

Handout #1 – Teacher Development

Exercise from *The Courage to Teach* - Parker Palmer

Parker Palmer writes (p. 67 - adapted):

I ask each teacher to write brief descriptions of two recent moments in teaching: a moment when things were going so well that you knew you were born to teach and a moment when things were going so poorly that you wished you had never been born.

Next I ask people to gather in small groups and focus on the positive case and help each group member in turn identify his or her gifts—that is, to name the strengths and capacities of the teacher that helped make the case in question an authentic (positive) learning experience.

Palmer then asks the group to consider the second experience – but not to try to fix it or talk about what would have made it better.

I ask them to look at this second case in the light of a particular paradox: every gift a person possesses goes hand in hand with a liability. Every strength is also a weakness...”

Consider all that a teacher brings to a situation as gifts—that can be both positive and negative.

Once the instructions have been read, follow them as best as you are able.

Handout #2 – Teacher Development

Paradoxes of Space – Parker Palmer

The Courage to Teach, p. 74-77, adapted

Choose one or more paradoxes of space that you would like to further explore. Choose one religious education space with which you are familiar and a lesson from a curriculum that is likely to be taught in that space. Use the handout to quickly categorize ways in which the space/curriculum addresses each side of the paradox.

Space/Curriculum: _____

The Space should be bounded

The Space should be open

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The Space should be hospitable

The Space should be “charged”

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The Space should invite voice
of individual

The Space should invite voice of group

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The Space should honor the “little” stories
of the students

The Space should honor the “big” stories
of the discipline and the tradition

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The Space should support solitude

The Space should surround it with the resources of the community

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The Space should welcome silence

The Space should welcome speech

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