

Valentine`s day



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

With Valentine's Day approaching, I plan some cheer in the lives of college students. I prepare hundreds of love poems by the famous and the infamous on slips of paper to be tossed in a basket and passed around the classroom. And we share poems in April during NationalPoetryMonth. Last December when we read " A Christmas Memory" by Truman Capote, I noted that not one student in class had ever tasted fruitcake. I made some and brought it in for a taste test (ingredient list on BB to avoid any allergies).

My students always know the homework and what is expected, but I like to bring in the unexpected. They know that for me " educationshould be fun BUT education is never a joke." I grew up in dreadful Appalachianpoverty, the only one in a large extendedfamilyto attend college. My students know the story. If a person works hard, most of life works out and brings rewards. I demand that they work hard. I have been teaching for almost 40 years.

I am not shy about calling a student into my office and using the " metaphorical stick" to say: you are brilliant. Why are you so casual about your studies? I receive emails or letters from students to let me know how life worked out for them. One of the young men whom I had reprimanded in my office for taking his studies too frivolously sent a note that he had just received his PH D and had accepted a position as a Superintendent of Schools in Connecticut.

I have served on every committee and volunteer to mentor young faculty. I understand that at my age, they must say: she is still excited to enter the classroom after all these years. What is the secret? I have presented at both national and international conferences. About five years ago I began to

question the value of our curriculum in developmental education. That led to much research, a chance meeting with Peter Adams of Community College of Baltimore who became my mentor.

I knew that our administration and Trustees would not consider class sizes of eight (Peter's recommendation and practice) so I devised a triad system. Two classes of ENGL 101 (nine developmental students nestled into the 20 in each section). The two nines join later in the support class of eighteen. We have had phenomenal results in both retention and graduation. When the need arose recently for an Honors program, I stepped up to get that curriculum going.

Students stop by my office to chat or to ask that I listen. When a student enters, I place everything aside and am "in that moment." I have been voted Faculty of the Year twice by students and was presented with the Lindback Teaching Excellence Award. I look forward to every day with my students and with my colleagues in the community college.