

Study stresses 'time as a tool'

Time has always been as important element in our lives. It is said to "heal all wounds," "discover truth," and be "what we have the least of."

Education researchers know that time also is an important variable in learning, and several UNL Teachers College faculty are working on a project they hope will help teachers understand more about how time relates to their task. The team members, Bob Egbert, Joy Ritchie and Charles Godwin, call their project "Time to Learn."

U.S. students spend an average of 703,700 minutes in a classroom by the time they graduate from high school; even more if they attend kindergarten. How young people spend those 12,000 or so hours is crucial to their academic success, educators say.

The Time to Learn project came out of previous research on how effective schools used time, according to Mary Kluender, who wrote an article on the project with Egbert. In the late '60s, there was a suggestion that schools didn't make a big difference in learning — that environment and intelligence were the factors that affected individual learning. But research during the past 15 years refutes that claim, she said.

The single most important research base for the present interest in assignment and use of school time, according to Kluender and Egbert, is the California Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study, done by Charles Fisher and David Berliner. This study spanned ten years and used three measures of time related to classroom learning — allocated time (the amount of time allotted to the teaching of a given subject), engaged time (the amount of time the student is working on a task) and academic learning time (amount of time learning is actually taking place).

In general, studies support a correlation between time on task and student achievement, although there may be a variation by subject matter. Time on Task research can be useful to teacher educators in order to help prospective teachers understand how actual learning time gets subtracted from that initial block of time allocated to the subject. (Snow days, announcements from teachers and principals, bells, errands run by students and the need for discipline all account for lost time.)

There is also a need for future teachers to realize how time becomes lost within the instructional process and to understand ways to use time

profitably. They should also know how to make decisions which will increase the amount of learning time in classrooms.

The UNL Teachers College project involved faculty members working with schools in the western part of the state. Each faculty member randomly picked 10 students, observed their on-task and off-task time and checked for patterns of time use. Then teachers were trained to make the same observations.

"The issue isn't time per se," Kluender said, "but time as a tool to get teachers to ask questions about what they are doing with it."

It is often hard for teachers to know what is happening in the classroom with each child because the teachers are so busy, she said. Using this technique, teachers can get a visual profile of what their classroom is like and then use effective classroom research for guiding information on how to improve learning time.

Critics of the time on task concept fear that the approach is too mechanical. Kluender, however, says the concept is a vehicle for getting at other types of questions. It is a method of analysis, not evaluation, she said.

Program offers hands-on learning

Fresh from graduating its largest class — 144 students — the University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture here is looking forward to moving first-year students ahead in their educational process this summer and enrolling a new group of students in October for the fall quarter.

Gerald Huntwork, associate director of the institution, a unit of UNL's College of Agriculture, said current students working toward an associate degree in the 20-month program represent 72 of Nebraska's 93 counties, 9 other states and one foreign country.

First-year students who have completed work-experience will be returning to the 470-acre UNSTA campus — all of which is used as an instructional laboratory — on July 22, Huntwork said. They will receive four more quarters of instruction on the campus, he said.

"The school's curriculum follows the agricultural calendar," Huntwork explained, with students receiving "hands on" instruction in livestock and crops courses.

New students are accepted only in the fall quarter of each year, Huntwork said, "because of the building-block nature of the school's instructional program and the fact each course includes the practical hands-on application."

UNSTA programs which lead to employment in agricultural production relate to only a small portion of the opportunities available to graduates, Huntwork said, because of potential employment in agricultural business and industry for graduates.

"Placement of graduates in fields for which they have been educated has been 95 to 98 percent in recent years," Huntwork said.

For UNSTA graduates who wish to continue their education, a unique transfer agreement between the College of Agriculture and the school allows any graduate with the Associate in Technical Agriculture degree to transfer 56 hours into the College of Agriculture, Huntwork said. These credit hours subtract from the 128 hours required for the Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture, he said.

Huntwork ticked off unique attributes and accomplishments of UNSTA:

- UNSTA is Nebraska's first post-secondary school to offer vocational technical education in agriculture, making it the only post-secondary school in the state with this as a total mission.

- It is UNL's only formal classroom educational facility west of Lincoln.

- It is nationally accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

- It is viewed as a leader in 2-year post-secondary education, and its instructional programs have served as a pattern for a number of in-state and national instructional programs.

- It has an excellent student-faculty ratio, and carries out a complete extracurricular program.

- It is the first two-year school to have a chartered Farmhouse fraternity chapter.

Shorts

Burlington Northern Railroad has donated \$10,000 to the UNL's agricultural LEAD program to help it develop leaders in agriculture and agribusiness.

The grant will fund one individual's participation in the program for two years, said Allen Blezek, executive director of the Leadership Education/Action Development Program.

LEAD is a program designed to improve and develop decision making and problem solving skills by broadening participants' exposure and speeding up the leadership development process according to Blezek.

UNL received \$5,242,706 in outside support in May, according to Earl Freise, assistant vice chancellor for research.

Support for research and programs totaled \$2,705,245, while instructional programs received \$533,045, public service programs \$1,892,603 and student aid \$111,813.

The largest amount of support in May, \$3,205,681, came from federal agencies. State support totaled \$406,352. Funds from area and local agencies totaled \$4,000; from industry, \$113,590; and the University of Nebraska Foundation \$719,794. Other agencies provided \$793,289.

UNL has received \$23,540,994 in outside funding during the 1984-85 fiscal year, according to Freise.

Campus Capsules

By National On-Campus Reports

Minority students suffer from reductions in aid

Minorities suffer most from the reductions in federal aid. A report from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities says that, since 1982, the number of minorities getting federal help has fallen 12 percent while the number of white aid recipients has remained steady.

Students protest undercover cops

Undercover police surveillance of student protests is drawing fire from students at the University of Oregon. Students are questioning the propriety of undercover work at a recent anti-apartheid march. Students were also angry that, when asked, the plainclothes officers refused to identify themselves as police.

Survey: speech crucial in job search

What gets a graduate that first job? According to a survey of personnel directors, it is how well one speaks and writes. Personality and appearance are third and fourth in importance. College grades come in fifth. I.Q., college reputation, academic major and extra-curricular activities are far less important.

Students expelled in grade payoff

Ending a 14-month investigation, the University of Southern California expelled 17 students for attempting to change their grades through payoffs to employees in the records and registration office.

Collegians bike for famine cause

Three Stanford University students are pedaling 3,269 miles across the United States to raise money for the American Red Cross African Famine Relief Fund. A celebration is planned for August 12, when the cyclists are scheduled to arrive in Washington D.C.

Texas Greeks remain segregated

Greeks will remain segregated, at least for the near future, at the University of Texas-Austin. UT's black greeks refused an invitation to join the Interfraternity Council, saying "We don't want to be in it as just a token member. We want to be in as an equal member."

Computers no help in aid search

Computers don't pay off in the search for financial aid, according to a study by the California Student Aid Commission. The study found that private companies charging fees to match students with scholarship opportunities are ineffective.

Phony degree dealers plead guilty

A phony degree racket was the subject of a three-year investigation by the FBI in Charlotte, NC. Four men pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy, wire fraud and mail fraud. Three institutions, the American Western University and Northwestern College of Allied Services in Tulsa, OK, and Southwestern University in Tucson, AZ, issued 2,101 bogus degrees for fees totaling \$1,945,000.

Dean says Greeks fuel violence

Violence on campus is being fueled, in part, by the macho sexual roles encouraged by the Greek system, according to the University of Florida's assistant dean of student affairs. The official told a recent audience that some fraternities pressure members to sexually coerce women, and the conflicts often lead to violence.

T.V. image discourages students

The "mad scientist" image in television shows is discouraging students from entering the field of research, according to the American Institute of Physics. According to a two-year study by the University of Pennsylvania, scientists have the highest mortality rate of all professions portrayed on television. The study also found that half of the scientists on television botched up their work, as compared to one-sixth of the doctors.

Students boycott vending machines

Some University of Oklahoma students are encouraging boycotting of vending machines to protest an administrative decision to remove machines that dispense soft drinks in cans. The administration says the cup-dispensing machines are more cost effective in "high volume areas."

Bugs Bunny students' favorite

Bugs Bunny is No. 1 with college students, according to a survey by a Radford University business professor. The survey found that 82 percent of students still watch Saturday morning cartoons. Roadrunner was also a favorite; Scooby Doo came in a distant third.

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