

2009

Front Matter

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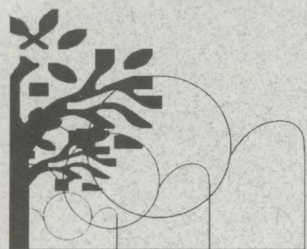
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J A E P L

The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

Pictures of the Believing Game

Volume 15 • Winter 2009-2010

The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

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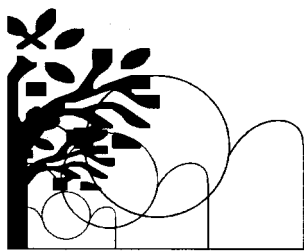
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The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning (AEPL), an official assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English, is open to all those interested in extending the frontiers of teaching and learning beyond traditional disciplines and methodologies.

The purposes of AEPL, therefore, are to provide a common ground for theorists, researchers, and practitioners to explore ideas on the subject; to participate in programs and projects on it; to integrate these efforts with others in related disciplines; to keep abreast of activities along these lines of inquiry; and to promote scholarship on and publication of these activities.

The *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning, JAEPL*, meets this need. It provides a forum to encourage research, theory, and classroom practices involving expanded concepts of language. It contributes to a sense of community in which scholars and educators from pre-school through the university exchange points of view and cutting-edge approaches to teaching and learning. *JAEPL* is especially interested in helping those teachers who experiment with new strategies for learning to share their practices and confirm their validity through publication in professional journals.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to: aesthetic, emotional, and moral intelligence; archetypes; body wisdom; care in education; creativity; felt sense theory; healing; holistic learning; humanistic and transpersonal psychology; imaging; intuition; kinesthetic knowledge; meditation; narration as knowledge; reflective teaching; silence; spirituality; and visualization.

Membership in AEPL is \$20. Contact Laurence Musgrove, AEPL Membership Chair, Department of English, ASU Station 10894, Angelo State University, 2601 W. Avenue N, San Angelo, TX 76909. email: musgrove@angelo.edu. Membership includes that year's issue of *JAEPL*.

Send submissions, address changes, and single copy requests to Joanna S. Trapp, Co-Editor, *JAEPL*. email: jtrapp@waynesburg.edu

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Visit our JAEPL website at <http://sworps.utk.edu/aepl/jaepl>.

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- Sheridan Blau* 8 **Believing and Doubting as Hermeneutic Method:
Reading and Teaching *Paradise Lost***
Using a variation on Peter Elbow's believing game, I help students discover the degree to which Milton in Paradise Lost succeeds in his explicit attempt to justify God's ways to man and in that success also offers us an account of human happiness and misery that is psychologically sophisticated, spiritually illuminating, entirely rational, and supremely wise as a guide to living a humanly satisfying life. Such an approach to Paradise Lost also fosters an experience of the text through which many students undergo a modern version of the spiritual transformation and enlightenment that Milton explicitly aimed to make possible for readers of his epic.
- Tim Doherty* 16 **Lessons from the Believing Game**
My essay reflects on different lessons I have learned in using the believing game to promote deliberative dialogue in first-year writing courses. I have learned that it helps not to be in a hurry: spending enough preparation time with students thinking about belief itself, listening to students' stories and sense of attachment to beliefs, and playing the game repeatedly. I also explore the believing game as a mode of play, especially the fruitful way that role-play can be integrated into the believing game.
- Anne Ellen Geller* 27 **The Difficulty of Believing in Writing Across the Curriculum**
What would happen if we tried to consider writing-across-the-curriculum work through the lens of Peter Elbow's methodological believing? If we were to believe that every faculty person in the university is a writer, thinks about writing, and teaches writing in his or her own way, what virtues would we find that doubting leads us to disqualify?

Shelly Sheats Harkness 37
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**The Believing Game in Mathematics:
 Stories in a Discipline of Doubt**

Many people view mathematics as a discipline of certainty and rigidity. Answers are either right or wrong, and, when they are wrong, it is easy to play the doubting game. We invite readers into our mathematics classrooms as we story our attempts to play the believing game. We provide a lens into how we suspended our own logic, assumptions, and interpretations until we first tried to "unpack," understand, and honor our students' logic, assumptions, and interpretations. Within our individual stories, elements of tension, surprise, and wonder emerged as collective themes.

Judy Lightfoot

**50 Saying Yes to Freestyle Volunteering:
 Doubting and Believing**

My formerly academic interest in Peter Elbow's work developed fresh relevance a few years ago after a member of my family was diagnosed with schizophrenia. To volunteer "outside the box" with individuals who suffer from mental illness or homelessness, I needed a skeptic's doubt as well as an enthusiast's belief. But the first step was believing.

Clyde Moneyhun

54 Believing, Doubting, Deciding, Acting

I used Peter Elbow's believing and doubting games and cooked up two games of my own, to structure a first-year writing class aimed at teaching students to read and reason critically. The first new game has been hinted at by Elbow himself: the deciding game, in which students used their exercises in believing and doubting to make up their minds about a topic. The second new game, which my students called the living game, asked them to extend their intellectual decisions into the world and take or recommend actions based on them. This was all enacted through a series of assignments for reading journal entries, a term paper, and an elaborate oral presentation. I learned a lot from teaching the course this way, including the enduring power of unreflective skepticism in my students' ingrained thinking patterns.

Irene Papoulis

63 A Reflection on Habitual Belief and Habitual Doubt

Some people are habitual "believers" while others are habitual "doubters." I'm a believer, but doubting others helps me believe myself. I explore the idea that examining our individual habitual relationships with believing and doubting helps us think better and relate better to others and to ourselves.

Stephanie Paterson

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I introduce the basic principles for the practice of proprioceptive writing and describe the experience and outcomes of incorporating this ungraded writing into three undergraduate composition classes. I offer this as a case study of a writer, teacher, and reflective practitioner emboldened by Peter Elbow's believing game, and I point out some of the intellectual and pedagogical discoveries that emerged in my fourteen-week experiment.

- Donna Strickland* 78 **Before Belief: Embodiment and the “Trying Game”**
I use my experience of teaching “Mindful Writing” to reflect on the pre-cognitive act of “trying out” new ideas. It seems that there’s an important piece of the believing game that happens before the cognitive act of belief and that involves the body as much as the mind.

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Andrew Statum

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Space

Joonna Smitherman Trapp

Composition Class 7:45 AM

Editors' Message

In 1996, on a gloomy Sunday afternoon in Chicago, Linda and Kris were struggling to pack new books, posters, flyers, and clothes into suitcases for our return home from NCTE. Then the phone rang. AEPL chair and founding member Dick Graves called with an invitation that changed our professional lives: "Would you consider editing *JAEPL*?" We looked at each, stunned at the opportunity and the board's confidence in our abilities. The packing forgotten, we asked ourselves, "Would we consider it? Could we possibly live up to the high standards set by Alice Brand, the journal's founding editor?" As charter members of AEPL, we had been involved with the assembly from its inception, we had both published in the early issues of the journal, and we had both served on the board, Kris as ex officio member and Linda as secretary. Without a doubt, we were engaged with and dedicated to AEPL. But could we do the journal justice?

That cold Sunday afternoon marked the beginning of our work with *JAEPL*, and, now, on a sultry summer day in 2009, we write our last editors' message, welcoming Joonna Smitherman Trapp and Brad Peters as the incoming co-editors of *JAEPL*. More than 12 years have passed, and more than 11 co-edited volumes have been mailed to assembly members and to those committed to our precepts but outside of our organization. During that time, we have had the privilege of working with scholar-teachers exploring nontraditional topics that have renewed and enriched the goals that form AEPL's core. We look back over our work and plot our editorship according to the themed issues that arose from each year's accepted submissions, beginning with "Mind, Body, Spirit: Teachers Making Connections" and ending with "The Believing Game." And we have been blessed that NCTE has also found value in those themes, selecting through a rigorous review process volumes 4 through 14 for national promotion through their web site and catalog. We have high hopes that Volume 15, guest edited by Peter Elbow, will also receive that same recognition.

We are grateful for the confidence that Dick, Alice, and the long ago board had in our abilities. The experience of working with each other, with a cadre of top-notch reviewers, and with writers dedicated to researching and teaching beyond conventional boundaries has been rewarding beyond measure. We are confident that Joonna and Brad will discover the same gratification, the same joy. So we are again packing. But instead of books, papers, and clothes, instead of suitcases in a hotel bedroom, we box up 12 years of co-editing to send with warmest congratulations to Joonna and Brad, who will take the journal in new and exciting directions. ☺