Andrew Panetta Final Reflection Paper

The time I’ve spent teaching seniors and learning about the struggles and they face in day-to-day life has had a tremendous impact on the way I view older adults. There have been few classes that I have taken at Pace that have had an effect that I carry with me outside of the classroom. I often find myself talking about The Hallmark and my experiences in teaching my older adult. This, along with my role as group leader for the hardware team term project, provided me with a lasting respect for technology and its relationship with older adults.

Originally, I took this class as a requirement to graduate. As I searched through the list of AOK I classes available for my final spring semester, I stumbled across Intergenerational Computing. I really only liked the computing half of the course title, and was more concerned about the intergenerational portion than anything. The first day of class was jarring as it became clear that the requirements of the course sought to remove me from the comforts of the classroom and instead implant me into the life of an older adult with whom I had never met. The workload seemed immense and the idea of working with a complete stranger was so overwhelming that I considered dropping the class all together. Luckily, I decided against giving into my fears and give the course a fighting chance.

One of the major factors in deciding to stick with the class came from my work experience. As a certified Apple Personal Trainer, I knew that I not only possessed the skills necessary to succeed as a teacher, but that I had a chance to actually make a difference in someone’s life. What seemed at first like a massive burden, quickly turned into a magnificent opportunity that I was ready to take head on.

Following our introductions at The Hallmark, I was quickly approached by Larry Greenberg, who as a long time Mac owner, seemed extremely eager to enlist my services and take full advantage of my knowledge. Larry had an engineering background in his working life so I was relatively confident in his ability to grasp the majority of the basic concepts I planned on teaching him. Luckily, I was not wrong in my assumption as Larry proved to be an above average and apt pupil. Still, I found the need to occasionally alter my teaching style. By making analogies and references to things that were more familiar to Larry, I was able to clarify some of the more abstract concepts.

My goal from the beginning was to provide Larry with the tools he needed in order to understand how to interact with the computer as a whole rather than finding quick fixes for his common problems. I assured him that even though what I was teaching may have at first seemed irrelevant; it was ultimately working toward a larger goal. I told him that the basics were the building blocks for all subsequent interactions and that by understanding the simple operations and commands of computing, he could make better-informed decisions when facing future problematic situations and unfamiliar conditions. I was able to accomplish this by letting him do most of the work and attempting to “learn leading out”. To learn leading out relies on the concept of directing the student to his or her own logical conclusions. This is achieved by leading with open-ended questions, such as: “If we want to add a new contact, what are some familiar symbols we should look for?” Or, “If we know that the ‘copy’ command is located in the menu bar, then where should we look for a the ‘paste’ command?”

As a teacher, especially one who is younger, I found that it was important to not oversimplify or patronize, while at the same time be able to acknowledge and praise success. As time went on, I was able to hone these techniques and from this, I learned a lot about myself. I was able to better gauge my patience and test my ability to adapt my teaching approach to a new learning style. But more than anything, I was rewarded by knowing that Larry truly learned something and can now better use his computer (which he plans to use to keep in touch with me via email).

In addition to my responsibilities as a teacher, I also took on the role of group leader of the Pace hardware team for our term project. I think I would be selling this reflection short if I neglected to mention my experience here. As eager as I was to take this job, I was totally unprepared for the workload that it entailed. I learned more about myself from this experience alone, than perhaps any other class I’ve taken at Pace. As team leader, I was responsible for managing a crew of seven students and overseeing the ambitious project of repairing, maintaining, and organizing the computers at two elderly care facilities. At first, the group was as disorganized as it was ineffective. We struggled to keep in touch and to find common times to meet and organize an effective strategy for tackling our objective. However, once the semester got going, we blended together and formed a bond that saw us through to the end. By the end of the semester, everyone in the group was devoted to our cause, and dedicated to making it as successful as possible. I truly feel privileged to have had the opportunity to lead a team with such enthusiastic and caring members. I also feel that had it not been for the sense of purpose and significance that our combined efforts cultivated, the success of the project would have paled in comparison to the feelings of accomplishment we all got from teaching the seniors. For this, I am also proud.

In more ways than I can count, this course exceeded my expectations of what a computer class could be. This course gives a hands-on approach to learning, and provides a wealth of experience in understanding and working with people, both young and old. I would recommend this class to anyone who is willing to challenge their comfort zone and eager to make a difference during their time at Pace. As a graduating senior in my final semester, I am thankful for this experience. I can proudly say that I had the opportunity to end my college career on a high note, and that I took full advantage of it.