

JSPH CLASS NIGHT **May 27, 2014**

JSPH Award for Teaching Excellence

As an educator and mother of three daughters, I've always been very fond of Maria Montessori, the early 20th century Italian researcher who revolutionized the teaching and learning of 3-5-year olds. Montessori believed that each child has its own way of learning. Some were visual learners like my first daughter; some were kinesthetic learners, like my second daughter; and others were aural learners, like my third daughter. Today we refer to this as having different "learning styles." (I thought of it as parenting chaos!) Montessori also realized that children who are not emotionally engaged in what they are doing cannot concentrate and soon lose interest in what they are doing.

As a pioneer ahead of her time in the understanding of teaching and learning – not just with children, but also with adults. Montessori realized that the best way to assure deep, long-lasting learning was to teach in a way that included recognition of all learning styles (so they could reinforce one another) and to provide an atmosphere that is emotionally safe and open. Learning, she said, should be fun. Children at play are really working at learning. Deprive the child of fun or play and learning ceases.

I was thinking of all of this when preparing these remarks about Amy Leader, this year's recipient of the JSPH Award for Teaching Excellence. **Amy Leader, DrPH, MPH**, currently Assistant Research Professor in Jefferson's Division of Population Science in the Department of Medical Oncology, has taught the *Introduction to Public Health* course, and the *Capstone Seminar*, but is most famous for her rendition of *Behavioral and Social Theories in Public Health*. In reading her student course evaluations,

I was struck by the fact that certain words and themes constantly appeared. There was the usually expected "extremely knowledgeable and passionate about the topic." But the one word that came up time and time again was *fun*. "This course was *fun* and productive," said one student. "The assignments were innovative, creative and *fun*," said another. And so it went: "The assignments were *fun* and interactive and made me think about and understand course material through application" "The poster presentation reinforced the information in a *fun* way. I would not have objected to more assignments." "I actually had *fun* and enjoyed going to class."

It appears that Dr. Leader has truly found the key to successful teaching: make it fun. Make your assignments diverse so that they appeal to all types of learners. Sprinkle your lectures with in-class activities and meaningful discussions. Students constantly referred to "great assignments", "very creative and thought provoking assignments." "Her assignments made me think." "I thought the assignments were relevant and very applicable and illustrated how what we learned could be seen and used." Perhaps one pharmacy student summarized it best: "I think this is an excellent course that helped us to understand behavioral policies as they relate to public health. I would recommend this course, and I have, to my fellow pharmacy students. The teacher was thoughtful, engaging and truly loved to teach the subject matter. Each class was a joy to be in."

Dr. Leader holds a BA in Biology from the University of Pennsylvania and an MPH and DrPH from George Washington University. She did an interesting Post-Doc at the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Center for Excellence in Cancer Communication



Left to right: Nancy Chernett, MA, MPH, Instructor; Andrew Messersmith, Recipient of Outstanding MPH Capstone 2013-2014; David B. Nash, MD, MBA.

Research at the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, not the usual place you would think of when you think of public health. She also attended the National Institute of Health Advanced Training Institute on Health Behavior. Her current research investigates how patients with early stage prostate cancer make informed decisions about their treatment options (funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Health) and best ways to increase informed decision making about participation in breast cancer clinical trials (funded by the American Cancer Society.) Previous funded research includes development of a decision aid for Hepatitis C Testing in High Risk Populations (PA Department of Health); promotion of HPV or human papillomavirus vaccination through African-American beauty parlors (Merck); evaluation of an informational aid to increase HPV vaccination among adolescent males; and factors influencing decision making about HPV vaccination among African American adolescents and their caregivers (American Cancer Society). She has published on all these topics, and more, in various venues, including the *Journal of Health Disparities, Research, and Practice*;

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Hispanic Health Care International; Health Promotion Practice; American Journal of Men's Health; the American Journal of Health Studies; and the Health Marketing Quarterly, among others.

When not coming up with new and innovative ways to have fun with her students, Dr. Leader serves on the Radnor Township Board of Health in Montgomery County, enjoys participating in Boy Scout service projects with her son Eli, vacations with her husband and son on the beaches of St. Thomas, works in her local community garden at Skunk Hollow, walks her dogs, Millie and Marley, and indulges in eating frozen yogurt.

Amy, we can't thank you enough for all that you do for our students and for the Jefferson School of Population Health. As your students said so perfectly, your classes are *fun*, and you are a *joy!*

JSPH Special Recognition Award

In this post-industrial age of information and e-security, it is not possible to provide productive and meaningful educational experiences for our students without the help of others – many others – who often work behind the scenes, unnoticed and unrecognized, to make this learning possible. While a strong and dedicated faculty remains crucial to our mission, we also rely on the expertise and support of others throughout the University to make what we do possible and successful. Accordingly, the Jefferson School of Population Health *Special Recognition Award* is intended to show our appreciation to someone outside of our School who,

quietly, earnestly, and pro-actively, has made considerable contributions – above and beyond the call of duty – to the learning of our students and to the success of our School and its programs.

Kyle Conner, MA, CIP, this year's recipient, is the Associate Director of Jefferson's Division of Human Subjects Protection, the administrative support center of the IRB (Institutional Review Board), a position he has held since January 2005. A voting member of three Jefferson IRBs, he is a Certified IRB Professional (CIP), one of the first in the country to receive this certification. As such, he is highly respected in the world of human subjects protection, both locally and nationally. He is very active as a teacher of human subjects research and its regulations and finds this "classroom" role one of the most satisfying aspects of his work. Indeed, it is in this capacity that we find him constantly helping our students throughout the year as they hone their skills as future public health researchers and practitioners. If truth be told, there is no Capstone Project alive that has not benefited from Kyle's kind instruction and helpful advice. Dealing with "human subjects" is not always easy!

Kyle holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from Temple University and came to Jefferson in 1996 after finishing his Master of Arts in Creative Writing, also from Temple. His master's concentration was in poetry. His published works include *Songs for South St. Bridge* (1996), *The Pulverized Thing of Doubt* (2002), *Toward Belief* (2005) and *breaths for flesh* (2008). He ascribes to the theory of "Oughtism" (because you Ought to know), which holds that art is never more or less than an extension of the way

one chooses to live one's life. (Speaking of Maria Montessori, she once said: "We especially need imagination in science. It is not all mathematics, nor all logic, but it is somewhat beauty and poetry.")

When not reading or writing poetry, Kyle is an enthusiastic bicycle rider and an active member and supporter of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC). He combines these activities by doing the annual PEC Environment Ride to support the Council's work in developing land and water trails in southeastern Pennsylvania. As he says on his blog, "I have been inspired by the gorgeous countryside of southeastern Pennsylvania and its diversity of geography and people. I always learn something new."

In keeping with the spirit of this occasion, I've composed a little poem, a limerick, in Kyle's honor:

*There once was a fellow named Kyle
Who had his very own unique style.
He tamed the IRB
With a dash of po-e-try
And caused all human subjects
to smile!
Ah! Poetry and the IRB:
Perfect together!*

Kyle – we thank you for all that you do for the students and success of the Jefferson School of Population Health.

Presentation of the Award for Service Excellence in Teaching and the Special Recognition Award was written by Caroline Golab, PhD, Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs, Jefferson School of Population Health.