



# Spokesperson

January 12, 1999

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“But why keep silent when it’s something truer than truth?” Erasmus

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## DISTANCE LEARNING/PROXIMITY LEARNING

Editor’s Note: We are publishing in our second year. This is our first thematic issue. A memo from the Provost about a new distance learning program in Tacoma “surfaced” and we received scads of comments on it. (Most of them came from the applicants for the Labor Studies position, but we think they are just whiners, so we excluded them from our public organ.) We think you’ll agree that the following commentaries are, really, the pick of the litter.

Also, we are proud to print our first “letter to the editor.” It is a ... uh ... first.

### **Distance Learning = Safe Learning for Tacoma Campus. Institute for the Protection of Young Minds Impressed by Provostial Move.**

The following memo from Marianne Goforth, of the Institute for the Protection of Young Minds, 1342 G Court, Suite 530, New York, NY 14225, to Evergreen Provost Barbara Smith came, also, to *The Spokesperson* and to *The Cooper Point Journal*. You can imagine who takes this recognition to the public first.

The Institute for the Protection of Young Minds has taken active interest in your "alternative" institution for some time, but particularly since receiving a disturbing communication from a first-year guest of yours, one Sara Steward (her pseudonym, you understand), whom you permitted to enroll in something called "Fictional Sociology," taught by three of your, shall we say, "alternative" faculty. IPYM, in short, has had its eye on you.

And we don't miss much. In particular, IPYM didn't miss your administrative memo of Tuesday, November 24, 1998, 3:58 p.m. It won't have slipped your mind, but let the record show the full text here. Addressing your sundry deans, you wrote:

"It looks as if we will be able to offer a distance ed course from Pullman to tacoma [sic] winter quarter. This will actually be a course we purchase rather than going through all the machinations of cross listings and registering students with them. The course has no preprerequisites [sic?] and is in Labor Economics and is taught by an old pro, Ernie Stromsdorfer (sp?). We couldn't get Princ of Econ because that's a lower division course which we don't offer at upper division campuses. Well, this is as of today at 4 p.m. Many

details remain to be worked out, including hiring a tech to run the cameras in Tacoma, and I'll keep you informed. Les Purce really worked hard to make this happen. Maybe it will.

barbara"

Now for the surprise! IPYM writes to commend you for the administrative wisdom on display in this memo. I would be hard pressed to find anything on your campus that shows better promise of implementing the protections IPYM has long advocated. Poor Ms. Stewart (refer to my earlier memo to Arney, Rideout and Pailthorp) would surely have been spared the humiliation and harm she suffered from these three perp's had similar steps been taken earlier at your home campus in Olympia.

"Distance Learning" holds promise in ways perhaps even you do not fully appreciate. I have in mind, especially, the obvious fact that the other side of "Distance Learning" is "Distance Teaching." The technology now available, and this course in Tacoma will only utilize the low end of it, permits what we at IPYM would call "Safe Learning" and its counterpart "Safe Teaching." At long last, technology begins to deliver on an old promise: erection of a suitably permeable but safely public prophylactic between students and faculty. I don't know this "old pro" Stromduffer, as you dub him in your inimitably hospitable way, but that is irrelevant. The point is, students won't be left alone in the room on intimate and private terms with the man. His every move can be surveilled simply as an element of the pedagogical technology. If he gets out of line, just pull the plug!

Consider the advantages of such an arrangement for both Ms. Stewart and your administration. Those "old pros" of your very own, Arney, Rideout and Pailthorp, would never have gotten away with their pedagogical shenanigans, the CPJ wouldn't be on your back, all this distress over "forced speech = stuffing/inserting = defacement = violation of some body of law" (from my earlier memo to those creeps teaching "Fictional Sociology") would not have arisen. Is it hyperbole to suggest that everyone would be looking forward to the pre-Millennium with optimism rather than dread?

Other subtleties in your memo have not been missed at IPYM. I note that this course, Labor Economics (Made Safe), will appear in your curriculum by administrative fiat. None of your "alternative" faculty types need even be aware of this shift in curricular responsibility. You and your pal Purce simply put this thing together. Old Pro Stormsdorfer will have to agree, but that's no problem. He just reads through his notes, exams are cooked up by his graduate student flunkies, faxed to Tacoma, and he plays to the camera. He will be flattered.

Nor should one overlook the obvious here. At risk of betraying my own status as a kind of "old pro," I'll call upon that earlier radical slogan, "The Medium is the Message." Stormsforder will be teaching Labor Economics, and what a message he will deliver to your faculty! The days of "unsafe learning" and "intimate teaching (ha, ha)" are numbered. Package your "curricular products" for safe delivery - the Internet, we both know, is where all this is headed - or pack your bags.<sup>2</sup> What stronger way could there be to teach faculty the praxis of labor economics in higher education? Their days are numbered: you know it, IPYM knows it, and your "alternative" faculty will soon learn it.

This is all very exciting, a wonderful note on which to end the Year and Celebrate the Season! One caveat, however: don't assume a cavalier attitude towards that "tech" you hire "to run the cameras." Techies are just the sort whom today's students ("guests" I should say) admire all too readily. Such a person might not approach the harm done by Arney, Rideout and Pailthorp, but pay attention to where she or he points the camera. (IPYM could be contracted to place a representative in your production booth, I will mention.)

IPYM stands ready to assist you in every way in these innovative endeavors. We salute you on your wise foresight and advocacy of a Safe Learning Environment. Bravo!

CC: editors, The Spokesperson; editors, The Cooper Point Journal

1 IPYM did learn, however, that Stormsfodder is a member of Business School faculty rather than the Econ Dept. He should pose no threat. Safe choice! Purce seems to know his business.

2 "Package them and pack your bags" is what comes next, we also both know, and should not say too loudly.

## **Brain Compatible Research Shows How to Avoid Too-Much-Too-Soon Learning Syndrome**

When it rains as hard as it did over the holiday break, all sorts of strange stuff bubbles to the surface. You just have to have your eyes open when you walk past other people's desks. Somehow—we won't say even if we knew but we don't because all our operatives sign a pledge that they will accord us "plausible deniability"—the following memo, also from M. Goforth came to our editorial offices. It sort of puts all the sucking up in the previous memo into a context. Goforth is a pusher. She's got products. And she's on the make for another customer.

But in the interest of getting out the whole story, we give it to you here, unedited:

To: Vice President Barbara Smith  
The Evergreen State College  
Olympia, WA 98505

From: Marianne Goforth MD, MBA  
Institute for the Protection of Young Minds  
1342 G Court, Suite 530  
New York, NY 14225

Re: Opportunities in Brain Compatible Teaching  
Division of Curricular Development and Marketing

As you know, we have been delighted in your receptiveness to our distance-learning packages. As you implement these courses on your campuses, you will find that we offer many research-based products that ensure a smooth transition to technologically mediated teaching experiences. As an administrative educator, you will no doubt be aware of the recent breakthrough in Brain Compatible Teaching and Learning, a vital concept that has emerged from the joint efforts of the Oregon Educators' Symposium and the Oregon Primate Center<sup>1</sup>. After many years of trial studies, these important research groups have announced the results of their work on educational practices in both animal and human laboratories. Some of the nation's most innovative colleges have already begun to implement BCTL®; for instance, Rio Salado Community College-North offers a \$23 two-session class in "The Body-Mind Connection in Activated Learning," which teaches student/consumers how to demand BCTL®-trained teachers. Because these (and other) recent developments have such broad and significant cross curricular applications, we thought you would be especially interested in a brief description of how they can be implemented.

First, a summary: Brain Compatible Teaching and Learning (BCTL®) is based on brain research that demonstrates precisely what triggers stress in neurophysiological function. In a learning environment, these stressors are triggered when students get Too Much Too Soon, or TMTS®. What researchers have discovered is that the brain stops learning after an overload of information

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<sup>1</sup>In fact, BCLT has been lying dormant in the literature for almost a decade. In the late 1980's, researchers published preliminary results, most notably, "All "Thinking" leads to the Brain," Leslie Hart, in *Educational Leadership*, V43 n8 p45-48 May 1986; "Cutting Edge: Brain Compatible Learning," James Conner in *Journal of Developmental Education* v13 n1 p26-27, Fall 1989. In the last few weeks, these decade-old discoveries have been rearticulated in the context of emerging technologies that finally help teachers and students realize the full potential of these cognitive truths.

has been administered within a specific time-frame. On these occasions, when students are asked what they learned in school, they will reply, "I don't remember."

To avoid the sad outcomes of TMTS®, the IPYM now offers distant learning packages (The Tech-Pack®) that are scientifically calibrated to the capacities of young minds to learn without the counter-productive results of shut-down stress. The Tech-Pack® can be integrated with the distance learning technologies, and the IPYM offers distance-training for the technicians who run these camera-mediated learning communities. As its centerpiece, the Tech-Pack® includes state-of-the-art biofeedback monitors for each student who has paid for a distance learning package. The biofeedback monitor is equipped with a shut-down mechanism that is tuned to an individual student's ability to learn. This means that the minute stressful physiological signals are sent by the student's brain to the biofeedback program, the learning session ceases. Further, students will not be able to begin a learning session until their brain activity is at an optimum level of receptivity.

Institutions who invest in the Tech-Pack® feature of distant learning curriculums also receive classroom enhancement technologies that reduce the distractions of technology in the classroom. For instance, subscribers to the Tech-Pack® will find a significant lowering of noise created as the camera rotates and focuses during interactive sessions. And our Computer Mufflers® make computer operation a virtually silent phenomenon. These advances are adapted specifically to classroom applications where stress-free environments are pursued as pedagogical ideals.

Finally, The IPYM is pleased to announce the inaugural issue of our Distance Learning/Tech-Pack Journal which is provided free to institutions who subscribe to our curriculum. In this peer-reviewed scholarly publication, you will find research on innovations in the emerging technological classroom. Our first issue includes a double-blind study that shows a significant lowering of STD's, dating, pregnancies, offspring and marriages between students and teachers who no longer share classroom space; a short-term longitudinal study that reveals lower blood pressure and higher self-esteem among distance learners; a psychological profile of distance teachers that reveals a significant loss of interest in the atavistic erotics of the student-teacher relationship; and a paean to the end of flirting. The DLTP Journal will keep members up-to-date about the critically acclaimed, positive impact of technologically mediated learning on the minds of our youth. A teleconference, utilizing Tech-Pack® technologies, is scheduled for March 15, 1999. In attendance will be many people who, like Prof. Stormsdorfer, are well respected persons of extraordinary achievement, distinguished teachers, and entrepreneurs, including, as well, many former long-time editors of the Journal of Irreproducible Results--all pioneers of the distance learning labor movement.

The IPYM welcomes you to the next millennium of college teaching.

<sup>1</sup>In fact, BCLT has been lying dormant in the literature for almost a decade. In the late 1980's, researchers published preliminary results, most notably, "All "Thinking" leads to the Brain," Leslie Hart, in Educational Leadership, V43 n8 p45-48 May 1986; "Cutting Edge: Brain Compatible Learning," James Conner in Journal of Developmental Education v13 n1 p26-27, Fall 1989. In the last few weeks, these decade-old discoveries have been rearticulated in the context of emerging technologies that finally help teachers and students realize the full potential of these cognitive truths.

In addition to all that ... uh, stuff, we received—and thank goodness for it—a document that speaks for itself:

**PROXIMITY EDUCATION:  
An Essayistic Polemic**  
Nary á Libel

Emmanuel Levinas depicts the gesture that captures the essence of the ideal educational encounter. The caress, as a “mode of being,” accurately describes the sort of “reaching out” in which our ideal student/consumer engages at the beginning of each class; and, reciprocally, a caress that is, of course, not touching, “properly speaking,” is the way all good teachers imagine “reaching” their student/consumers.

*The caress is a mode of the subject's being, where the subject who is in contact with another goes beyond this contact. Contact as sensation is part of the world of light. But what is caressed is not touched, properly speaking. It is not the softness or warmth of the hand given in contact that the caress seeks. The seeking of the caress constitutes its essence by the fact that the caress does not know what it seeks. This “not knowing,” this fundamental disorder, is the essential. It is like a game with something slipping away, a game absolutely without project or plan, not with what can become ours or us, but with something other, always other, always inaccessible, always still to come [à venir]. The caress is the anticipation of this pure future [avenir], without content. It is made up of this increase of hunger, of ever richer promises, opening new perspectives onto the ungraspable. It feeds on countless hungers.<sup>2</sup>*

And that is why the best education has to be **proximity education**.

Isn't that where we all want our student/consumers: reaching out to us, reaching out not to possess but in the gesture of a caress? Don't we want our student/consumers to enter into the pedagogical relationship in a state of “fundamental disorder” characterized by “not knowing” what “it [sic] seeks”? Don't we want them to enter with us into a game—nothing serious, mind you—where their first move is a kind of slipping away, a teasing flirtation, but one without a plan, project, or future? Don't we look for student/consumers—those who come closest to that what our sociologists call the “ideal type”—who are “always still to come,” those in anticipation of a “pure future,” a future “without content” (or commitment)? Isn't the ideal student/consumer whom we all desire one who is increasingly, unceasingly hungry, one who is “opening,” especially to “new perspectives”?

Yes.

And then what? Put that student/consumer in front of a TV camera in Yakima and put our team of teachers in the TV studio in the basement of the Library Building in Olympia and have present in the room (now more highly paid) minimum wage workers running the “technology in general” (i.e., monitoring and recording our every move toward the *other [le autre]*)? Is what begins in the “mode of being” of a caress to be stopped in its tracks, if we can speak of the caress leaving tracks (which we hope it doesn't), end with someone saying “zoom in; tight shot on teacher 2”?

What have we come to?

We can turn to another philosopher of education to see where we come when we engage in “distance learning.” Jane Gallop, herself no mean teacher, says of the Marquis de Sade, “there

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<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other [and additional essays]*, trans. Richard A. Cohen, Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987, p. 89.

may be some sense in treating the entirety of Sade's writings as a meditation on teaching."<sup>3</sup> Sade gave new meaning to that old phrase, "teaching her a lesson." As Gallop constructs the Sadean scene,

*Pederasty is undoubtedly a useful paradigm for classical Western pedagogy. A greater man penetrates a lesser man with his knowledge. The student is empty, a receptacle for the phallus; the teacher is the phallic fullness of knowledge. In the classroom the students are many; the teacher unique. Unicity is a primary phallic attribute. The fact that the teacher and student are of the same sex but of different ages contributes to the interpretation that the student has no otherness, nothing different than the teacher, simply less.*

*This structure and its sexual dynamic become explicit in Sade. The student is an innocent, empty receptacle, lacking his own desires [and in how many seminars have we seen that?], having desires "introduced into him by the teacher.... From the first dialogue of Sade's Philosophy [of the Bedroom]: "we will place in this pretty little head all the principles of the most unbridled libertinage, we will inflame it with our fires ... we will inspire in it our desires."*

Don't get us wrong. We are not, in the instant case, accusing the Professor Stormingdoors of being a libertine. Heck, even if he is, he'll be on the other side of the mountains. But what will the student/consumers in Tacoma confront. The unicity of Professor S.? No. Instead, they will stare into the phallic fullness of—that's right—a video camera. Of course one can argue, as the Institute for the Protection of Young Minds does in these pages, that this is a "safe" learning arrangement, and there is some merit to keeping the parties to the pedagogical encounter from "mixing," if you know what I mean. But consider the implications of the hypermediated encounter. If the student doesn't "get it" the first time, all they have to do is rewind the tape and Prof. S "comes onto" the student again ... [got it now?] ... and [rewind] again [got it yet?] ... and [rewind] again.... Not very caressing, if you ask me. But no one did, and that is why Tacoma is going to "get it"—labor economics no less.

What do we want in education? Proximity. The best known statement on the topic, of course, is "Proximity," an article, a call to "arms," a "man"ifesto, by Kay Johnson originally published in 1963 in Laurence Ferlinghetti's *Journal for the Protection of All Living Beings*. Johnson's well-known view of the effects of proximity bears repeating here:

*...if they let the soul flow out, the body is opened as easily, and everyone has no fidelity any longer, and everyone deep down in their soul wants to love everyone of them, as Saint Francis kissed the leper, I could everyone, and if we were all released from the barriers of our imaginations, the whole world would turn into an ecstatic holocaust and we would all be throwing ourselves upon the bodies of each other constantly, indiscriminately.*

*Because that is the nature of us.*

*Only a few wild ones dare give into it.*

*The rest of us play at it, play at it, I say, only....*

*The dog, the cat, when they rub us with their flesh, yes, with their flesh, when the cat kneads and purrs, when the dogs want to kiss us in the mouths ... oh the sensual and beautiful soul of the animal, it's not the full sexual union of its sexual organs with yours it's asking for ... but simply closeness, the closeness of its little sensual soul, which is its body, the touching of the skin, the lying down close to each other....*

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<sup>3</sup> Jane Gallop, "The Immoral Teachers," pp. 117-134 in *The Pedagogical Imperative*, *Yale French Studies* ..., p. 117.

*But it is not sexual union the soul is after. It is some chemical interchange from skin to skin, from being to being, from proximity to proximity, from sitting next to each other, from sleeping in the same bed. From the clasping of hands, from the touching of skins.*

Isn't that what we mean by "whole person education"? Isn't that what the founders of Evergreen and other alternative colleges of the sixties meant by their mantra, "Theory, Practice, Proximity"? (In fact, didn't they turn the business school slogan of "Theory and Practice" into the alternative's trinity only after reading Johnson's article?) Don't we want our student/consumers to really be open all the way, completely, if they are going to consume us? Don't we really, really want the ones who are not just playing at the teaching/learning game?

Yes.

Our current administration has been helpful in encouraging proximity education. How else are we to understand the ever increasing size of seminars? Smaller rooms plus more people equals—that's right—proximity. No sexual unions, of course ... just closeness, "sitting next to each other ... clasping hands ... touching skins." In fact, there was so much proximity in one of my seminars that one of the student/consumer's dogs *did* kiss me in the mouth. And when the carbon dioxide gets too high "sleeping in the same 'bed,'" right there on the seminar room floor. And of course it works. Seminar size has increased but so has "student satisfaction" scores on course evaluations (except in computer programs where they consumers at terminals which are 3.7 feet apart to reduce the effects of electro-magnetic radiation). With such proximity as we achieve in most classes now, those who want to caress can, and do.

No reason to backslide now. No satellites. No technology in general. No low paid people to run the cameras replacing low paid, very warm bodied professors. Say no to technology; say yes to a student/consumer today. We need to be together on this, if you know what I mean.

And just in case you think we forgot:

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Or Ms. Editor  
Spokesperson

Recently my order for mud bay holiday tuiles arrived from olympia. We do so enjoy them here. This will be our first christmas without Dork. They were his favorite, too. He got so much pleasure just sitting them the box came, get a case of Dr. Pepper and just “dig right” into that box like some kid. Those things are so good, the doctor was even begging for the recipe right after the autopsy. But this is neither here or there.

What I’m writing for is in regards to is a copy of Spokesperson which somebody as used for packing the “Mud Bay Holiday Tuiles” in this year which we get every year. . At first I didn’t pay it too much mind even though I do like to read those packing papers ( as I call them). I always thinks it’s so interesting what other places in the world are like, even though it may seem funny to some people, like Washington. Of course, I never been there, but we always wanted to before Dork passed on , but we did go to that reservation in Arizona. It was so interesting to see how they did things.

So I was thinking, looking at the Spokeperson, “there’s some good ideas here” And of course, with Dork gone, money is a little tight. I took ceramic classes and started making a line of Linda Tripp lip balm and perfume, but Mabel said you don’t want to get investigated because you can’t afford it . But then when I saw those pictures in Spokeperson, I thought “what a cute tusch”. Who would have thought famous person for his mind all would have such a sweet little bum and thought wouldn’t that make just the cutest beanie baby idea? And with Ms. Rideaway we can add some interest for the boys, too, like Ken and Barbie but that’s been done and then Mabel said wasn’t it better to go with a nowhere college idea which didn’t exist anyway if fictional means what my dictionary says sociology means knowing everybody’s business..

So, we were hoping you wouldn’t mind if we used the fictional people in your paper to make a line of beanie babies like the therapist, the provost, and some of those others?

Dafne Delpperdang  
Dagget, California

P.S. Could you please send a frontal picture of Dr. Arney, too for the pattern?.