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Editorial: A Middle Ground

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A Middle Ground

As the journal wraps up another volume year, I would like to look ahead to my remaining two volume years and announce a new genre for those issues, what I propose to call the Classroom Research Progress Report. I hope you've been reading Associate Editor Holly Hassel's *Inquiry* series this year as she has sketched out some of the major principles and issues of engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning. I envision the Classroom Research Progress Report as a preliminary inquiry piece that might lead to a full-fledged SoTL (Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) project.

My sense is that *TETYC* readers are reflective practitioners, not merely dedicated instructors but teachers who regularly ask the questions "Why?" (as in "Why did that class go so well? Why did this assignment engage the students?") and "Why not?" (as in "Why not scaffold that activity in small groups to prepare for the capstone paper? Why not incorporate photographic imagery in that assignment to expand the students' concerns with design issues?"). *TETYC* readers routinely ask themselves other questions as well, such as "How effectively have my students developed their skills in writing for a particular audience?" or "What are the barriers to students' understanding of ambiguity in literary texts?" The journal draws such teachers as readers because they are always ready to adopt or adapt good teaching principles and pedagogies when they read about them. Such readers/teacher practitioners are precisely the audience for Holly's *Inquiry* series.

As she has explained, the kinds of questions I've identified above can serve as the catalyst for SoTL projects. But there's a middle ground between reading, thinking, reflecting, and adjusting one's own teaching and designing a formal SoTL research project. That intermediate step is the one I'm interested in capturing for the journal. Most of us modify or change our teaching based on our impressions of our experiences, impressions often based on the "data" we have collected—for example, students' writing. And when we implement changes, based on our analyses of that data, we generally monitor closely the students' newly produced work, the outcomes of our innovations.

Perhaps a full-fledged SoTL project should follow, but in the meantime, I think there's a place in the journal to report on this middle ground between reflective teaching and SoTL. The Classroom Research Progress Report, as I envision it, would range in length from 1,000 to 2,000 words and would report on a teaching "problem," as defined by Randy Bass (see Hassel, September 2013, p. 57), that

the teacher has uncovered and begun to address. Like Hassel and Bass, I want to be clear that “problem” need not mean something gone wrong that needs to be “fixed.” The problem may be indeed how to repeat a successful activity. I imagine the Progress Report to be just that: a report on the progress being made, not a presentation of a panacea.

The Progress Report would describe the “problem” or question being addressed and would suggest the innovation or solution being implemented. A key component of the Progress Report would be to address what forms of evidence will be collected to determine how things have gone. For example, will the author be analyzing the students’ written work or collecting their reflections on the class activity in some fashion? In other words, the Progress Report might well serve as a pilot study of sorts that could lead to a larger project.

I hope to see submissions of Classroom Research Progress Reports. The submission process would be the same as always (see instructions in every issue), but authors would identify the manuscript as a Progress Report. So as you wrap up the term and begin to think about the changes you plan for next term, keep in mind the possibility of sharing what you’ve learned with other *TETYC* readers by submitting your Progress Report for consideration.

—J.S.