



Teaching Matters Monthly

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Director's Note

What a year! I admit to deepening fatigue from disconnection and disruption in a year like without compare. As we wrap around to a second March and begin to mark anniversaries of traumatic events we take stock of many changes in daily patterns of living, health, state of mind, and our body politic. I stand with those who believe we should take lessons from this time, going forward, as educators and as citizens.

As we plan for a return to normal for the year ahead, I'm thinking more intentionally about course design and, reciprocally, learning patterns. I look to combine affordances of remote learning, including the tools of Canvas, with best practices of in-person learning when we return to the classroom. I hope to improve my skill set in using Zoom and in recording lessons. These are things that I struggle with. How about you?

In that spirit, I invite you to share with your colleagues something you have learned this year or perhaps a question to ask of fellow teachers as you plan for a new academic year. (Please see below for details.) And read our several blurbs on flexible course delivery, on our new education secretary, and teaching in the age of QAnon.

Peace and health!

News

Miguel Cardona, Education Secretary

Biden's pick for Secretary of Education [was confirmed](#) on March 1st. Miguel Cardona brings with him a doctoral degree in education, years of public school teaching, and increasingly impressive administrative roles—progressing from principal to assistant superintendent to Connecticut commissioner of



education. Cardona [is also bilingual](#), having learned English once he enrolled in a Connecticut public school as a child. In his new position overseeing education in the United States, he has the platform to champion programs for English-language learners, an under-supported student demographic in the U.S. He is a shining example of what bilingual (and multilingual) students can accomplish if the resources are available to help them learn. Right now, however, he is focusing his attention on safely reopening schools and weighing in on transgender bills that affect student athletes. We look forward to seeing how Cardona champions all students, but especially English language learners.

Flexibility in Course Delivery

Too often, universities ask disabled students to be flexible when it comes to course delivery. Disabled students are asked to compromise, to do the work of acquiring their own accommodations for classes like asking a peer to be a notetaker or reminding the professor they need recordings of the lecture. COVID-19 has brought to light that universities are capable of being flexible when it is their majority able student population that needs it. Yes, COVID-19 precautions on college campuses are necessary, but when students requested the same accommodations before, such as asynchronous classes or the ability to Zoom into a class, their needs were not always met. Many features of our current education landscape are accommodations that disabled students have requested for years—with varying levels of cooperation from universities and professors. Disabled students [report being worried](#) that once universities return to “normal,” they will continue to struggle to receive flexible course delivery. Aryanna Falkner [addresses misconceptions](#) about flexible course delivery and accessibility and how we can continue to provide for disabled students after campuses reopen.

Although some disabled students seem to be thriving under the temporary flexibility of course delivery, it is important to keep in mind that certain features of “Zoom school” [work better](#) for some disabled students than others. Chronically ill and autistic students stand to benefit, while blind or deaf students may struggle more than in face-to-face class because their universities are unable to continue providing accommodations as they would on campus, such as translators or software. If nothing more, the shift to remote learning brings to light that disabled students need their universities to be more flexible.

Information Literacy

In a post-Trump, QAnon-rampant age in which “fake news” and conspiracies abound, the need for information literacy is perhaps more pressing than other points in recent history. Improving information literacy helps students learn how to discern reputable sources from misinformation and how to analyze and correctly attribute information to these



PROJECT
Information Literacy

sources. Christine Pawley, information science scholar, advises that we need to teach students “how information ‘works’”—not just how to find and select information as if it’s a market good to be produced and consumed, but rather how to understand the social and economic contexts that influence how information is created and circulated.” We agree—and we recommend you check out the article that Pawley is featured in, “[The Librarian War Against QAnon.](#)” We also recommend checking out [Project Information Literacy](#), a nonprofit research institute with [resources](#) for teaching information literacy in the classroom.

Teaching and Learning with Technology Workshops

In addition to our own workshop series (see below), we’re plugging the upcoming TLT workshops from the Rutgers Division of Continuing Education! The TLT has divided their workshops into three series based on your professional development goals. You may choose from activate sessions, in which you’ll explore the foundational elements of teaching and learning online, elevate sessions, in which you can refine your pedagogy, and innovate session, in which you can discuss innovative approaches to online teaching. Check out this [link](#) for more info!

Spring 2021 Workshops

Below are the remaining workshops in our Spring 2021 workshop series! For more information and to sign-up, please click [here](#). If you can’t make a workshop, or had your eye on one that’s already passed, checkout our handouts, also under the [workshops tab](#).

1. **Here’s What I Want: Designing Effective Rubrics**, *Thursday, March 25th*
Bring your assignment sheets and we’ll build task-specific rubrics based on them! These rubrics will reflect the demonstrated learning goals of the course and of the specific assignment.
2. **Assessment and Grading in Remote Teaching**, *Wednesday, March 31st*
We’ll talk about grading practices, assessment practices, and when to use one over the other.

For additional resources, visit tmac.camden.rutgers.edu, or write us at teaching.matters@camden.rutgers.edu

