**Teaching and Learning Scenarios\***

*What makes for a significant teaching and learning experience?*

**Purpose**: The purpose of this ranking activity is to highlight different perspectives on teaching and learning and to help you better recognize and articulate your own principles.

**Process**: Carefully consider the scenarios below and rank them from the one in which the most effective teaching has taken place (1) to the one in which the least effective teaching has taken

place (6).

**Deliverable**: Be prepared to defend your ranking by making reference to specific details from the scenarios and your own experiences teaching and learning.

\_\_\_\_ 1. Frank has been taking golf lessons for six months. His pro is famous for basing his instruction on four key principles. Frank knows these principles by heart. In fact, he’s so good at explaining them to others that his playing companions feel that they are getting the benefit of professional advice without having to pay for it. However, Frank isn’t always able to put these principles into practice. Sometimes everything clicks for a hole or two but rarely for more than that. Frank scored in the low 90s when he began his lessons, and he typically scores in the low 90s now.

\_\_\_\_ 2. Maria has completed her dissertation and has just accepted a job in the Department of History in a major research university. As she packs up her apartment, she finds herself thinking about the course that started her on her way, an introductory course on nineteenth-century European history. Although she doesn’t remember much about the specific content (in fact, she chose a very different area for her own specialty on the role of immigrants in the labor movement), and she has rejected the type of historiography her professor did, she does remember the passion that Professor Neal displayed in her teaching and the profound conviction she expressed that “doing history” matters. That was the first time Maria thought that studying history could make a difference and that being a historian was a worthwhile pursuit.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Peter recently moved with his two small children to a house in the city on a street far busier than the one they lived on in the suburbs. Peter explained to his kids, ages two and three, that they must never walk in the street because cars were dangerous. One day he was raking leaves while the kids were playing. He turned his back for a minute or two and looked back, horrified to see his kids jumping in the leaves he had raked into the street. He ran to the kids and slapped their hands, the first time he had ever physically disciplined them. The children were shocked and burst into tears. Neither child ever went in the street again.

\_\_\_\_ 4. Tom has a piano competition coming up soon. His teacher has gone through Tom’s piece with him several times, note by note, explaining every detail. His teacher also recorded the piece the way it should be played. Tom listens to the music all the time; he even falls asleep with his iPod on. Tom practices hours every day until he plays the piece exactly the way his teacher did. At the competition Tom plays the piece just as he had hoped and wins first place. His parents have never been so proud.

\_\_\_\_ 5. As Jude looks back on high school, she realizes that her favorite class was sophomore English. It was different than any other class she had ever taken—maybe it was the uniqueness that made it powerful and special for her. In this class there were no formal assignments. Her teacher, Mr. James, began the year by soliciting topics from the class that were of interest to them and that were also of social significance. He then brought a wide variety of materials on these topics—ranging from articles and videos to classic pieces of literature. He also encouraged them to find their own information. Students spent almost all of their time reading and thinking about these issues, usually on their own. Each week, discussions and debates would be held in small groups. At the end of each quarter, groups formed and created “knowledge documents.” They were free to choose their topics and their projects. During the year, Jude had participated in creating a museum display, a video documentary, a hypermedia document, and an informational website. Each quarter ended with a “Family and Friends Night” where these projects were shared. Though Jude couldn’t remember Mr. James having ever actually instructed her in any way, she had never read so much or been so motivated to learn. And though she couldn’t really name what she’d learned, she knew it had to do with asking questions, working alone, and working with others.

\_\_\_\_ 6. Arlene has taken a summer job with her uncle and his partner, who are electricians. It is hard, frustrating, challenging, but fun and she feels she is learning a lot. The first day, her uncle told her, “I know how electricity works and you don’t. My job is to help you understand electricity the way physicists and electricians understand it.” To this end, they began playing with batteries, conducting wire, and light bulbs to make different kinds of circuits. Her uncle then asked her to articulate rules of electrical currents. Then he confronted her in real situations with her mistakes and what problems her misunderstandings could cause. Whenever he felt that Arlene knew enough to do a particular kind of electrical work, he would let her do it on her own. Otherwise he let her observe him, or he guided her as she did her own work. After awhile, Arlene started to feel that she was really coming to understand electricity—so much that when the electricity went out in one room of their home, Arlene could explain to her parents exactly what the problem must be and how it could be fixed. Still, this kind of learning took a long time, and it was hard work. She was kind of relieved when the summer ended.

\*Original idea and scenarios written by Michael Smith, this version from *Strategic Reading: Guiding Students to Lifelong Literacy K-12*, Jeffrey D. Wilhelm, Tanya N. Baker and Julie Dube Hackett, 2001.

**Principles of Significant Teaching and Learning Experiences**

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**Questions about Teaching and Learning**

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**Belief Map**

**Directions:** Use your principles of significant teaching and learning experiences to draft a belief map. This map should visually express the principles you most strongly believe in as well as the specific practices you incorporate into your teaching that support each principle. You may also want to explore and visually represent the connections among the various principles.