

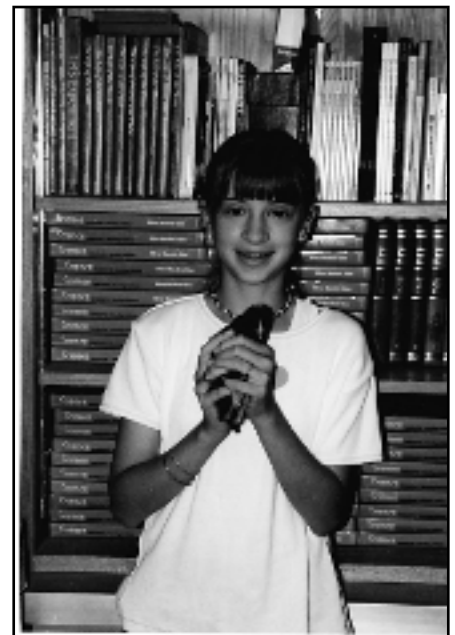
THE TRUTH IN TEACHING

By N.C. Childrose

Summertime is a wonderful time for a teacher. Without stating the obvious, the rigid routine of coffee, classes, books, copiers and grading is broken by time to reflect. Teachers ponder new ways to approach their subject area. They invent new lessons and inspire a whole new year of learning that begins when autumn rolls in. As a professor, I worked my way through the ranks from peer tutor, high school teacher, teaching faculty, to professor at the college level. Throughout this beautiful life of teaching and learning, I tend to wish that summer is more productive. Restlessness replaces the anticipated relaxation while out of the synchronized routine school. With the pace of today's life and thanks to new learning technologies, many parents and adult students themselves realize the advantages of summer tutoring, summer school, summer classes and summer enrichment programs, all that can easily be completed right from home. Each of these can be effective modes of learning. But, what I think every parent and student needs to know is that learning never stops once the routine ends. Actually it can be enhanced. Learning occurs beyond the walls of the classroom or the halls of school. Perhaps my frustration with summer is that it goes without fully being realized for its potential. This is where I find a special truth in teaching.

In first grade, I wanted to be Mrs. Fiore. She was my teacher. The embodiment of a true professional, she was a role model who truly seemed to love learning for its own sake. I admired the manner in which she held a book between two fingers so that everyone could always see. She had a way of gliding the chalk across the board so that it created good-looking, hard to spell words. Mrs. Fiore made encouraging green-ink comments on my papers. Her classroom ran like a well-oiled machine. I was interested in science and she gave me books to read over the summer as well as a chart to keep track of little bits of research I might find in June, July and August. I went home and measured dandelions, dissected daisy stems and collected rain water. The following September, I reported my findings. She cared, listened and gave me more ideas. The future years of scholarly research began there. My parents became lab assistants, statisticians and presentation audience members. The world was my science lab, my oyster. Her lessons were memorable. This was great teaching and as a result, I really loved to learn. This is the truth in teaching. Learning can actually happen constantly and without a summer break. Powerful teaching enables learning to happen anywhere or anytime.

I would like parents and adult learners to consider how this applies to them. It makes me think of an essay written by philosopher Jaques Derrida. He was inspired by a letter from the artist Paul Cezanne to his friend saying, "I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you." Philosophy is a way of discussing truth, and art is perhaps the greatest form of expression. In the 1880's, Derrida explained to his readers, "I owe you the truth on painting and I will tell it to you, and as painting ought to be the truth, I owe you the truth about the truth and I will tell it to you." Instruction is similar to painting. Teaching is powerful, hard to quantify, yet constantly measured. It requires heart and skill. If I could provide a picture of my classroom, or Mrs. Fiore's for that matter, it would reveal that learning is even more magical. As a teacher, I am witness to the magic every day and that is what I miss during the summer. It's a magic that can be forgotten once people leave the classroom for summer, or for longer.



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In my twenties, having taken a philosophy class, I grappled with Derrida's book and ideas. The ideas just floated around my head like clouds covering the sun. I wanted to step out of the classroom and work. I thought I needed to see the light, the real-world. With maturity and a new decade came new dreams and the desire to teach. Could I ever be like Mrs. Fiore? Little did I realize I was already walking on sunshine.

To explain the truth in teaching is equally important and probably even more relevant than Derrida's message to his artist friend. Everyone ought to know what happens in classrooms. That is where the future is made. The art of teaching is the beauty of transformative education. Learning changes people. In turn, people change the world. I have taught children and adults, in person and online. From my desk in Greenport, New York, I have reached students as far as Katmandu and as close to home as Hudson. I teach the story of people, distant places and their ideas. Teachers have the responsibility to nurture within their students an understanding of how the liberal arts contributes to a more responsive and conscientious world. Those who are studying realize how thoughts lead to action, which inherently changes things. If everyone picks up on this, then there really is no need to be restless in the summer, because the work of a teacher has only just begun.

I want to thank my teacher Mrs. Fiore for instilling the core qualities and power of education within me at a young age in elementary school. I hope to pay it forward as a teacher myself. Anyone can take advantage of the opportunities that summer brings to learn skills such as swimming, hiking, trying a new sport or taking a road trip, pointing out places along the route. The truth is a parent, sibling or friend can be a teacher. Discuss the little details, listen and care. Summer is perhaps one of the best times to learn and in turn, transform.

Reference

Derrida, J. (1987). *The truth in painting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

July thru August of 2016, Photographer and Artist William Shaughnasey is announcing his third solo show, "Natural Abstraction." The show is located in the Blue Hill Gallery at Columbia-Greene Community College, with an opening reception on July 14, 2016 at 5-7 PM. Light refreshments will be served.

"Natural Abstraction" is a group of ideas that started in 2011 with "Beyond the Grid" to the extended adventures with a camera. The photography in the show will be separated into two galleries based on nature photography and abstract digital art. In "Experiments in Light" the artist uses a light source and other household objects to make light art, while other abstract art sourced in nature. The natural gallery will be based on adventures of William Shaughnasey, and the various fauna and landscapes, where some of the images might have an abstract bent.

Other works will be Yarn Art where yarn is weaved along a plastic canvas in a ricochet pattern following a color code; six photos of "Warhol Sunflowers" where its really same photo with changes in color and mood; and "Beyond the Grid" works are color pencil on graph paper.

William Shaughnasey is a Columbia County resident who was educated in both Hudson City and Taconic Hills School Districts, then graduated from SUNY Columbia-Greene in 2000 and SUNY New Paltz in 2002.

