

CORRESPONDENCE


DEAR EDITOR:

It's Mother's Day and I'm sitting at home alone. My son is in college; his favorite subject is chemistry. I am also a teacher, a new one, teaching eighth-grade English and several high school tutorials for English-language learners. I also teach a voice class for a community college.

Dr. James N. Spencer's article, "From Traditional to Radical: One Teacher's Odyssey" in *Thought & Action* [Winter 2001-02] hit the spot! My son's first semester of organic chemistry was a personal victory for him. He got a B! His second semester, with a different teacher who lectured the whole period and hardly used the blackboard, was a serious defeat. He got a D. Though despondent, his response was, "I'll take it again. I love chemistry." He is working as an aide in the emergency room at a city hospital and wants a career in some area of medicine.

I spent many sessions on the phone with him trying to convince him that it wasn't his entire fault that the second semester was such a struggle. We discussed his learning style, which is kinesthetic, visual, and right brained. He realized that his first semester instructor had helped him be successful because of his style of teaching and engaging the students.

As a newly trained teacher, I am aware of the constant re-education and skill development that elementary and high school teachers immerse themselves in. I also realize that the only requirement I needed to teach a music class at a junior college was my Master's degree (which is not in education!) The process you outline is used quite often in our high school. It has a name, Complex Instruction.

I applaud your ability to risk entering that "maelstrom" for the sake of your students. I will send a copy of your article to my son so that he may give it to the instructor who was so helpful and, hopefully, the article will be passed on to the instructor who was not. 

Betsy Bell Taylor
Boonville, California

DEAR EDITOR:

As a graduate of New York's City College, class of 1967, I read Lavona Reeves' article with great interest. ["Mina Shaughnessy and Open Admissions at New York's City College," Winter 2001-02]

I believe Dr. Reeves has made an error in the first sentence of the article, when she states that "From 1847 until 1965 the College of the City of New

York (CCNY) provided a free education to thousands of academically outstanding men and women who had traditionally been poor but were also among the best learners that New York City's high schools could produce."

When I began my education at City, in the fall of 1963, I paid a General Fee of \$17; in the spring of 1967 that fee had risen to \$37. While a student, I attended a number of "Our Position, No Tuition" rallies, and am quite certain that tuition was not charged until after I graduated.

I received what I believe to have been an excellent education, tuition-free. [nea](#)

Jean M. Goldstein

Bergen Community College

DEAR EDITOR:

In "Caution! What You Learn Here May Offend You," [*Thought & Action*, Winter 2001-02] Paul Weizer is understandably outraged that false accusations of sexual harassment can "forever alter" the "careers and lives" of innocent teachers. However, when Weizer goes on to ignore the very real harm caused by harassment itself, he betrays a bias that seriously undercuts his argument.

Weizer offers multiple egregious examples of teachers who have suffered censorship or worse for essentially harmless classroom behavior and speech. On the other hand, he cites a single example of documented sexual harassment only, it appears, to minimize the victim's suffering. Weizer admits that the plaintiff in *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* endured taunts and physical grabbing by a male classmate. He omits to add that, because school officials refused to step in for months, this 10-year-old girl, formerly a strong student, avoided school and became suicidally withdrawn. Her harasser was indeed eventually "punished within the existing framework of the law," but only because the mother, desperate for help, finally got the police to intervene. Perhaps most telling, Weizer reduces the mother's suit against the school board to a cynical quest for money. What more transparent example of harassment as predation does Weizer need?

"Does every persistent or overzealous suitor become a sexual harasser in the eyes of the university?" Weizer asks in closing. His euphemisms speak for themselves. Of course not all "suits" are harassers. But some are, and the academy is obligated to recognize this. Until freedom of speech on campus no longer depends on protecting the rights of some at the expense of others, we will need legal rulings like *Davis*, however temporary and imperfect. [nea](#)

Lissa McLaughlin

San Francisco State University

San Francisco, California