

The 31st Annual West Virginia Great Teachers Seminar



2023 Seminar Summary

Created by Steve Smith

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BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and the Community and Technical College System, with support from the Faculty Advisory Council, sponsored the 31st annual West Virginia Great Teachers Seminar (WVGTS), Monday, June 19th – Thursday, June 22nd at North Bend State Park in Cairo, West Virginia. The seminar focused on innovations and problems of instruction at the college and university levels. Faculty members from every higher education institution in West Virginia were encouraged to apply.

The workshop focus is not on teaching specific disciplines, but rather on the art of teaching. The emphasis is wholly on the special nature of those who are and aspire to be great teachers. The GTS is based on the notion that, if properly tapped, the collective wisdom, experience and creativity of any group of practicing educators far surpasses that of any individual expert or consultant. The structure of the seminar evolves from the initial innovations and problems workshops. Experienced and inexperienced college educators learn from each other. Underlying all activities is the challenge to characterize and define the “great teacher.” There’s agreement up front from participants that all the seminar sessions will be positive and productive, a mainstay in the National Great Teachers Movement.

The purpose of the WVGTS was to:

- Celebrate good teaching.
- Challenge educators to venture beyond the limits of their own specializations and environments in search of transferable ideas and the universals of teaching.
- Promote a spirit of introspection and self-appraisal by providing a relaxed setting and straightforward process whereby participants can seriously review and contemplate their attitudes, methods and behaviors as teachers.
- Practice rational analysis of instructional problems and to develop realistic and creative approaches to their solutions
- Stimulate the exchange of information and ideas by building an expanding state-wide network of communication among teachers in higher education. The WVGTS continues to be run without commercial or outside business vendors or interests.

SEMINAR LEADERSHIP

Steve Smith (1PS, LLC) served as the lead facilitator assisted by David Wohl (Winthrop University), Cat Hayes (WVSOM - retired), and Elaine Cruse (formerly Marshall University). Mark Goldstein (WV Northern CC - retired) and Barbara Ladner (WVSU) served as event coordinators.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Twenty-nine (29) faculty members & staff representing fifteen (15) community colleges/universities participated in the Seminar. The range of experience included first year faculty to those with over 30 years of experience, collectively totaling about 500 years. Disciplines from all areas of the college were represented, including veterinary tech, social services, health science/respiratory care, business, marketing, psychology, entrepreneurship, studio art, computer science / student retention, hospitality & tourism management, management and marketing, public health, biology, mathematics, physical therapy assistant, medical assisting, allied health, psychology behavioral neuroscience, teacher education, elementary and special education, community health promotion, communication, pharmacology and mindfulness coaching, English/film/humanities, theatre & arts administration, medical education, and professional learning.

The following community colleges and universities were represented at the Seminar.

Pierpont CTC	Glenville State University
New River CTC	Concord University
Shepherd University	Bluefield State University
West Virginia State University	Fairmont State University
Marshall University	WV Northern CC
Davis & Elkins College	Winthrop University
Southern West Virginia CTC	WVSOM
Mountwest CTC	

SCHEDULE AND ACTIVITIES

The WVGTS opened Monday afternoon evening with a brief introduction to the seminar, purpose and philosophy. The participants were introduced to one another using a physical sorting activity avoiding mention of their college, discipline, and/or teaching field.

Monday evening was devoted to small group discussions of the innovation papers prepared by participants, and on Tuesday morning, discussions focused on educational problems and problem solving. Tuesday afternoon consisted of various presentations and discussions of learning strategies and tips for classroom management and self-care. These activities involved all participants. The “tricks of the trade” were presented in a large group session later that evening.

During the small group discussions on Monday and Tuesday, the seminar staff identified topics in which there was a great deal of interest. On Wednesday morning, participants reviewed the list of topics and voted on those they wished to discuss further. The selections included the following:

- The Lost Art of Communications
- Student Motivation
Student Engagement
- Educating Students Post Covid
- Using Groups
- Have It Your Way (Hybrid/HyFlex class design)
- “Get a Life” (teacher self-care strategies)

The topic sessions were held on Wednesday morning in more traditional, conference –style sessions. Participants engaged in a positive, solutions-based discourse of teaching methods, strategies, and teaching innovations. Wednesday afternoon was an opportunity for participants to individualize the seminar—some reviewed their notes and reflected on their learning, while others gathered together in special interest sessions. Many participants visited local sites and areas of interest in and around the Cairo area.

Following the traditional evening WVGTS Educator Banquet, Wednesday’s night session focused on three (3) faculty who were new to teaching. Participants shared their thoughts and advice for successful teaching and responded to questions from those relatively new to the profession..

Thursday morning closed the seminar with group presentations on the nature of “The Great Teacher”—all of which were profound representations of the art and spirit of teaching. The final closing circle gave each person an opportunity to express what he or she was taking home from the seminar. In addition to the structured seminar activities, participants found time to share ideas and thoughts during meals, throughout the day, and in late night discussions. Many participants stretched themselves through new activities of various kinds.

For the most up-to-date information about the West Virginia Great Teachers Seminar, visit <https://wvqts.com>. The 32nd Annual WVGTS is scheduled to be held June 17-20, 2024 at North Bend State Park. For seminar information, contact Barbara Ladner at ladnerbe@wvstateu.edu or (304) 634-5397. 1ST Person Seminars Higher Education Consulting, LLC may be contacted at 910.280.3247 or on the web at <https://1stpersonseminars.com>.