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Introduction

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Perspectives on Legal Education

Introduction

This issue of *The Hastings Law Journal* contains two articles important to legal education.

Richard K. Neumann, Jr. has written a fascinating piece entitled *Preliminary Inquiry into the Art of Critique*. Any law school teacher, whether a classic question-and-answer teacher, a lecturer, or a clinical teacher, will be enriched after contemplating Neumann's piece. In the first portion of his article he deals with the art of "Socratic" critique, discussing the major differences between a class taught using a true Socratic critique and one taught using the Langdellian method. The distinctions drawn by Neumann between a true Socratic teacher and a Langdellian teacher should stimulate serious reflection about one's own teaching style. The next section of the article explores "creativity" and the effect of critique on creativity and is also worthy of contemplation. Finally, Neumann explores barriers of effective critique, with an emphasis on matters of structure and technique. Any law teacher would do well to read, reread, and then think again about the insights offered in Neumann's piece. His work is one of the best examples of how clinical law teaching has expanded and enriched our understanding about law teaching generally. In the process of trying to inspire students to be creative we too often stultify creativity. Neumann's article is highly recommended to all law teachers for serious reading.

The article by Paul T. Wangerin, *Law School Academic Support Programs*, argues persuasively that law schools have operated largely in a vacuum in constructing needed academic support programs for high risk law students. He asserts that most legal educators are unfamiliar with a large body of information and experience about academic support and special admission programs developed over many years by undergraduate educators. Wangerin concludes that it could be of substantial benefit to legal educators to become familiar with that body of information, not just to "avoid inventing the wheel again," but also to improve understanding about legal education's own support programs. The turn of the coin is also true: Wangerin points out that many undergraduate academic counselors are wholly unfamiliar with the considerable amount of

work being done with academic support programs for high risk students in the law school world. Techniques used in law teaching, particularly the "case method" traditionally employed at law schools, might be of great benefit if adapted for use by other academicians. His theme, calling for greater interdisciplinary respect and understanding, appears well taken.

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