily transferable to other fields and that the technology education teacher is well suited to transform this teaching concept into reality.

The second feature article is a qualitative study, which is one part of a mixed method dissertation produced by Antje Barabasch. Barabasch grew up in East Germany and completed a doctorate at Georgia State University. She was interested in looking at career and technical education in the United States through her “lens of the German system.” Barabasch examined how technical students’ career choices are related to their perceptions of risk and opportunity within that particular career. Her research provides suggestions for helping young adults make technical career decisions. Barabasch is currently a visiting scholar at the University of Bremen, Germany.

Next, Edward J. Lazaros and George E. Rogers examine teachers’ perceptions of critical issues and problems in technology education, employing a quantitative research model. Lazaros and Rogers worked together to convert Lazaros’s dissertation research into the current journal article. Lazaros, a new scholar, is currently an assistant professor at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.

Two “At Issue” pieces are featured in this issue, both focusing on assessment issues. The first is written by Jeffery Cooper, a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma. This is the first piece he has submitted to a journal and he is an exceptionally enthusiastic new writer and scholar. Cooper’s piece focuses on the issue of developing career and technical education students’ higher level thinking abilities. He suggests that CTE teachers use journal writing as part of their curriculum to help students learn to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. He points out that these skills are needed to compete in today’s workforce. He offers strategies and assignment ideas and discusses grading issues.

The second “At Issue” piece is written by Steve Rogers, a doctoral student at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. Although a new scholar, Rogers is not a new author to *JITE*. Rogers discusses and reflects on standardized testing and suggests that there should be state-wide assessment tests in technology education to show students, parents, teachers, and administrators that technology education is relevant in today’s climate of accountability.

Following is the *Journal's* "Bits and Pieces" section which contains information for submitting articles to the *Journal* and how to become a member of NAITTE.

JZB

References

Jung, C.G.(1961). *Memories, dreams, reflections*. New York: Random House, Inc.