

Validating Our Values

When asked by William Purkey to act as editor for the *Journal for Invitational Theory and Practice* my first reaction was “Where is my good friend Bill Stafford going?” I called Bill and found that the summer lures of the Jersey shore, fishing, crabbing, and the delights of being a grandfather were making increasing demands on his time. On top of that, Bill has a new house in Pennsylvania and a new crop of back road restaurants in the quaint and quiet villages to be explored and celebrated. As Bill was willing to succumb to the bliss of the rewards from a very successful career, I consented to a short stint in his shoes. Bill’s service as editor of the journal has been as gracious as it has been invaluable. I can only hope to extend his conscientious and caring leadership.

This issue of the journal contains four articles that, in their own way, deal with the issues of exploring and validating those core cherished beliefs that we call values. I had been a teacher for about 15 years by the time I first heard about Invitational Education. During that time I had moved from the “do it or else” authoritarian view toward a gentler view of students where their needs took a primary role over my needs as a teacher. I still wanted to fulfill my nominal role and teach the “3 R’s” but also to help children grow, mature, and discover the joy in also fulfilling their responsibilities as emerging adults and contributing citizens. Invitational Education espoused a number of theories that matched my new set of professional values. As a result, I didn’t need an empirical validation of many of the basic tenets of invitational theory. Rather, a careful examination of my own personal experiences and how children performed was adequate verification that these new attitudes were obtaining the results the children, their parents, and I desired.

We are, however, in a new era of school reform and demands for external accountability. It is no longer adequate in my professional role that I remain convinced. Like so many others in the Alliance for Invitational Education I must now look for evidence, other than personal con-

viction, in order to influence the decisions and actions of others. The four articles included in this issue contribute to the objectification as well as our understanding of Invitational Education.

Janet Rakes contributes the article “Research? Why? For Whom?” demonstrating how research is typically ignored by counseling practitioners. She describes a process by which counselors primarily rely on other practitioners for their information leading to improvement in their practice. Rakes explores why this occurs and makes suggestions regarding ways researchers and universities can assist practitioners in obtaining and employing current research.

Kate Asbill and Maria Luisa Gonzales, in “Invitational Leadership: Teacher Perception of Inviting Principal Practices,” explore the use of invitational practices and their effects on the school environment as viewed by teachers. Showing that invitational practices fit nicely into a shifting administrative paradigm away from power-based “top-down” practices toward collaborative decision-making styles, they explore the use of inviting practices and job satisfaction. With the impending teacher shortage and the well established pattern of young teachers leaving the profession for other areas, management strategies that enhance teacher satisfaction are critically needed in today’s turbulent school environment.

Patsy Paxton, Pip Bruce Ferguson, Stephen Bright, and Jenny Newby-Fraser contribute “Teaching Invitational Theory within the context of a New Zealand Polytechnic” by examining the use of invitation practices as a primary theory for understanding and implementing the delivery of educational programs in the polytechnic. Through the use of case study they effectively demonstrate the internal consistency of invitation education, its intuitive logic, and its emphasis on positive human interaction makes invitational theory a successful approach to assisting new instructors in developing appropriate teaching practices, but also in unifying diverse cultural approaches to learning and teaching.

The final article is a complex examination of the questions regarding the development of inviting practices and the natural maturational processes of individuals. Salene Cowher examines the “Levels of Ego De-

velopment and Attitudes toward Women in Authoritative Positions among Adolescent Males...” to see if inviting attitudes exist and if those attitudes are related to maturation and/or self actualization. While this study leaves many questions open, it convincingly demonstrates that inviting practices are unlikely to occur naturally in sufficient quantity and quality to provide career advancement and supporting work environments for women in authoritative occupational roles.

After assembling this collection my wife and I spent a day reading, proofing, and discussing the articles. That evening over dinner, we found that we had reason for optimism about the future and also a cautionary tale or two to help us realize how critical invitational theory will be to the development of a world where human dignity and the worth of all people characterize our basic human interactions. I hope this issue will contribute to your development in the same way.

Phillip S. Riner
Editor