Special Issue Honoring Professor Wilbert (Bill) J. McKeachie, a Forefront Pillar of Theory, Research, and Practices on Teaching and Self-Regulated Learning

“The most influential person in the teaching of psychology in the history of the discipline.”

“Beloved Teacher, Mentor, Researcher, Author, Innovator, Department Chairperson, Benefactor, Veteran, Pitcher, Card Player, and Friend”

“I try to enhance my students’ self-efficacy beliefs about their capability to do well on a particular test. I tell them to tell themselves, “I’m going to do OK! I can do it!”

“In the original version of the Motivation and Strategies for Learning questionnaire, we had metacognitive strategies. Some of those are what would be involved in self-regulation.”

“Make all students feel your commitment to their learning.”
In this issue of Times Magazine of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Studying and Self-Regulated Learning (SSRL) Special Interest Group (SIG), we celebrate the life of Dr. McKeachie, our mentor, friend, collaborator, card game partner, teacher, and advisor. This issue represents a small sampling of the life of a person who has impacted the world's educational systems. This issue reflects our admiration for what Dr. McKeachie contributes to teaching, learning, and self-regulation.

Times Magazine is not a historical document, and its contents need to be verified. Given space constraints, many influential people in the life of Dr. McKeachie are not included in this issue, and for this, we sincerely apologize. As a personal note, I have a professional and personal relationship with Dr. McKeachie and his family; thus, the selection of content for this issue reflects that relationship. His daughter, Ms. Linda Dicks has been approved it, but I take full responsibility for its content. His wife of 74 years, Ginny died in August 2017. His younger daughter, Karen died in August 2016. Dr. McKeachie currently resides in an assisted living community in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where his daughter Linda and other family members care for him. At his 97 years old, Dr. McKeachie continues his favorite hobbies, and plays the piano.

From Dr. McKeachie’s teaching, we learned that without self-regulation, we could not learn or teach. Without self-regulation, we cannot play music, card games or sports or value equity, diversity, and inclusion in our pluralistic society. His daughter, Ms. Linda Dicks has been approved it, but I take full responsibility for its content. His wife of 74 years, Ginny died in August 2017. His younger daughter, Karen died in August 2016. Dr. McKeachie currently resides in an assisted living community in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where his daughter Linda and other family members care for him. At his 97 years old, Dr. McKeachie continues his favorite hobbies, and plays the piano.

Dr. McKeachie continues to transform teaching at all levels. Teachers, scholars, administrators, and practitioners find that his teaching helps them to be problem-solvers, more creative, and student-centered. Moreover, Dr. McKeachie appreciates diversity, equity, and inclusion, the contributions of underrepresented community members, equality for women, and the rights of individuals with special educational needs. Those are core values that we can all adopt and appreciate. Dr. McKeachie played softball, played the piano and composed his high school song, was a super administrator, and a family man, but he was always teaching. He is self-efficacious and engages in self-regulation until these days. Synchronously, he posits that to be metacognitive and self-regulatory all the time might not be the best approach; balancing self-regulation with other personal, educational, and social core values is also important.

His philosophy of teaching is reflected in his book, McKeachie’s Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers. In the book, he shares how to make lectures effective. He observes that grading is not the most important function of teaching. He also shares tips for assessing, testing, and evaluating. He recommends testing from the students’ perspective. He gives us strategies for teaching gifted learners. Dr. McKeachie believes that self-efficacy plays a significant role in a student’s learning and our teaching practice. He also discusses the impact of test anxiety on learning and teaching. He believes that teacher education programs should teach how to learn to preserve teachers, and that learning to learn is especially important for teachers and teacher candidates. He considers self-regulation and academic delay of gratification to be essential factors for successful learning and teaching. Although his primary legacy is imprinted in his Teaching Tips book, a major secret of effective learning and teaching is revealed in one of Dr. McKeachie’s lectures in 1964 (see https://youtu.be/nyQ6QOrb_Ag), delivered at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where he read Langston Hughes’ poem “Theme for English B.” In the same setting, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. lectured a year later. Dr. McKeachie met Dr. King and Nelson Mandela. Part of Hughes’ poem reads, “So will my page be colored that I write? Being me, it will not be white. But it will be a part of you, instructor. You are white—yet a part of me, as I am a part of you. That’s American. Sometimes perhaps you don’t want to be a part of me. Nor do I often want to be a part of you. But we are, that’s true! As I learn from you, I guess you learn from me—although you’re older—and white—and somewhat more free.”

It is understood that for Dr. McKeachie effective learning and teaching occur when a teacher accepts that students are “a part of me” and a student embraces the belief concerning the teacher “I am a part of you.” As our SSRL SIG enters a new era of self-regulated learning science, we honor our pillars. Dr. McKeachie is undoubtedly a significant pillar of our professional community. Like Dr. McKeachie, we aim to use research to make a difference and to improve teaching and learning. We strive to promote research and practices that support a self-regulated culturally proactive pedagogy with an emphasis on the celebration of diversity, equity, inclusion, and global citizenship.

As we celebrate the life of Dr. McKeachie, our SSRL SIG, along with other AERA SIGs, such as the Motivation in Education SIG and Division C, the American Psychological Association’s Divisions 2 and 15, and the Psychology Department, University of Michigan, strives to emulate the passion for learning, teaching, serving, collaborating, and researching that Dr. McKeachie modeled for us.

In this new era of self-regulated learning science, we are called to shape the future of how learning and teaching happen. We aim to make self-regulation of learning an essential element in all educational settings. Dr. McKeachie invites us to be agents of transformation where teachers and students can say to each other you are part of me, and I am a part of you and where teachers and students endorse a self-regulated culturally proactive pedagogy. It is now our time to write our teaching tips with our lives, service, research, and teaching. That would be a real honor to Dr. McKeachie.
Biography of Professor Wilbert (Bill) J. McKeachie

Dr. Wilbert J. McKeachie is a Professor Emeritus of Psychology and former Director of the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan, where he received his Ph.D. in 1949. Dr. McKeachie is Past President of the American Psychological Association; the American Association of Higher Education; the American Psychological Foundation; the Division of Educational, Instructional, and School Psychology of the International Association of Applied Psychology; and the Center for Social Gerontology. He is also Past Chairman of the Committee on Teaching, Research, and Publication of the American Association of University Professors and of Division J (Psychology) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He has been a member of the National Institute of Mental Health Council, the Veterans’ Association Special Medical Advisory Group, and various other government advisory committees on mental health, behavioral and biological research, and graduate training. He has received eight honorary degrees and the American Psychological Foundation Gold Medal for Lifetime Contributions to Psychology. Most recently, the College Reading and Learning Association, during their 2004 annual conference, honored him with a Lifetime Honorary Membership for his contributions to the practice and research of college teaching, the training of college teachers, and the study of human learning at the college level. His classic book, McKeachie’s Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers, is now in its 14th edition.

“I Was Just Lucky”

Bill has been a teacher of psychology since 1946. Born in Clarkston, Michigan, in 1921, he was enamored early in life with both psychology and religion. With support from his family and from scholarships, Bill enrolled in Michigan State Normal College with the intention of becoming a high school teacher. He completed all three of the psychology courses offered in the program, along with a variety of courses in other disciplines. In his final year at Michigan State Normal, Bill met Virginia Mack. They married shortly before Bill began his World War II duty as a radio/communications officer on board a destroyer in the Pacific. At the conclusion of his military service, he resolved to become a psychology graduate student. He embarked on an academic career at the same institution where he received his graduate training: the University of Michigan-and completed his PhD in 1949.

His contributions to the development of the University of Michigan Psychology Department are inspiring. He coordinated the introductory course and began a research program to examine the factors that enhance college-level learning. He collaborated on curriculum development and reform within the Department at undergraduate and graduate levels. From 1961 to 1971, he served as chair of the Department. He carefully declined other offers that would take him away from the Psychology Department. He became the director of University of Michigan’s Center for Research on Learning and Teaching and has served as associate director of the National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning. In these roles, he has completed significant teaching-learning research while promoting collaboration across institutions. Just in the past few months [quite many years now] he has moved formally out of the classroom and into retirement, although his activity level, speaking commitments, and energy remain unchanged.

His enthusiasm for teaching psychology is evidenced by an impressive array of contributions. He radiates fondness for undergraduates, thousands of whom have directly benefited from his talents as a teacher. He is proud of the substantial number of teaching assistants whose ideas about the profession were shaped under his leadership. He wrote a popular introductory text that is still in use today. He has been an editorial advisor to many journals in psychology and education. He was the first teacher of psychology on video, participating in live broadcasts in 1951.

Bill has also been actively involved in the American Psychological Association (APA) throughout his career, including his service as the Bicentennial President in 1976-1977. He was president of Division 2 early in his teaching career. He has participated in the APA in many other roles, including service on the Board of Directors, the Education and Training Board, the Policy and Planning Board, the Board of Professional Affairs, and the Council of Representatives...

His outstanding contributions to psychology and to higher education have garnered many awards. Two such awards are especially cherished. The American Psychological Foundation honored Bill in 1985 with the Distinguished Teaching in Psychology Award. His citation summarized the high regard in which Bill is held: “As a teacher of psychology and as a teacher of teachers, he has remained first and foremost a superb psychologist.” Bill was one of the first two recipients in 1987 of the APA’s Education and Training Board Award for Distinguished Career Contributions to Education and Training in Psychology.

Beyond his loyalty to psychology, Bill has assisted in higher education in many other ways, including being the president of the American Association of Higher Education, being involved in various levels of the American Association of University Professors, and participating in other educational societies, including the Social Science Research Council, American Council on Education, American Education Research Association, Special Medical Advisory Group of the Veterans Administration, National Institute of Mental Health Council, and others. He has served as an educational consultant across the country and abroad.

But perhaps the activity for which Bill is perhaps best known and most highly regarded is his ongoing work on Teaching Tips, which was first published in 1951. The eighth edition [it is in its 14th edition now] of the text was published in 1986 and the ninth edition is in process. Countless college teachers have suggested that their first few months of college teaching wouldn’t have been the same without the help they had gotten from Bill through this publication.
After 63 years at the University of Michigan, I have quite a few memories.

I was a math major with History and English minors as an undergraduate at Michigan State Normal College, but my career as a teacher was cut short by World War II with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. I had always thought that I would ask for deferment as a conscientious objector if a war came (and I would have been for any war since then), but in World War II there really seemed to be a good side and a bad side. I talked to one of my friends who was in seminary in Evanston about what I should do, and he said, "Well, have you thought about being a minister? I go to the upper peninsula of Michigan every weekend to serve 9 little Methodist churches. I can't serve 9 churches adequately. Why don't you take a couple of my churches, and you can probably get deferred. If you decide to enlist, you can do that. Or if you decide to declare yourself a conscientious objector you can do that; or if you decide to become a minister, you can come to seminary." I said, "I'm not a Methodist. I'm a Presbyterian." He said, "The Bishop won't mind." And sure enough I was assigned to the Trout Lake and Hulburt churches. I was to get $300 a year for preaching and playing the reed organ at the two churches and $1100 for teaching math, history, English, etc. in the 10-grade school at Trout Lake. I went to a minister's conference and talked to the speaker who provided some wise advice: "If the Lord wants you to be a minister, you'll get deferred. If he doesn't, you'll get drafted."

So when I turned 21 (draft age at that time), my draft board classified me as 1A (draftable). I joined the Navy as a "90-day wonder" (In 90 days we were trained to be the equivalent of Naval Academy graduates) and spent the next three years as a destroyer radar officer in the Pacific. Ironically, by the end of the war, I was the most combat-experienced destroyer radar officer in the Navy. I think that my experience as a minister and as an officer whose captain would turn down my applications to volunteer for hazardous duty with the statement, "Anyone who likes enlisted men should be an enlisted man" (He would probably have court-martialed me had he known that I would get fresh bread from the bakers for my radarmen when we had a 4 to 8 AM watch).

I had married my wife Ginny the day before I enlisted, and I wrote to her that if I survived, I'd like to go to grad school in psychology after the war. I was released from the Navy in time to enroll for the Fall term of 1945 at the University of Michigan, and I have been here ever since.

My experience about preaching helps explain why I taught the course "Psychology and Religion" for 40 more years even though by that time I had become a humanist. After we arrived in Ann Arbor, we spent the next two years visiting over 42 churches... My wife and I have also sung in the First Baptist choir for 60 years. In 1947 the Baptists asked me to pitch for their softball team, which launched my 50 year career in the Ann Arbor softball leagues. For many years, I was also member or chair of the University of Michigan’s Committee on Studies in Religion...

My research on college teaching was the first to distinguish between male and female students. Previous research had simply reported on students without noting that there were differences between men and women. Later, I was the first to note that women tended to do better in college teaching than men. It was due to the fact that women tended to be more nurturing, and the most important factor in student motivation is the feeling that the teacher is concerned about me as an individual and wants me to learn. I found that male teachers could do relatively well even though they were more impersonal, but female teachers who were impersonal were rated badly and did not do as well as other teachers.

Yet I was surprised to learn that some departments did not have women faculty. One of my first courses in psychology was taught by Martha Colby and we always had some women faculty members. I recruited more when I was Chair, and it wasn't too many years later before Pat Gurin became department chair, and she was excellent...

When I became Chair, I gave a "State of the Department" address and said that my top goal was to get us together in one building. At that time the department offices were in West Quad, and our faculty were scattered over 23 different locations. Although we reached the top of the University's priority list for a new building, the year that it appeared that we would get the funds, the Medical School got them instead. When Pat Gurin became Chair, the East Engineering Building became vacant as the Engineering School moved to North Campus. We were to have 2/3 of the building and the Department of Math would have 1/3. However, before we got moved in, the University administration said that they couldn't afford the research labs for the 4th floor. Pat said that if we couldn't get the labs, she would resign. We got the labs and she remained as Chair...
Dick Mann had been one of my teaching assistants in introductory psychology and after getting his PhD, he joined the faculty at Harvard. When I became Department Chair I invited him to come back to run the Intro Psych course. He was so good that the students inaugurated a “Golden Apple” award to honor him, and that award is still given annually.

One of the things Dick proposed was that in place of the usual 4th hour of class time, students be allowed to spend 2 hours tutoring students in the schools. I had to go to the LSA Curriculum Committee (on which I had previously served) and persuade them that students would learn as much or more from this service experience as spending the hour in class since it would provide real life questions and observations that would enrich the classroom discussions. The Committee was skeptical but agreed to let us try it, and we collected student ratings and other data to demonstrate that it was really useful. John Hagen also had students in his Developmental Psych class go out to the Maxey Boys Training School for similar service learning. I think these were the first two uses of service learning in the U.S. Now service learning is a big thing both nationally and internationally, and we have the Ginsburg Center.

When I was a graduate student (1945-48), behaviorism was the reigning theory. Beginning in the late 40's and 50's, psychologists began studies of intentions and motivations and by the 1960's, cognitive psychology became dominant. In fact, one of my most embarrassing moments was when I gave a speech at West Virginia University about how Skinnerian behaviorism had been outmoded by cognitive psychology. After my lecture, a faculty member came up to me and said, "I'm Fred Skinner's daughter." Fred and I were friends even though we always disagreed about theory.

After completing my second term as department chair, I decided that we needed to get our new understanding of learning and motivation to our freshmen so that they could be better learners throughout the rest of college and for the rest of their lives. So I started a new freshman course called “Learning to Learn” and taught it until I retired. Dr. Yi-Guang Lin and I did some follow-up studies that showed that students who took the course got better grades in later years than students with comparable SAT scores who hadn't taken the course.

When I turned 70, I retired officially although my friend, Sidney Fine told me, “Bill, we don't have to retire when we turn 70. One of my former students is going to change the Michigan laws so that mandatory retirement will be ended.” This was former State Senator Joe Schwartz, a loyal Michigan alum and great friend of Sidney. Nonetheless, at age 70, I retired, but said that I would keep on teaching one course for free because I like teaching. The University is always short of money and I figured I could save them some. I kept on teaching until I had to have my hips and right shoulder replaced 3 years ago (the penalty for pitching fast-pitch softball for 50 years).

The department has generously given me an office so I come in every day to do my e-mail and to play MURDER at noon. MURDER is a card game invented by some of our graduate students who played bridge. Some days they would have only 3 players; other days 5; and you need exactly 4 for bridge. So they invented a game that can be played by any number from 3 to 7. It was just called “the game” until Warren Norman (my successor as department chair) screamed so loud when someone trumped his ace that a grad student came running down the hall thinking someone had been mortally wounded.

When I retired as department chair, I said that I would continue to participate in departmental activities except that I would no longer be involved in any noon departmental or university committee meetings (which had taken a lot of my noon hours). I would now play MURDER at noon, and I have been helping maintain the tradition of the noon MURDER game ever since.

I suspect that few faculty members have served on as many university committees as I, and at the same time I was serving on committees of the American Psychological Association. I was on one or more committees of APA from 1950 to 2005 and served as President one year. At age 85, I refused re-nomination feeling that it was time for a younger generation to take over.
Eric Landrum: Who have been your role models?

McKeachie: Certainly, Don Marquis, the chair of the department, was my role model. He would have us all come out to his house to discuss new books or discuss current issues in psychology, creating a kind of continuing education program for our younger faculty members. He was a brilliant person and very supportive. My other model was Harold Guetzkow. He ran the introductory psychology course. He was just a very gentle and a very nice person. He encouraged and stimulated us to ask questions and think about our teaching. My psychology teacher at Michigan State Normal College, Everett Marshall, was also important to me.

My father was also a role model. He was a teacher. I suppose that’s one of the reasons why I thought teaching was a good career. My father was very task-oriented, demanding, and hard working. He went to school early in the morning, started the big furnace in the one-room country school, and he stayed after school was over in the afternoon and wrote questions on the board for us to use when we were studying. He wasn’t mean at all. He was understanding, but we knew we were expected to study and we might be embarrassed, at least in front of the other students, if we didn’t know the answers to the questions.

Eric Landrum: In a previous interview (Halonen, 1992), you mentioned that your father was your teacher in a one room schoolhouse for your first 9 years of education. What kind of impact did that experience have on the type of teacher you have become?

McKeachie: My father was a model in a number of ways—sense of responsibility, good organization, commitment to student learning. And it may have influenced my interest in teaching as well as my enthusiastic receptivity to research showing that school size and class size make a difference. Generally smaller is better than large for learning.
Marie White: Life experiences born from World War II

McKeachie: “I got back from the war in time to enroll in grad school for the fall semester of 1945. I had been a math major as an undergrad, but my experience as a minister convinced me that I didn’t need more theology; I needed to understand people better; so I wrote to Ginny that if I survived I’d like to go to graduate school in psychology after the war. And I’ve been here ever since.”

He went on to share his experiences regarding World War II and how it shaped his career, first as a minister, and then as a Navy war officer.

“During my senior year World War II started... So when I turned 21, which is the age for the draft, I was drafted. Ironically, by the end of the war, I was the most combat experienced destroyer radar officer in the whole Navy. Every ship in my squadron was hit by a kamikaze plane at Okinawa. The other eight were all sunk, but I think we killed the pilot attacking us on his way in so that the bomb exploded alongside and we were damaged but able to return to the United States where I was to get a new ship to take out to invade Japan.

I had married my wife Ginny the day before I enlisted in the Navy. We had a week together before I went to get my new ship for the invasion. On the train going to Florida the newsboys in Rome, Georgia were out yelling, ‘The war is over.’ That was probably the happiest day of my life because those who designed our plans for the invasion of Japan told us of all the kamikaze planes waiting for us. I got back from the war in time to enroll in grad school for the fall semester of 1945.

We visited 42 different churches the first year after I got back from the war, and then the Baptists invited me to pitch for their softball team in the Church League. People ask me ‘What was the best year of your life?’ and I reply, ‘1975, I pitched 3 no-hitters that year.’ I was also President of APA, and that was also important.

Ironically, when I was department head here at the University of Michigan, one of my faculty members was Sachio Ashida, a Kamikaze pilot. I asked, ‘Sach, how come you didn’t commit suicide He said, ‘It was a matter of honor for the older pilots to go first, and I was one of the younger ones.’ I said, ‘If it hadn’t been for the atomic bomb, you would probably have killed yourself killing me.”

Questions regarding his daily routine brought forth some of the most motivating statements for those in the field who have thought that academia demands scholarly pursuits without ceasing. According to McKeachie, his interests and activities have always went beyond his research to include a life filled with the pursuit of challenges, enjoyment, and interacting with friends, family and those who share his love of games and music.
Professor Wilbert (Bill) J. McKeachie
“I Love Ginny!”

McKeachie: “During my senior year in college, I had to go to the last dance of the year. Ginny worked in the library and I had admired her, but I didn’t really know her very well. One day, she was waiting for the bus when I came out and I said, “Will you go to the Spring Breeze dance with me?” She said, “Yes.” A month later, I asked her if she would consider marrying a minister. She didn’t say, “No.” She was a bit shocked, as were her parents when I asked them. We got engaged, and I went up to the Upper Peninsula to be a minister. We have been together ever since...I was just lucky. I was lucky to survive the war and lucky to marry Ginny.

Jane Halonen: Let me return to the more personal side of Bill McKeachie. Along with a very distinctive career, you have managed to have a very successful marriage. I know Ginny has attended almost as many APA conventions as you have. How critical has your relationship with her been to your satisfaction with your career?
McKeachie: Tremendously. I have seen a number of very good psychologists really get hung up because of problems in their marriages. I just have been very lucky, lucky to find her, lucky to get her. She’s been very supportive.

I have been a strong proponent of the Women’s Movement. I never thought my younger daughter would get married. It was nice that you don’t have to get married these days to be a respectable woman. My older daughter was an auto mechanic. My younger daughter is an engineer. Great career choices have opened up for women.

I guess my only fear was that women who chose to be homemakers would be denigrated. I suppose that occurs, but I don’t think that Ginny has felt particularly discriminated against.

It has made a big difference in my life. She takes care of balancing the checkbook. I do the income taxes. She does a lot of the tasks in a dual career home that have to be shared. I used to do more cooking and baking and such, but now I bake fruitcakes at Christmas. It is about the only baking I do. She does most of the housework and household tasks. I’m interested in this. In an article that I was reading yesterday, even in dual-career families, the women still do 30 hours of housework a week and the men only do about 18. There is still quite an imbalance in most homes. I have saved a lot of time because she has taken care of so much.
**Professor Wilbert (Bill) J. McKeachie**

“I Love My Daughters!”

Jane Halonen: *Are you at all disappointed because neither of your daughters followed in your career path?*

McKeachie: No... it’s nice, I think. I know a number of families where children have followed. It is nice to see families like the Thorndikes, to see the children following in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents. The Wertheimers-Lisa and Mike.

On the other hand, it’s a burden sometimes... So it is tough, being the son or daughter of a famous psychologist.

Jane Halonen: *Were you satisfied with the amount of involvement that you had with your girls?*

McKeachie: I think so. My younger one was always into athletics, so I kind of enjoyed that. I think I was busy. I probably could have spent more time with them. That is one of the problems when there is only one career. It was a lot easier on me when they had problems. I would go to work and I’d be working, and I wouldn’t think about it until I got home at night. Ginny would be at home, hanging around the house, and she’d worry all day long. It is a lot harder on the mother than it is on the father. I don’t know how they do it in dual-career families, but I didn’t do my fair share of worrying. Although we did worry about the girls sometimes.
Professor Wilbert (Bill) J. McKeachie
“I Love My Family!”

Dr. McKeachie and his two brothers, Duane and Mal, 2016

Dr. McKeachie and his niece, Lisa, 2018

Dr. McKeachie and his granddaughter, Erica, 1994

Dr. McKeachie and his sister-in-law, Millie, 2018

Dr. McKeachie and his two brothers, Duane and Mal, and his brother-in-law, Bill, 2016

Dr. McKeachie during a family picnic

Dr. McKeachie and Ginny with their two daughters, Linda and Karen and sons-in-law, Lew and Larry, 2016

Ginny and her sister, Millie, 2017

Dr. McKeachie and Ginny hiking in Germany, 1993

Dr. McKeachie and Ginny fishing, Ireland, 1993
Professor Wilbert (Bill) J. McKeachie
Teaching Tips: Lecturing & Grading

Russ Hodges: Your seminal book, Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers, was first published in 1951 and is now in its 11th edition. What prompted you to write this book, and how has the book evolved over the years, making it more applicable to the new challenges facing educators?

McKeachie: I don’t know; I hope it’s more applicable! In those days we didn’t have copy machines or computers; we had a mimeograph which duplicated materials. After my first year or two of running the introductory psychology courses, I discovered that my teaching assistants (TAs) were having some of the same problems as earlier TAs had had. I thought I would just mimeograph some notes so they would know how to handle these problems before they encountered them. I mimeographed these “tips” for them. Then they’d go out and teach in other universities and they’d write back for copies of the “teaching tips.” So I published the book myself with a local printing firm in Ann Arbor, and it was distributed through a local bookstore. I charged one dollar a copy and the bookstore got 75 cents. Whenever I add something, I have to take out something. I remember when I took out the chapter about the college classroom based on Dick Mann’s research, I went to another university and they said, “You got rid of the best chapter in the book!”

Christie Hand: How have you gone about deciding when to publish a new edition?

McKeachie: Actually, with the first few editions, it was just when they ran out of copies! When Houghton-Mifflin took over, they initiated regular revisions. Even before the new edition comes out, I have manila folders for each chapter with additions and changes. One of the problems is I try to keep the book small enough to fit in a purse or jacket pocket. Whenever I add something, I have to take out something. I remember when I took out the chapter about the college classroom based on Dick Mann’s research, I went to another university and they said, “You got rid of the best chapter in the book!”

Héfer Bembenutty: What are your tips to make lectures more effective?

McKeachie: One tip is to be sure to get the students to do more talking. Splitting them up into small groups is helpful. I used to use pairings. I would have students write a minute paper about something such as, “What was the most important thing in yesterday’s lecture? Think of one question you have about the topic for the day, and then talk to a student who sits beside you. There are two students who sit on either side of you, turn and ask what they think about the topic.” Then, I’d get reports from somebody about what they concluded or what issues came up in their group. It can be pretty deadly to listen to somebody talk for an hour straight, so the more you get students doing things themselves, the better. For example, having them write for a minute, that’s one way of getting their attention back on the topic. Doing some talking to other students by using the Phillips 66 strategy, pairings, and demonstrations helps.

It is important that teachers know what lectures are good for. Lectures are good for presenting up-to-date information, summarizing material scattered over a variety of sources, adapting material to the background and interests of the students, helping students read more effectively, and focusing on key concepts or ideas. Likewise, it is important that teachers understand the importance of planning lectures, preparing the lecture notes, and organizing the lectures. Getting the students actively thinking in a lecture situation is also important. For example, I often interrupted a lecture to have a minute paper time. During a minute paper, the students write answers to specific questions or summarize what they have learned during a particular lecture. Becoming conscious of the students understanding, reactions, and behavior during lectures is paramount for educators.

Héfer Bembenutty: In your book, you observed that grading is not the most important function of teaching. What are your tips for assessing, testing, and evaluating?

McKeachie: The thing is not to grade on a curve. I think that’s very detrimental to learning. One time, our dean decided that there should be a certain proportion of As, Bs, Cs, and Ds. I went to him and said, “I can’t train my teaching assistants if you’re going to have a system like that.” I said, “It means that if all students in class do a good job, the graduate students will still have to give some students in the class Ds and Es, and that’s not good motivation for teaching.” I persuaded him that we shouldn’t have to give any grades according to a certain formula. We shouldn’t grade on a curve; we should grade in terms of whether or not our goals are being achieved. I always told students, “Look, you’ve got 100 points, and if you all get 95 or above, you’ll all get As. We’re not grading on a curve in this course.” Some medical students used to cut pages out of books in the library so other students couldn’t get to them ahead of them. I said, “Grading is not competitive in my course. You can help one another and the more you help one another, the more it’ll be good for the person that helped as well as you for you. One of the best ways to remember something is to explain it to someone else. Work together, study together, help one another, and you can all get good grades.”

In the book, I observed that learning is more important than grading. Tests and other assessments should be learning experiences as well as evaluation devices. Providing feedback is more important than assigning a grade, nongraded evaluation can be used to increase motivation even if that evaluation is not a criterion for grades, and teachers should avoid evaluation devices that increase anxiety and competition. In the book, I discuss alternative testing models. For instance, in my own teaching, I often use group testing, online testing, performance assessment, graphic representations of concepts, journals, research papers, portfolios, and peer assessment. In sum, the primary purpose of assessment is to provide feedback to students and teachers so that learning can be facilitated.
Héfer Bembenutty: In your book, you recommend testing from the students’ perspective. Could you please explain what you mean by testing from the students’ perspective?

McKeachie: What I mean by testing from the students’ perspective is that tests are a way of learning. I’d usually give a quiz during the first week, maybe another one after the third week, and an hour test after the first month. I’d say, “Now, these aren’t going to count for very much but they’re going to give you an idea of whether or not you’re learning what I’m trying to get across. You’re not here just to get a grade. You’re here to learn. I’m trying to set it up so you can tell whether you’re learning. If you’re learning well, your grade will come up. I am concerned about your continuing to learn after you leave the course. What you learn in 15 weeks is not nearly as important as whether you keep on learning afterwards, the rest of your life. I don’t want you thinking, “Well, I’m just learning so I can pass the final examination, then I can stop.” If you’re learning just to pass tests, you’re going to be handicapped the rest of your life because you’re not going to have people giving you tests just to see how well you’ve done. It’s important to keep on learning because you enjoy learning.”

One of the problems with giving tests is that students begin learning just to pass tests and don’t develop motivation to continue on after that.

In the book, I shared my own practice to help my students coping with test anxiety. For example, I lowered the stakes of any given test by having multiple assessments with low point values for each. I also offer second chances to students who have difficulties during a test. I invite the students to explain their answers on the test itself. I gave nongraded practice tests to familiarize the students with my testing practice and style. I also offer suggestions about how to study for my tests. Some of my suggestions include strategies such as taking deep breaths, putting down the pencil, and using other relaxation strategies. I try to enhance my students’ self-efficacy beliefs about their capability to do well on a particular test. I tell them to tell themselves, “I’m going to do OK! I can do it!”

Héfer Bembenutty: In your book, you talk about what educators can do about cheating. Why do students cheat? How can educators prevent cheating?

McKeachie: Well, I think the main point in reducing cheating is to take the pressure off any one test. Students aren’t going to cheat if they know the material, so if you’ve got them learning all along, they’re not going to be as tempted to cheat as if they haven’t studied until it’s time to take the final examination. So probably the best thing to prevent cheating is to be sure that they’re learning and studying during the semester and not just before the final exam. One of the other things I do is that I usually give a practice exam a week before the final exam saying, “This one’s not going to count, but it’ll give you some idea as to how well-prepared you are for the final.

I had a pool of probably a thousand multiple-choice questions, but I always included essay questions because students study better if they know they’ll have an essay question. Even though I tell them, “My multiple choice questions are not going to require straight memorizing of the text. They’re going to make you think,” they still think you just memorize to study for multiple-choice, true-false exams. If they’re going to have an essay exam, they study better and try to think about the material. Even in a class of 500, I say, “There will be an essay question on the final. Obviously, I’m not going to have time to read all 500, but I promise I will read the essay if the points on the essay will make a difference in your final grade.” I would read, maybe 40 or so out of the 500, where it could make a difference in raising or lowering the grade.

In addition to reducing the pressure off the students to prevent cheating, I address the issue of cheating in my syllabus and I discuss it with the students. Other ways to prevent cheating include making reasonable demands and writing reasonable and interesting tests to avoid student frustration and desperation. Instructors can prevent cheating by creating an environment that supports honesty and by talking to those students who are not doing well in the course to find out their problems. Prevention is preferable to punishment. Cheating will be reduced when the students feel that the teacher and their peers know and trust them.

Héfer Bembenutty: What teaching strategies would you recommend for teachers teaching gifted learners?

McKeachie: I don’t think it’s that much different from nongifted learners. Obviously, you can probably expect more and probably do more problem solving. I like to have students do research as part of a course. Working with a couple of other students on a team to devise a research project and carry it out during the term is one way in which they’re learning to think and learning psychology as well. Teaching gifted students learning is a challenge. However, every class has challenges, whether it’s a slow learning class, a traditional class, or a gifted class. I taught honors introductory psychology the last 10 years I taught. Gifted students are fun to teach because they come up with questions and ideas you haven’t thought of, so you can learn a lot from them. You learn in every class if you’re a good teacher, but I think gifted students probably do raise more questions, and it was fun to teach them.
Professor Wilbert (Bill) J. McKeachie
Teaching Tips: Self-Regulation, Self-Efficacy, Test Anxiety, and Delay of Gratification

Héfer Bembenutty: How do you perceive the role that self-efficacy plays in a student’s learning to learn and in teaching practice?

McKeachie: Students will not work very hard if they believe there is no use in doing so. It is important to build their confidence that it is possible for them to achieve the goals of the course. Thus, I think that giving them basic initial skills helps them understand that they may control their learning outcomes. Locus of control research has shown that it makes a difference in personal motivation if a learner has control rather than believing that the outcome is due to chance or is dependent on the teacher or an external force beyond oneself (Rotter, 1966). Albert Bandura (e.g., 1997) gathered much evidence supporting the idea that self-efficacy affects all students. We found that students’ self-efficacy correlates very highly with grades (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005; McKeachie, Pintrich, & Lin, 1985; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1993). Teachers’ self-efficacy is important, too. If teachers feel they do not really know how to handle classroom situations or do not feel very confident in their role as teacher, they will probably not do well, and that lack of confidence will be conveyed to the students. Logically, then, if the students perceive the teacher as lacking confidence, the teacher will find it more difficult to get students to learn as they should (Bembenutty, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). In learning to learn, I also emphasize teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs among graduate teaching assistants. I try to build their beliefs that teaching consists of learnable skills, so even if they might not be the best teachers right now, as we work together over time, they can learn to handle problems that will no doubt crop up in their classrooms. In this way, TAs become more effective teachers. I believe that teachers, including TAs, can be trained to enhance their self-efficacy. Training them to develop specific skills helps them feel more efficacious. Each teacher needs at least to have a sense that they have the potential to improve who they are as a teacher (Bembenutty, 2007).

Héfer Bembenutty: You also discuss the role of test anxiety in your learning to learn course. Why do you emphasize test anxiety so much?

McKeachie: I think test anxiety is the opposite of self-efficacy. If one feels efficacious, one is usually not very anxious. We did substantial research showing that anxious students did not do as well as they thought they would (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005; McKeachie, Lin, & Middleton, 2004; McKeachie et al., 1985; Pintrich et al., 1993). Some of those students probably deserved to be anxious—that is, they were not well prepared. Some of them actually studied hard, but only memorized their work instead of learning it effectively and so were understandably anxious. However, other students who were very good students became extremely anxious at exam time, and did not do as well as they were capable of doing. On a test that did not count for a grade, such as a review test, the students might do well. However, when the real test arrived, these high anxiety students did not do as well as they had done when the test was not graded. Marian Winterbottom (1958), one of my TAs, conducted studies of how test anxiety develops—what we called in terms of the McClelland–Atkinson theory, a fear of failure. No matter how well their kid does in school, some parents will say, “Well, you should have done better than that.” Therefore, some students always have a sense that their parents are going to be disappointed if they do not do well. Gradually, an underlying test anxiety builds up when taking a test, and continues straight through to college.

Héfer Bembenutty: Some current teaching programs use learning to learn with preservice teachers. Why is learning to learn especially important for this group?

McKeachie: I think it is important for any group of teachers. It is not just learning to learn; it is understanding the theory behind how students learn so that the teachers learn to teach more effectively. Teachers as well as preservice teachers need to learn self-regulation for the sake of their own learning and practice (Bembenutty & Chen, 2005; Dembo, 2001; Dembo & Jakubowski, 1999). I think every one needs to be a self-regulated learner. Essentially, everyone has some ability to set goals and figure out ways to achieve those goals and carry out appropriate actions, which is a form of self-regulation. Teachers and preservice teachers will always encounter problems in their classrooms and will need to think about these problems and establish strategies for coping with them. Teachers need to teach their students how to become self-regulated learners. This process is what we talked about in learning to learn. Our goal is to develop learners who will continue to learn once they leave the classroom. Thus, students need to learn to set realistic goals, understand how to achieve them, and develop a sense of self-regulation for their learning. In this way, they will most likely continue learning for the rest of their lives. In relation to self-regulation, I added the component of delay of gratification to our Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ; Pintrich et al., 1993) to assess students’ preferences for immediately available rewards with low value, as opposed to postponing immediate gratification for the sake of waiting for temporally distant rewards (Bembenutty & Karabenick, 2004). Walter Mischel conducted some of the first research with children showing that the ability to delay gratification was related to learning and achievement (e.g., Mischel, 1996). Students with a high tendency for immediate gratification did not do as well as those who set long-term goals. Of course, Héfer, your own work on delay of gratification has shown that when students want immediate gratification (like going out with friends instead of studying for assignments), they do not do as well (Bembenutty, 2005, 2008; Bembenutty & Karabenick, 2004). You have found significant and positive relations between delay of gratification and self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and use of cognitive and resource management strategies among college students, teachers, and teacher candidates.
Russ Hodges: From the 1960s through the 80s, the trend in college admission was toward promoting access to underrepresented populations of students. In fact, by 1970 one-half million students (one-seventh of those enrolled in U.S. colleges) came from low socioeconomic backgrounds. How did colleges and, in particular, college instructors adapt to the challenges of teaching these new populations of students?

McKeachie: Some didn’t! A lot of people just kept giving the same old lectures. I think at Michigan, we did better. Actually, we had recruited black graduate students. When I was chair of graduate studies for our department, one of my colleagues, who later became the chair, was very invested in doing something for African-American students. The university had set up a sister relationship with Tuskegee, a traditionally black institution, and we had faculty exchanges with them. So we were recruiting black graduate students even then. One of my first teachers at Michigan was also black. One of our early Black Ph.D. students, Nick Collins, went to Cornell to direct their study skills center. He was later brought back to Michigan and established what is called the Comprehensive Studies Program, which is still going on and is very successful. One of the key parts is a summer bridge program. Minority and low-income students or students from poor educational backgrounds (not necessarily minority, but most were) are invited to come the summer before they enroll as freshmen and are given courses in math, English, and reading. The center also provides tutorial services during the year. This has helped a lot in our retention of minority students. Nick and I taught a course in Learning Strategies which he still teaches for his students.

McKeachie to Héfer Bembenutty: Having different points of view enriches education. In Michigan, where affirmative action was legally challenged, I think it’s kind of a shame that they tried to pass a law against it. I served on the admissions committee and it’s sad that you shouldn’t take account of racial differences when you take into account differences like whether the parents have given money to the university or whether the parents are alumni or other variables that are not directly related to learning. Differences in cultures really do enhance learning so I think it’s a shame to ban affirmative action. We shouldn’t favor any one group, but we do favor different groups in admissions anyway.

With regard to equity for gender, my take is that women are taking over. I think about two thirds of the graduate students in psychology are women, and in higher education in general there is a big influx of women faculty members in all fields. We need to give women positive experiences in grade school and high school in science. With regard to diversity in relation to students with disabilities, I think we’ve always been aware of that. I remember one of my early students was completely deaf. I had to accommodate that by putting things in writing for him and making sure that he got notes from other students. Obviously, those who have cognitive disabilities would probably not be able to do well in most colleges, but that doesn’t mean they can’t learn, right? With the appropriate teaching, we can help them develop.

In the book, I recommend that it is important to be sensitive to cultural differences among students. For instance, it is important to be attentive to nonverbal communication such as eye contact. Students can give you feedback about their understanding by the way in which they look at you. For some African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, looking away from you could be an indication of careful attention rather than inattention. Students’ nonparticipation in class could be a factor of a culturally ingrained value of humility or a history of distrust. Differences in cultures related to being on time. For instance, some Native Americans believe that taking the time to do certain tasks well is better than doing them poorly. Other cultural differences affect having grades based on class participation because some groups may think that they should not participate. Being graded on the curve is problematic for groups that value cooperation rather than competition. I recommend that teachers match their instruction preferences to their students’ learning preferences, be concrete, enhance performance measurement, use appropriate nonverbal behavior, be accessible by maintaining consistent office hours, take time to chat with the students, and engage in positive appraisal and support.
Marie White: Daily routine includes fun and games
McKeachie: “My daily routine now is to come to my office in mid-morning to do my e-mail and then to play MURDER at noon. One of my friends retired from Harvard and can only go in to attend lectures because he doesn’t have an office, but The University of Michigan gave me an office. MURDER is a card game our students invented 60 years ago. They were bridge players, but sometimes they had only three players, and sometimes, five or more; so they invented a game that can be played by any number from 3 to 7. Originally, the game was just called the game, but one time my successor as department head, Warren Norman, screamed so loud when someone trumped his ace, that a graduate student came running down the hall thinking someone had been mortally wounded. So since then the game has been called MURDER. It’s a great game motivationally because not all the cards are dealt out. We bid to determine what will be trump; so if we win we can attribute our win to our good strategy in bidding. But, if we lose we can attribute it to the luck of the cards.

Marie White: As the following excerpt reveals, Dr. McKeachie continues to be a devoted consumer of professional and scientific research, a truly long-life learner. His love for softball resulted in surgeries, which forced him to give up teaching at 85. However, when he shares his joy of his years pitching softball, his accomplishments are equal to his presidency of the APA.

Anyone interested to obtain the instructions about how to play the card game could contact Kai Cortina (schnabel@umich.edu)
McKeachie: A group of leading psychologists met with 300 music educators in Ann Arbor, July 30-August 2, 1979, to discuss applications of psychology to the learning of music. I chaired the symposium and stressed in my summary statement that while music educators were looking to psychologists for clues as to methods of motivating music education, it was apparent that the educators already possessed the secret of motivating psychologists, since all the participating psychologists had been stimulated to carry out new and important research or theoretical work during the period between the fall symposium and the summer symposium. I also noted that two of the prevailing themes in the psychologists' papers were the importance of major individual differences in perception of music and the notion that the teaching of music occurs at several levels simultaneously, including the level of reading and producing notes and rhythms, the level of developing schemata such as scales or the nature of songs, and the level of music in relation to the self as a source of pleasure and of sense of competence. One activity facilitated by the symposium was the founding of a new journal, Psychomusicology, which will be edited by David Williams of Illinois State University, with an editorial board of prominent music researchers from the fields of music and psychology.

Marie White: Daily routine: Music
McKeachie: When I was in college I played piano in bars on weekends, and I still enjoy playing piano. My wife and I sing in the First Baptist choir. Now, our routine is to go to listen to the Easy Street Jazz Band on Tuesday evenings, to go to choir practice Thursday evenings and to choir and church on Sundays. After church, we have a coffee hour and I go to the piano and play old gospel hymns, which we don't sing in the church service, but a lot of the older people remember and enjoy them. I could probably play them for hours without music. Our daughters and their husbands live nearby; so we have dinner with them frequently.

Jane Halonen: I think another distinguishing feature in your identity is your aesthetic/musical side. Could you talk a little about that?
McKeachie: It was probably more my mother’s influence, although my dad liked to sing. My mother persuaded her father to buy her a piano. She wanted to play the piano. The first money that she earned in teaching school, she invested in getting piano lessons. And she started me playing early. She has a clipping, “Five Year Old Plays Recital.” I’m sure it was a simple piece. But she would start us on piano every fall, and then about the middle of winter she would get discouraged because I would quit. But I learned enough so that by the time I was 12 I really enjoyed it.

My best friend in high school played clarinet, so I’d play piano and he’d play clarinet. We wrote the school fight song. After we graduated from high school, we got very nostalgic about the high school. So one weekend we got together and said the school ought to have its own song. We were using “Anchors Aweigh.” So we composed and wrote one and they still play it.
McKeachie: I got back from the war in time to enroll in grad school for the fall semester of 1945. We visited 42 different churches the first year after I got back from the war, and then the Baptists invited me to pitch for their softball team in the Church League. People ask me ‘What was the best year of your life?’ and I reply, “1975, I pitched 3 no-hitters that year.” I was also President of APA, and that was also important.
Some Friends

Dr. McKeachie and Stuart S. Karabenick, 2016

Dr. McKeachie with Willy Lens and Monique Boekaerts during a conference

Dr. McKeachie and Héfer Bembenutty, 2017

Marilla D. Svinicki

Dr. McKeachie and Stacey Simpson Duke, 2017

Paul R. Pintrich

Claire E. Weinstein

Dr. McKeachie and Sophia and Berta Lin, 2016

Barry J. Zimmerman

Dr. McKeachie and Jaime Howe, 2017

Teresa Duncan

Jaquelynne S. Eccles

Barbara Hofer

Moshe Naveh-Benjamin
McKeachie: “When I became of draft age (21), I went into the Navy. I spent most of the next 3 years on a destroyer in the Pacific. I wrote back to my wife, “If I survive, I’d like to go into psychology after the war.” I think the experiences of the ministry and then being on a ship with 300 diverse people influenced me to want to go into psychology. We only had two psychology courses as undergraduates, introduction to psychology and educational psychology. Michigan State Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University) was a teachers college at that time, but I liked those two courses. Since I had a lot of combat, I was released in time for fall term after World War II. I started at the University of Michigan in 1945, and I have been here ever since.”

Jane Halonen: What was it you enjoyed about serving in the role as chair of a department?

McKeachie: I have always liked to solve problems. The department grew from 70 faculty members to 200 while I was chair. So I had a new problem every half hour. I'm Calvinist by upbringing, I don't know how much an influence that might be here, but you have to feel that you have accomplished something in a day. And with that many problems coming—perhaps it's the gambler's fallacy— you got a couple of them worked out. I may have missed on 10 others, but at least you get the feeling that there were 2 or 3 things that worked. Sometimes in research it is not so easy to feel that sense of accomplishment. So I like the problem-solving opportunities and the variety of problems to solve that the role brings. The most brilliant faculty member can be so ignorant and naive when it comes to getting things done at the university. There are usually ways of getting things accomplished easily, if you know how the university works. So I got a lot of satisfaction out of that aspect.

The other thing I like is that it really gave me a sense of knowing the field of psychology. I guess I have translated a lot of my evangelistic fervor into fervor for psychology. It is so diverse. It covers so many different areas that, as chair, I really had a sense of knowing what was going on, what the new things were. I hired 130 or more than that—new faculty when I was chairman. And I was trying to read what my own faculty members were producing and keeping up with their work. As I said once at a faculty meeting, “Each of you knows a lot about some area of psychology that I don’t know nearly as deeply. But I’d be willing to bet that I know more about all of psychology than anyone else in the department.” I just have had to. It was the role, and I really enjoyed it.
Dr. McKeachie had been the president of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (APA Division 2) in 1955-1956. The Society for the Teaching of Psychology created the Wilbert J. McKeachie Teaching Excellence Award in 1980. Through 2004, it was awarded to an early career teacher or a graduate student. The award has recognized graduate students since 2005, as a separate award honors early career teaching.

The Wilbert J. McKeachie Teaching Excellence Award recognizes teaching excellence for graduate students who are currently teaching. The Wilbert J. McKeachie Teaching Excellence Award is based on the following four criteria: (1) demonstrated influence in interesting students in the field of psychology, (2) development of effective teaching methods and/or teaching materials, (3) outstanding performance as a classroom teacher, and (4) concerns with professional identity as a teacher of psychology. Each criterion is accompanied below with suggestions for supporting evidence. Applicants will not be expected to have achieved recognition in all four criteria.

The Ginny and Bill McKeachie Award honors two special benefactors of the Improving University Teaching (IUT) Conference. Wilbert J. McKeachie taught psychology at the University of Michigan for more than 40 years, during which time he served as president of the American Psychological Association, the American Psychological Foundation, and the American Association of Higher Education. He also helped guide IUT. His wife, Ginny, first suggested that the conference become international and attended the conference faithfully with Bill. Their bequest to IUT makes the award possible. In keeping with the McKeachie’s interests, the award will recognize outstanding contributions toward improving university teaching and learning at our annual conference. Anyone presenting at the conference may apply, though preference will be given to those currently in their first three years of teaching (including graduate students).

The Wilbert J. McKeachie International Poster Prize aims to promote the importance and value of posters as opportunities to explore effective and innovative teaching and learning practices, and disseminate research results. Presenters are encouraged to reconceptualize the typical poster session in creative ways to incorporate active learning approaches and interactive engagement with both poster and presenter.
Professor Wilbert (Bill) J. McKeachie
Some of McKeachie’s Books &
Books Honoring Him

1966
McKeachie, W. J.

1970
Psychology
McKeachie, W. J. & Doyle, C. L.

1972
Psychology: The Short Course
(Addison-Wesley series in psychology)
McKeachie, W. J.

1975
Readings in psychology
McKeachie, Wilbert James

1976
Psychology Third Edition
McKeachie, Wilbert James

1980
New Directions for Teaching and Learning
Learning, Cognition, and College Teaching

1986
Teaching and Learning in the College Classroom: A Review of the Research Literature
McKeachie, Wilbert J.

1994
Student Motivation, Cognition, and Learning
Essays in Honor of Wilbert J. McKeachie

2002
The Teaching of Psychology
Essays in Honor of Wilbert J. McKeachie and Charles E. Bower

Note: This is not the actual book cover.
The Present

Currently, Dr. McKeachie lives in an assisted living community, Atria Park of Ann Arbor. In the Atria Park, he plays the piano, and plays the card game Murder with Kai Cortina, William (Nick) Collins, friends, and staff from the University of Michigan. He is cared for by his daughter, Linda Dicks, and other caring friends and family members. Although he is not currently reading emails, he can be contacted by mail:

Wilbert J. (Bill) McKeachie
Atria Park of Ann Arbor
1901 Plymouth Road
Room 417
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

The Future

Hand.: What do you see as the future challenges of developmental education in the United States? What are the opportunities?

McKeachie: The biggest challenge is getting people to pay enough taxes to support it! Almost every university is having financial problems. Even our community colleges are having trouble. To do a good job, you really need to have smaller classes. Students need to feel that the teacher cares about them as individuals and is concerned about their learning. The big problem is financial support for education, not just higher education but in inner city schools and education generally. Everybody is capable of learning. We now know that learning is a natural characteristic of human beings. Maybe if you have a severe brain injury, there’s a limit, but even that looks much more hopeful than it used to. We should be giving a lot more people a college education because the future of our country depends on getting more intelligent people in the White House and other places. We need to do a better job of education than we do now, and we need to make sure that newer research and theories get put into practice and used effectively.

Héfer Bembenutty: Reflecting on your 60-year teaching career, what have been the one or two most memorable moments?

McKeachie: Gee, I don’t know, I’ve had a lot of good moments. I suppose, when Ginny didn’t say, “No” when I proposed to her. That was kind of the beginning of a career. Being president of the American Psychological Association was memorable. Just teaching day in and day out is fun in itself. I don’t think anything special stands out; I just always enjoy it.

Héfer Bembenutty: What advice can you give to aspiring and practicing educators?

McKeachie: Find something you enjoy doing. It could be teaching, research, or administration, and emphasize that. And, if you’re doing something that you don’t enjoy initially, figure out some way to make it more interesting, more enjoyable. In every job, there are ways you can enrich it by adding some complexity or something different that makes it unique and not just a routine endeavor.

I would tell them, “Don’t get into a rut where you just do things somewhat mechanically. If you feel that you’re getting bored, think of some new thing to do that will make it different, make it more challenging.” We’re all motivated through challenges; if you get so you’re just doing things so easily that it’s not anything challenging any more, that’s not good. One of the nice things about teaching is that there’s always additional complexity and the challenge might be, “How do I get to these kind of students to do things the way I’d like to have them do and learning the way I’d like to have them learn?” Or it could be, “How can I handle this topic, which I don’t really enjoy teaching?” There are always possible challenges and I think finding new challenges is one of the ways of keeping motivated.

Jane Halonen: I suspect your retirement will exceed what most people do for regular work life. . . . If you were magically granted the ability to start over again, do you think your career would go in the same direction?

McKeachie: I can’t imagine it being better. Everything worked out better than I had any right to expect. Al Bandura makes a big deal of chance, and I think he’s right. I’ve just been very lucky. In my marriage. In my career. In everything.

Jane Halonen: One last question. Future goals. What do you hope to accomplish in the future?

McKeachie: I never really had any goals. I keep telling my students that you need to set goals and work out the implications for what you are doing. You tell students they need to set goals and you don’t do that? I’ve really just kind of drifted along and done whatever things just happened. I just hope I can stay healthy and keep on teaching and doing research. I don’t plan on making any great contributions. I know there are things I know how to do, things I’d like to be able to do, teach other students to be able to do. I’ve gone beyond any goals I would have even thought of setting. Things just worked out very well for me.
Professor Wilbert (Bill) J. McKeachie
Selected Abstracts


This paper reports on a new self-report, Likert-scaled instrument that was designed to assess motivation and use of learning strategies by college students. The motivation scales tap into three broad areas: (1) value (intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientation, task value), (2) expectancy (control beliefs about learning, self-efficacy); and (3) affect (test anxiety). The learning strategies section is comprised of nine scales which can be distinguished as cognitive, metacognitive, and resource management strategies. The cognitive strategies scales include (a) rehearsal, (b) elaboration, (c) organization, and (d) critical thinking. Metacognitive strategies are assessed by one large scale that includes planning, monitoring, and regulating strategies. Resource management strategies include (a) managing time and study environment; (b) effort management, (c) peer learning, and (d) help-seeking. Scale reliabilities are robust, and confirmatory factor analyses demonstrated good factor structure. In addition, the instrument shows reasonable predictive validity to the actual course performance of students.


The goal of this article is to discuss one of Paul Pintrich’s more enduring legacies: the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), an 81-item, self-report instrument consisting of 6 motivation subscales and 9 learning strategies scales. The MSLQ has proven to be a reliable and useful tool that can be adapted for a number of different purposes for researchers, instructors, and students. The MSLQ has been translated into multiple languages and has been used by hundreds of researchers and instructors throughout the world. This article reviews the history of the MSLQ and discusses how it has been used to (a) address the nature of motivation and use of learning strategies in different types of content areas and target populations; (b) help refine our theoretical understanding of motivational constructs, how they are distinct from one another, and what individual differences exist in self-regulated learning; and (c) evaluate the motivational and cognitive effects of different aspects of instruction.


In this article, the author discusses the other articles in this Current Issues section (see records 85-00210, 00217, 00208, 00211) and concludes that all of the authors agree that student ratings are valid but that contextual variables such as grading leniency can affect the level of ratings. The authors disagree about the wisdom of applying statistical corrections for such contextual influences. This article argues that the problem lies neither in the ratings nor in the correction but rather in the lack of sophistication of personnel committees who use the ratings. Thus, more attention should be directed toward methods of ensuring more valid use.


Experimental research on college teaching began with single variable studies of class size and lecture vs discussion. During the 1930s, research on student ratings of teachers began, and following World War II, studies of college teaching and learning became more common. In the decades from then to the 1980s, research moved to concern with a broader range of variables, to analyses of interactions between student and classroom variables, and to attention to processes as well as products resulting from teaching. Research on college teaching clearly meets J. B. Conant’s (1947) criteria for a scientific field: progress in theory, methods, and established knowledge. Moreover, we now have demonstrated that educational research can contribute to educational practice.


Contemporary teaching is concerned not only with imparting knowledge but with developing skills and strategies for further learning. This article describes issues related to the teaching of learning strategies in the context of evaluating an introductory cognitive psychology course. The course is intended to teach both the concepts of cognitive psychology and their application to learning strategies. The evaluation revealed substantial success in affecting students’ self-reported study habits and modest success in affecting achievement in later semesters. An Attribute x Treatment interaction revealed that students high in anxiety were particularly helped by the course.

Dr. McKeachie and Ginny with Sophia and Yi-Guang Lin


Professor Wilbert (Bill) J. McKeachie
Thank You, Dr. McKeachie!

Dr. McKeachie, you are simply the best!
Your thoughtfulness is a gift we will always treasure!
You are a blessing to us!
You make the world a nicer place.

Dr. McKeachie does not have diabetes.
He never ate more than a quarter of that food.