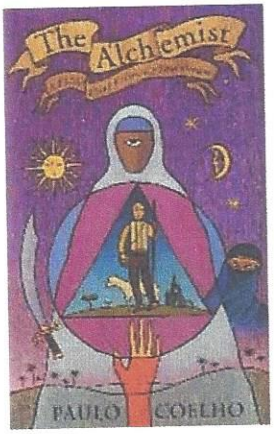
Great Teachers Seminar

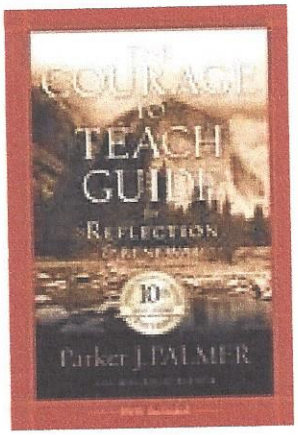
Summary of Group Sessions

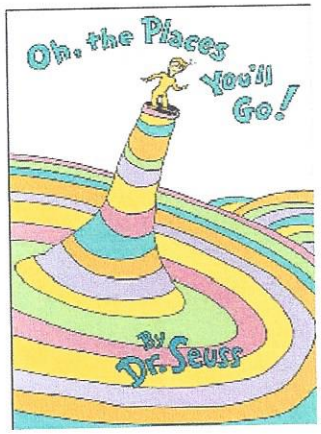
March 6, 2012

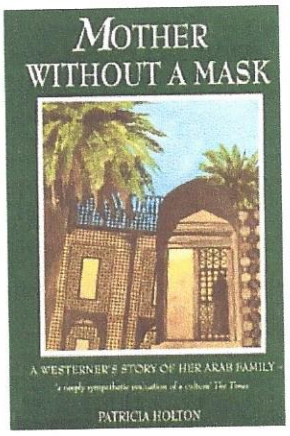
Taken from the notes of the small group facilitators

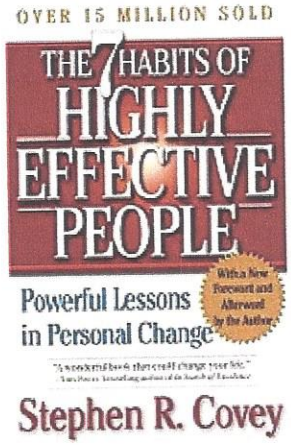
Important Books that had more than one mention

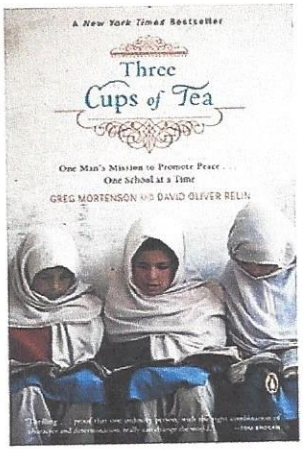












Also mentioned was this publication called **The Teaching Professor** available online from CNA-Q library:
http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=324ebbd6-232b-48b3-91c4-af584ed30c3f%40sessionmgr112&vid=1&hid=123&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=ehh&jid=4HN

All of the books (except Dr. Seuss's) are also available in the CNA-Q library.

Most Common Words from 6 Word Essays

Describing a Great Teacher

First Day of Class

- Put 5 or 6 dates and names on board and students have to ask questions that these dates and names could answer. Example, 1999 could lead to questions "Year you were born?", "Year you got married?"
- **Ask students what they think a good teacher does and what they think a good student does. Put students into two groups with flip charts or whiteboard. One group brainstorms ideas about a good student, and the other group brainstorms what a good teacher is. Come together to discuss and add any new ideas generated.**
- Put questions in a bag and everyone picks one and everyone then answers it.
- **Give series of questions to students and they have to ask each other and then tell everyone what they found out about the other students.**
- Take picture of each student for 'cheat sheet' to learn their names. (Only if they give you permission).
- **Ask students what their best class was like, i.e., teacher, activities, feedback, etc. List on board and try to incorporate the ones you feel comfortable with. Can also do that with worst class, for what not to do.**
- Talk to students about names, what their name means, who named them, etc. Always work on pronouncing their names correctly.
- **Speak individually with each student in the first week.**
- Create a Personal Jeopardy game to introduce yourself. They can respond by giving the questions in teams or individually.
- **Use business cards to introduce students to all learning support departments, like Advanced Writing Centre, Independent Learning Centre, Library, Bookstore, Instructor's office.**
- Piece of writing (structured essay) about themselves. Another at the end of the semester and then compare.
- **Make your worst student your best friend.**
- I show my very bad undergrad transcript, and then I show my master's transcript which is much better. I explain that the student can improve as I did.
- **My life in pictures to help alleviate the students' fears of new teacher. Builds a bond between students and teacher.**
- What do we have in common? Each student talks to every other student and they have to come up with 3 things they have in common.
- **Introduce self with three sketches. Students ask questions and then draw their own pictures to introduce themselves.**
- Students write 10 questions, which lets the teacher know their level of English. In pairs they share, then choose questions to ask the teacher.
- **Get them to line up in alphabetical order by first name. They learn each other's names well.**
- Ask the students how they like to be tested, where they like to study, how they study, etc.

Teaching Successes

- **Incentive for students to do work at home. Created videos of topics that I posted on Youtube. Math help where students follow along which makes it fun and stress-free. Using video has been very successful.**
- Used blog and the students had to post each day about course and learning. Teacher is highly involved with students.
- **Whiteboard soccer teaches teamwork. Good for multiple choice, true/false, short answer questions. Each team picks a name. Use magnets as point markers. This game gets the students engaged. Captain can only speak to referee. Give out prizes to winners and they make acceptance speech.**
- To instill confidence I have students teach one course objective to entire class.
- **Used a role play scenario that was all wrong. Students had to identify everything I did wrong.**
- Grouped weaker students with stronger students in peer groupings.
- **Students are expected to take notes in class and there is a mandatory binder for notes. Notes are to be dated and kept in the binder. On a test, I always have a 1 point question like, "What was my advice on Feb 12?" They open notes to Feb 12 and find the answer. They quickly learn the importance of taking notes.**
- Having students writing questions for exams has been successful.
- **Showing students the different places on campus and using the different environments for the class. For example, using the auditorium for presentations or using a boardroom for a meeting.**
- Literature circles in my class. Students read articles, and one student works on vocabulary, another one comes up with questions, another one makes a visual representation of what was read. Then they discuss the article and their parts in the larger group.
- **Allow students to "manage" the class. For example, take attendance, assign seating, etc. This motivates them and they like the prestige.**
- TPP Incident Report. Groups of 3 do a storyboard of 8 pictures about the incident. They go out and take pictures and write report together.
- **Develop reading activities from college emails, for example, recreation bulletin, student affairs bulletins – familiarizes them with the community.**
- To build in creative thinking and decision making skills use de Bono's plus, minus, interesting process. It leads to good discussions and debates. See http://www.ideels.uni-bremen.de/PMI.html for more information.
- **Problem-based and project-based learning that covers the course outline. Real life situation where students monitored themselves and realized it was useful learning. Students designed and planned the tasks following the guidelines and templates given to them.**

Teaching Challenges

- **Recognizing and dealing with students' family responsibilities.**
- Not enough time to prep, connect to students, and have timely feedback.
- **Too many hours and not enough curriculum.**
- Students are focused on marks and grade point average, and not on learning.
- **Improve attendance and get the students into the class.**
- Get course content covered because it's very heavy. No way to develop deep learning and understand the content at the same time. How much are students really learning? Where's the learner-centered learning when there are so many objectives to cover and so little time.
- **Getting students engaged. How to get them to participate and share?**
- How do you motivate the students to do the work outside class? Students who won't do extra work aren't successful. Many of them will cheat when they can. They see cheating as a viable way to increase their grade.
- **Lack of policies in the college - inconsistencies - lack of enforcement of rules.**
- Lack of problem-solving skills - where is it taught in the curriculum?
- **Students are moving on without the fundamentals skills or foundation.**
- Students are not prepared for classes (no pen/calculator).
- **Plagiarism is a problem.**
- Faculty morale is low.
- **Number of students in the class is sometimes very low or sometimes very high.**
- Cultural differences/language barriers are challenges.
- **Male/female troubles within mixed classes.**
- Mobile phone use in class for other than educational purposes.
- **Very low problem solving or critical thinking skills among the students.**
- Getting through objectives which does not allow for time for hands-on activities. In an EFL environment it takes longer time to cover objectives.
- **No instructor education to deal with special needs students in our classes.**
- Counselling services based on attendance only and missing other important issues.
- **Dealing with students who shouldn't be there, for a variety of reasons.**
- Finding the trigger that excites them to want/motivate them to all learn.
- **Lateness - wears you down - breaks you down.**
- Always keeping positive especially when things spill over from outside the classroom.
- **Some students see "support centres" in a negative way - do not take advantage and negatively influence other students with their attitudes.**
- It's challenging to always use clear, simple English to convey subject content.
- **No peer observation / collaboration among teachers. Sense of isolation.**
- Incorporating technology in class, with prep and teaching self to use it is time consuming.
- **Dealing with diversity in the classroom. For example, one student can't speak a sentence in English, and then have much stronger students.**
- Technical college but there is not enough technology.
- **Students want to talk all the time in class.**

Something Different After Today

- **To communicate to students outside of class.**
- Use sms texting to communicate with students.
- **Pause longer on what I'm teaching, to think about impact on the students.**
- Try to promote more positive peer relationships in out department.
- **Take some of the suggestions about improving peer relationships with the higher-ups and talk more with colleagues.**
- Make both students and colleagues feel valued by communicating with them.
- **Make some connections with people I don't have any connections with yet.**
- Try a new teaching technique and have the students present a lesson.
- **Try a game to help cover content.**
- Relate my subject area to real life, and use my teacher peer group (teaching the same subject) to come up with suggestions.
- **Have students do presentations.**
- Assign a student as a prefect or class manager for lateness and mobile phone issues.
- **Give students a chance to teach each other parts of the lesson.**
- Would consider trying to develop a reader to promote stronger independent reading habits.
- **To apply a more relaxed class during lectures and make class less intimidating.**
- Use creativity activity using PMI (plus, minus, interesting) to help motivate learning.
- **Ask my class what would motivate them and get feedback from my own students.**
- Do "get-to-know-you" exercises in class and allow students to make rules and compose an agreement.
- **Let students submit exam questions to use on the evaluation (20%).**
- I will use the graphic organizer for an introduction class and whiteboard soccer.
- **Use Youtube videos where I can.**
- Tell more stories about industry, personal stories, and get guest speakers.
- **Like to see if there is a way to use iPads as part of activities for English language classes.**
- Try to get to know the students more as individuals rather than just a group of students in the class.
- **Be more open to learning from colleagues.**
- Challenge the students with more responsibility.
- **To look at iBooks.**
- Use more positive praise in class.
- **Find a better use of mobile phones in the classroom.**
- Smile more, tell more stories, and be more personal.
- **Just be there for my students.**
- Nothing heard it all before.
- **Invite students to my office at a given time, for business or for coffee.**
- Try to leave more time for questions and summary at end of class (define objective).
- **CNA-Q's teachers are already incredible and surpass most students' expectations and what is being done in North American education. By nature of our collaborative and adventurous spirit, we are all Great Teachers!**
- Incorporate more technology into my classes.

Group Suggestions on Afternoon Themes

Critical Thinking

- Frequent questioning
- Refuse to hand over the answer
- Challenge assumptions on common wisdom
- Create a safe zone for critical thinking and assure the students there is no punishment
- Project – based learning – change assessment
- Develop critical thinking culture at CNA-Q throughout the institution

Professional Expectations

- Have former students come from industry to talk about what they do. Reiterate how important time mgt, etc. is that the teachers are telling them.
- At orientation - Have reps from different departments (Alumni) come to meet with instructors to talk about expectations (in a PD day setting). Mixture of speaker/PowerPoint/small group sessions. Have recorded for future use. Could also be done for students.

Textbook Issues

- Onsite Kinkos – printing on campus
- E-books / in-house materials online / publish your own materials
- Library resources – housing of extra copies
- Set up recycling textbooks
- In-house development of course materials is important – release time/committees

Cultural Differences

- Imposing a western model which is not necessarily appropriate
- Instructor needs to see distinction between western practices and eastern ones
- Some issues can be compromised (if Ss not prepared for class, bring pencils to class, have them set a due date, be flexible) and others cannot (standard of academics, cheating, listening in class). Let students know which are which.

Teaching Methodologies

- Scaffolding – primary steps- needs assessment
- Visual reinforcement
- Word wall / word bank
- Concept map /graphic organizer
- Relate to real – life situations

Vocational vs. Academic

- Level of requirements (math for example) are sometimes university level rather than vocational Why are students taking high level calculus in programs where they will never use it?
- Do an extensive study / needs analysis as to why we are going above and beyond what the students need, which includes instructor feedback so it is not top down.
- Communicate clearly to students and teachers what is the end goal based on the ever changing needs and demands of the sponsors.

Motivation

- Instructors need to understand the educational background for Qatari students. Maybe invite a teacher from a secondary school to address new (and old employees). Explain how they are taught, how motivation is instilled.
- Have a student focus group and ask them what it would take to motivate them. Involve industry reps.
- Increase entry requirements to build a sense of competition to get into (and stay) into program. Students should be dismissed if failing courses and semesters habitually. Limit years to graduate from a program. Include industry reps.
- Build rapport – can lose rapport by being heavy on the rules – can be honest and fair but not sarcastic – respect – teacher doesn't have to be best friend – points or awards in class – games in class for exam review.
- Instructor has to enjoy teaching – what does instructor do to mentally prepare for class? – instructor and students feed off each other's energy.

Instructor motivation

- Putting a lot of effort / time into something and not getting something back – out of our control
- Students need to be intrinsically motivated – dysfunction of organization – joy of teaching lost
- Good quality students vs. numbers of students
- Problems, e.g. Supplementary exams – dysfunctional system – why allow it
- Internal – compensation program – work for x years, you are compensated for what you accomplish – give chance for bonuses, etc. – college wide issues effect instructor motivation
- More support to instructors as they support students

Technology in the Classroom

- More discussion campus wide
- Support from senior management
- Support 24 x 7 for students
- Ongoing follow-up – support for teachers – easy recipe for use – formal program with manpower or build into workload
- Is tech helping learning, or is tech just for tech's sake?

- How relevant is technology for practical use for students? (i.e. will students use ipads at work?)
- Concerns – access and tech support for faculty

Creativity

- Good teachers relate content and current events to real life – to demonstrate relevance to learners
- We analyze learners' needs and give them content at the level they need
- We at CNA-Q need less objectives and assessment and more time for creativity to enhance learning
- de Bono's PMI (plus, minus, interesting) a creative decision making tool

Classroom Management

- Can be beneficial to interview students
- Take silent attendance – speak to students one-on-one, not as a group
- Help students build their career – they need to understand their goals – what is expected of them in their profession
- Help students to understand their actions produce their marks
- Sharing student successes in class

Successful Peer Relationships Among Teachers

- Creating an atmosphere / social culture amongst the instructors that has come from campus culture
- No staff room/ common room to relax in – networking (outside of department)
- As instructors alone in the classroom, we tend to think we have to deal with the problem alone
- In future PD training on personal relationships not just pedagogy
- Staff room with couches and coffee tables
- Challenge for our group is for us to go out and develop or initiate a relationship

Special Needs

- Cultural issues here with disabilities
- More disabilities than what we are aware of - college should promote learning for people with special needs
- Reading and writing disabilities; other medical disabilities

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