

Writing about the classroom is extremely hard- not because I do not have anything to say, but rather because have been at this for 25 years and (probably) have too much to say. So I will stop after one page.

I'm going to follow Chapter 4, "Learning to Not*Teach", from the book, *How Come Every Time I Get Stabbed in the Back My Fingerprints Are on the Knife?*, by Jerry Harvey, and give a "series of personal statements, questions, hypotheses, conclusions, descriptions, and observations about learning, teaching and learning to not*teach. As best I can tell, the series doesn't follow any logical sequence. Learning seldom follows any logical sequence." In Harvey's argot, "the [starred] prefix actively negates the stem. Not*teaching, therefore, is a disciplined, active, energetic process of **creating an environment that encourages learning** [emphasis mine]." And so I think of myself as a not*teacher. (If my idea follows Harvey's, or I quote him, I will put a star (*) by it.)

1. Education is Oedipal. Our students must rise up and slay us—figuratively, of course. If our students do not pass us, there is no progress.

2. I like working with and responding to students' work.* I like it so much, that when time, scheduling and class size permits, I have interactive grading sessions. My students meet with me for a half hour or so, while we mark the work. At the end of these sessions, we usually pretty much agree on the mark; more often than not, I deem the work better than the student does.

3. Sometimes, my "ideas per hour" rate is slow. This is because if I find students struggling in class to sort out an idea that I can clarify in 5 minutes, I let them do it. When students engage the material – work hard to wrap their brains around an idea- I just watch while keeping things focused.

4. The preceding comment relates to comment 1. Someday there will be no one there to teach or explain, yet the idea or the task must be confronted. Having done it before, the confidence to do it again is there.

5. "Have you ever known a competent professor, preacher, politician, manager, or student who wasn't funny, who didn't have a sense of humor or an appreciation of the absurd? I haven't." *

6. When I don't finish the topics on the syllabus, (which happens often because of number 3) I tell the students to go learn the rest of the course on their own and come by if they want to talk. They get it and they know how to do it.

7. William Perry wrote a marvelous essay about examsmanship and the liberal arts, (but it applies to science, too). <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~lipoff/miscellaneous/exams.html>. His essay inspired me to give exam questions in which students can rub ideas together and see what sort of sparks fly. They are easy to mark.

8. After Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, I wonder if the disciples asked him which parts of it would be on the test. (From an old saw on the Internet.)

9. I have devised an interactive syllabus in order to let the students have some input and control over the weight of projects and exams, and their timing. We also discuss some of the course content; if there is a topic that everyone is eager to learn about, I make sure that it gets covered. For lower division courses, we negotiate over due dates of assignments.

10. I am a bench scientist in the classroom, sharing what I know.

11. Every couple of years or so, I get an unsolicited testimonial from a student, saying what a great lecturer I am. I find it embarrassing.

12. "The more I have learned to not*teach, the more I realize that connection with others is a requirement for survival, and the more I become interested in learning, the more disturbed I become when people cheat. I define cheating as the failure to assist others ... if they request it." *

13. In all of my classes, we design the exams: as a group we determine topics and relative weights of questions. This makes sure that everybody studies the same material, and no one is an expert in a topic that I don't ask about.

14. I have been trying for years to come with one exam question that covers the 6 items in the Bloom Taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) but so far have only been able to come up with ones that cover 5 of the items.

15. I use the end-of-term evaluation form in the middle of the term, to see if things are going all right. I ask the students to sign it, too, but they don't have to. I ask for signatures because it engenders responsibility, and since I mark my students work, they always know who gives them their evaluation. I have been called horrible things on these forms, by students who then signed it. Once they figure out my shtick, all (so far) have revised their views.