



*Law Students Are Just Big  
Babies: What First-time  
Parenting Has Taught Me  
About Teaching*

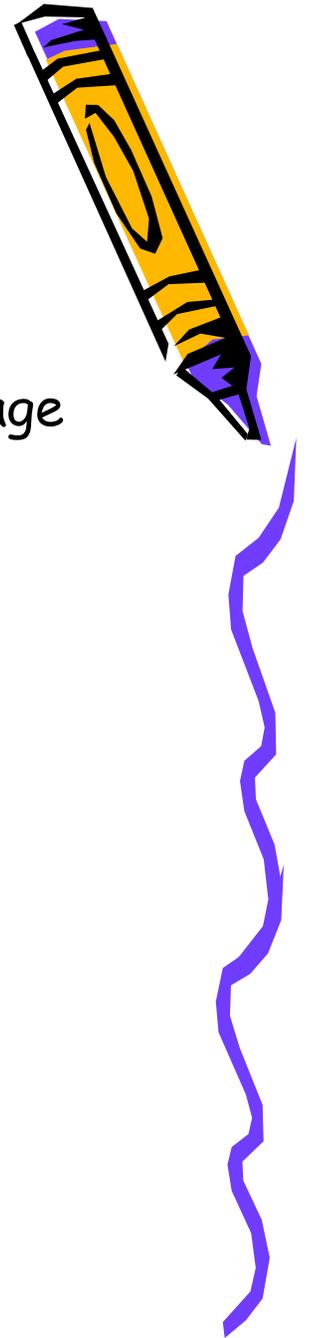
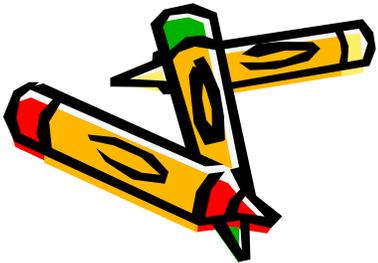
Institute for Law Teaching and Learning Conference  
June 25, 2012  
Gonzaga University School of Law

Nancy Soonpaa  
Texas Tech University School of Law



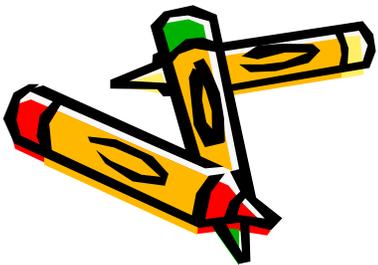
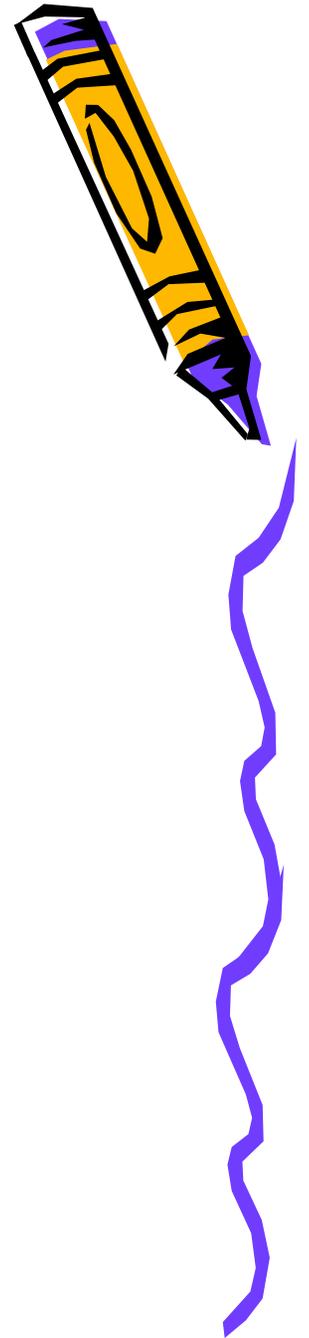
# Lessons I've Learned

- Communicating When You Don't Speak the Same Language
- 
- Repeat, Repeat, Repeat
- 
- Why What Goes In Doesn't Resemble What Comes Out
- 
- Respecting and Fostering Autonomy
- 
- Resorting to Tactics I Swore I'd Never Use
- 
- Why It's All Worth It (or, How Fast They Grow ...)



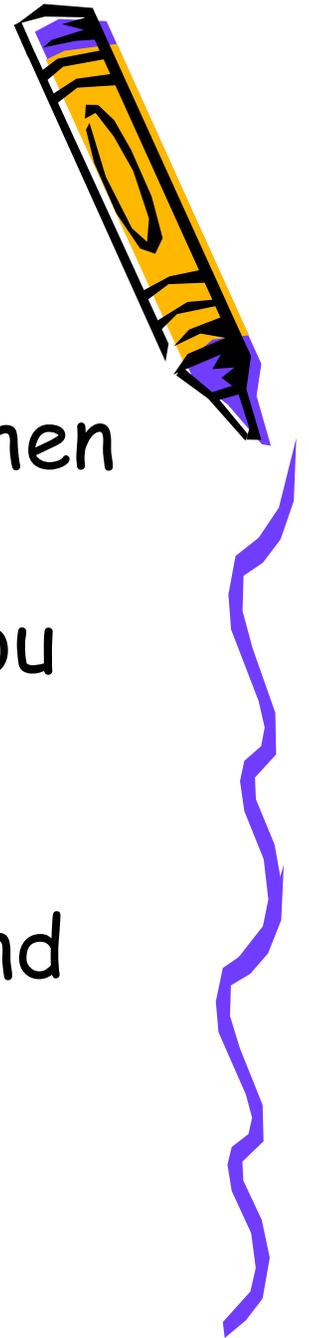
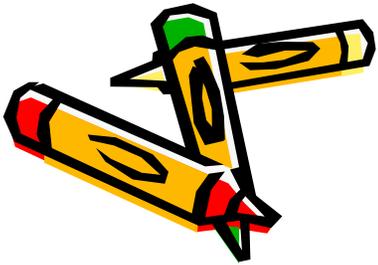
# Communicating When You Don't Speak the Same Language

- See handout



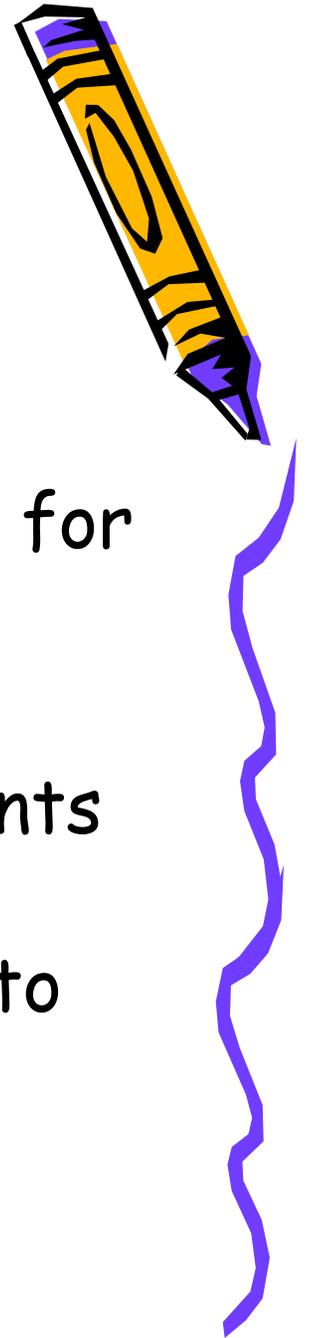
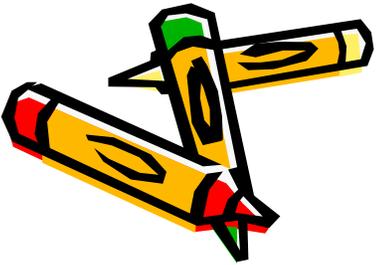
# Communicating . . .

- The world is a frightening place when you don't understand the language. Having a big person make noises you don't understand feels more like intimidation than communication. How can we help 1-L's to understand the language of the law?



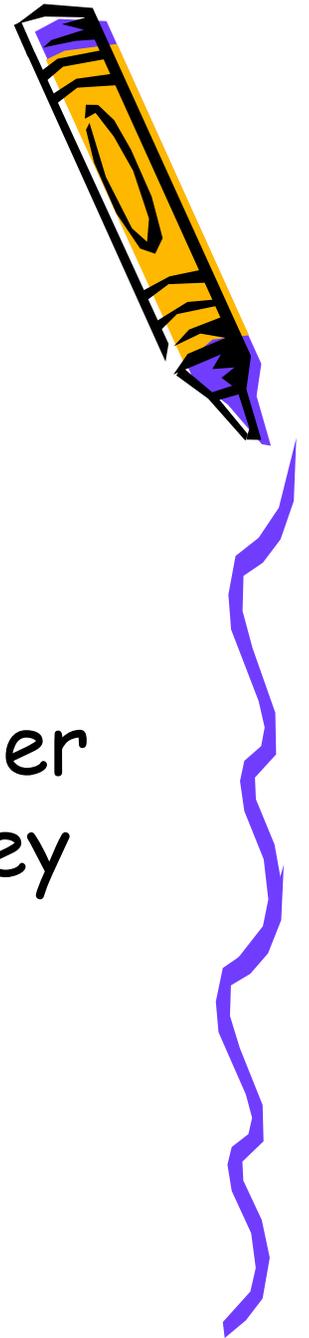
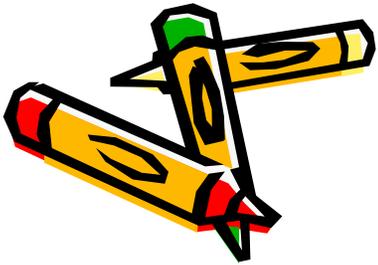
# Communicating . . .

- Discourse community: a term used in composition studies and sociolinguistics for a group of people who share certain language-using practices.
- The first year of law school asks students to learn the language of their new discourse community. What can we do to facilitate that learning?



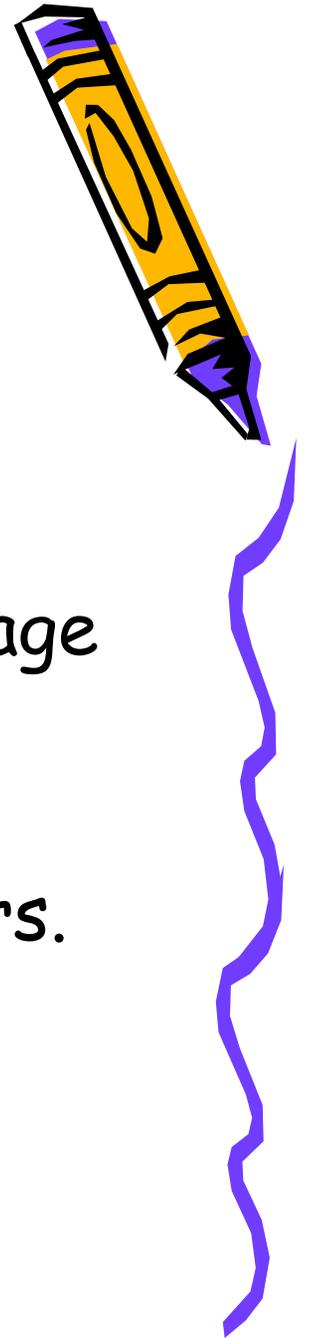
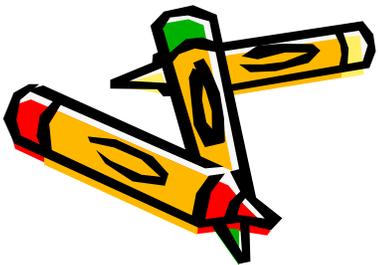
# Communicating . . .

- Patricia Bizzell says that to transition students into a new discourse community, we must respect and acknowledge the former or home community from which they came.



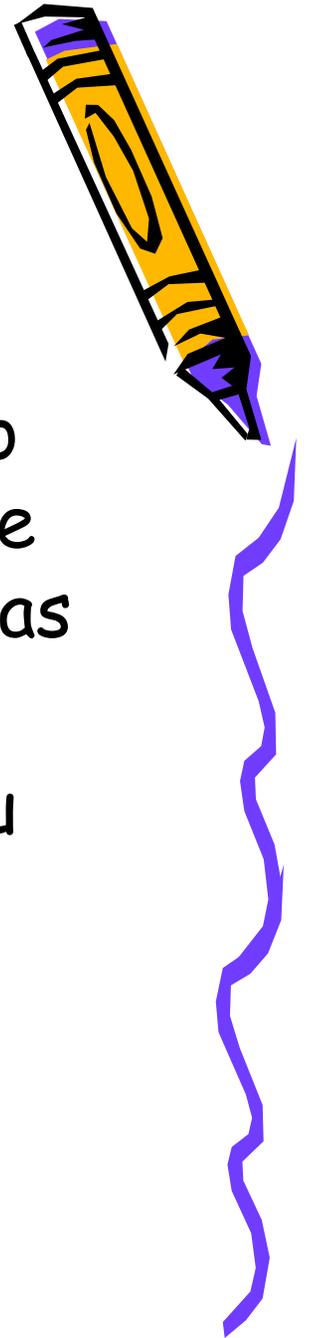
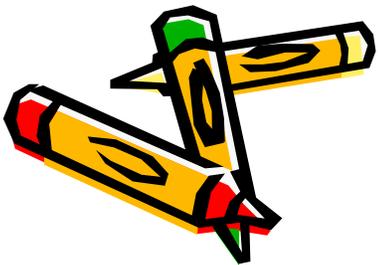
# Communicating . . .

- Old-fashioned vocabulary lessons work wonders.
- Remembering and speaking in the language of the novice facilitates the transition.
- Steadily increasing expectations to challenge, not overwhelm, works wonders.
- Or, there's the immersion approach . . .



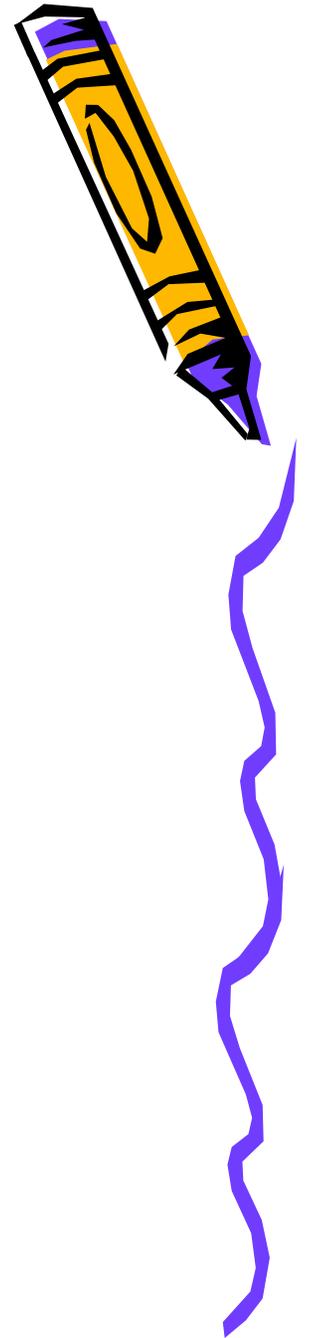
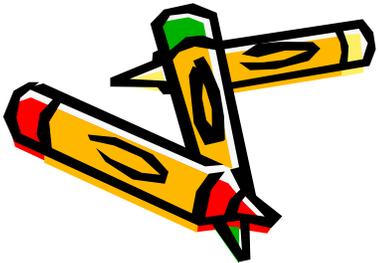
# Communicating . . .

- Finally, tone matters. How you speak to students, not only about the substantive law but about the practice of law, says as much as the words that you use.
- A caring and positive tone will carry you until you speak the same language.



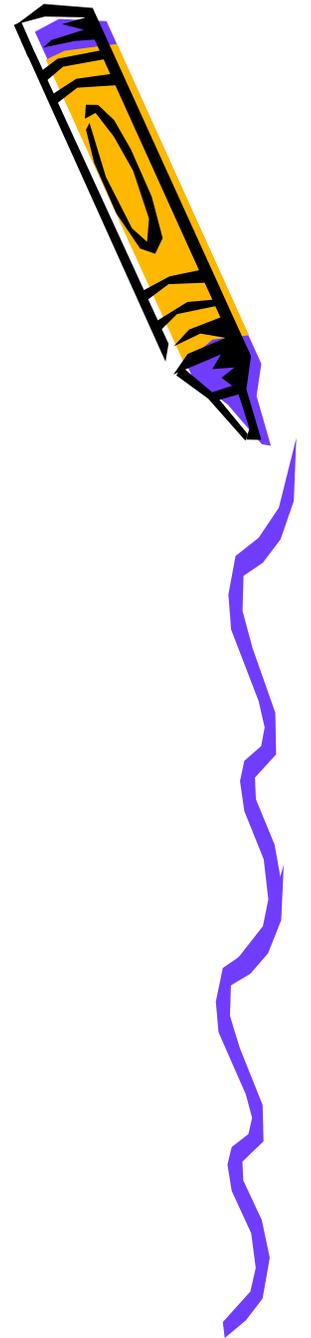
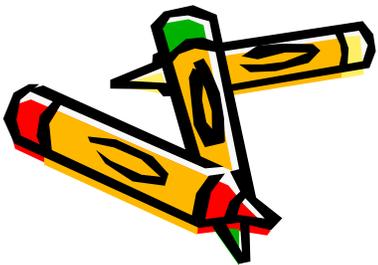
# Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

- See handout
- See handout
- See handout
- See handout



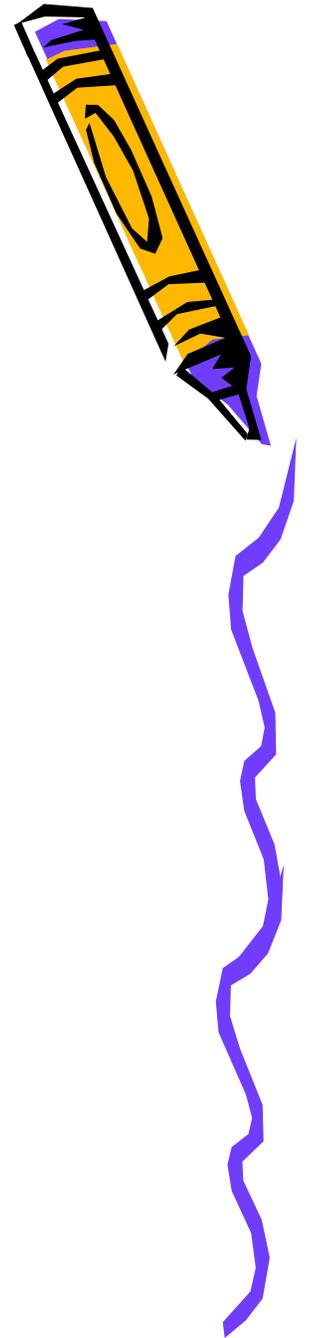
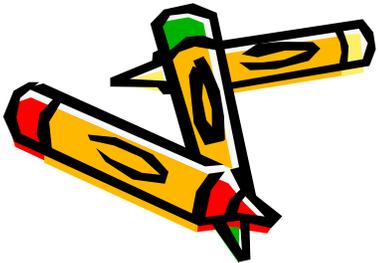
# Repeat . . .

- *repetitio est mater studiorum*



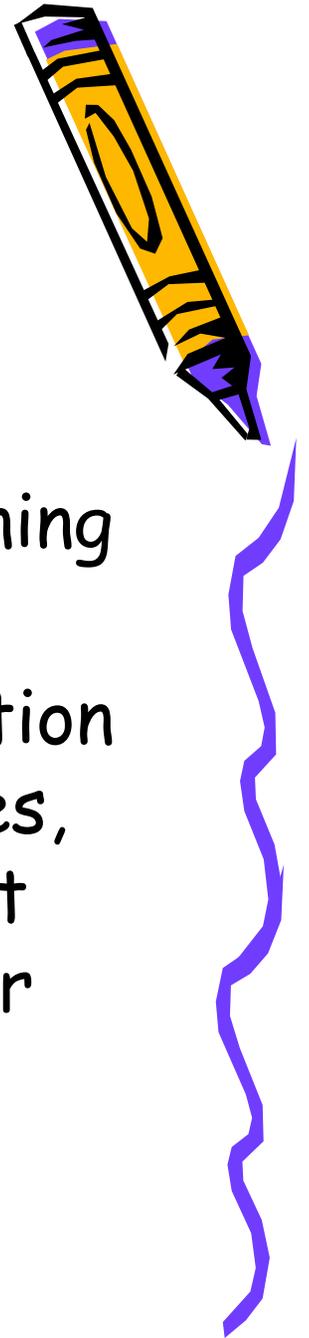
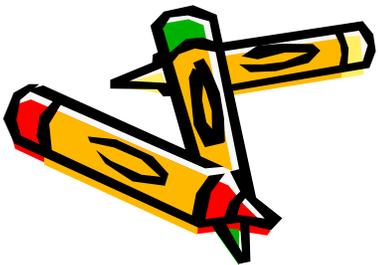
# Repeat . . .

- Repetition does not mean failure. Indeed, meaningful repetition is a key component of adult learning.



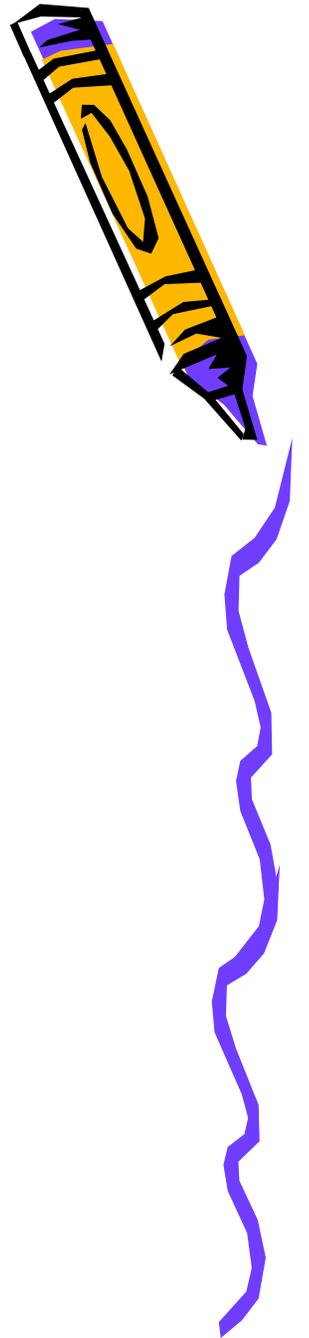
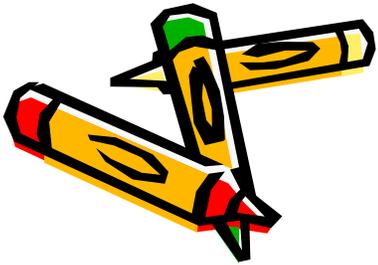
# Repeat . . .

- In addition to meaningful repetition, varied repetition helps to produce learning too.
- Vary the way that you present information . . . to appeal to different learning styles, to meet your students' understanding at different stages, to build on existent or recently acquired knowledge.



# Success!

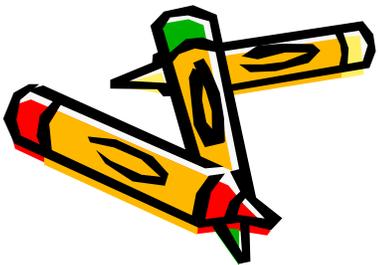
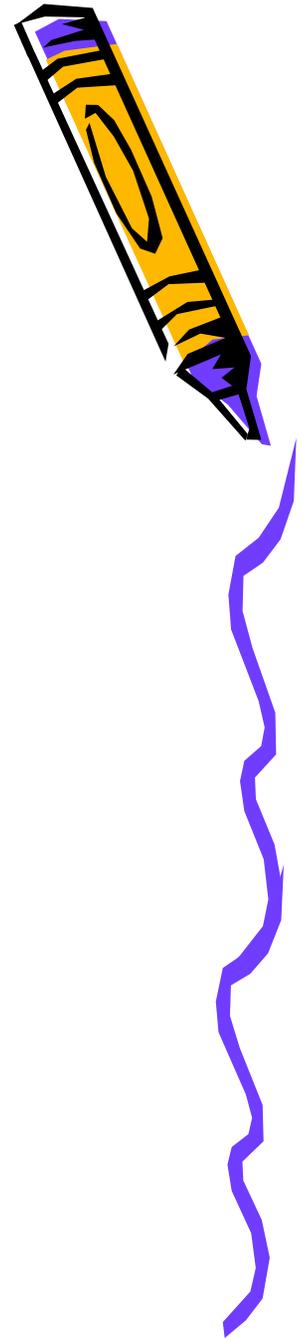
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# Why What Goes In Doesn't Resemble What Comes Out

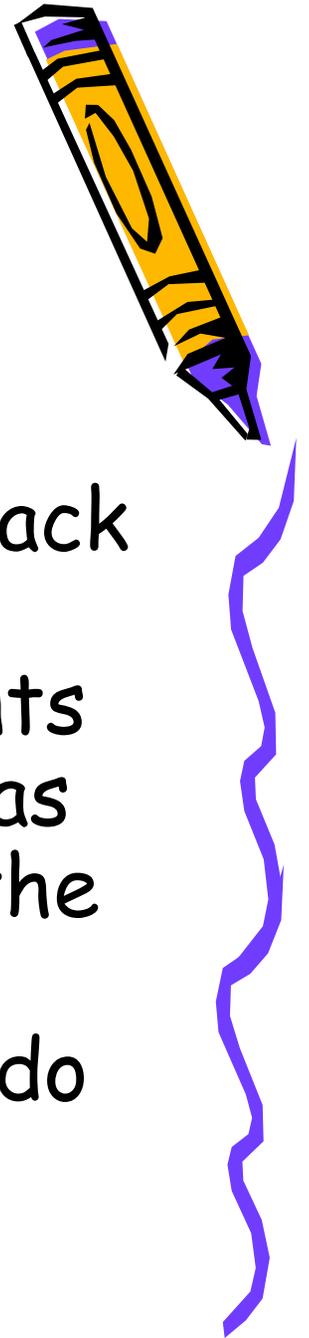
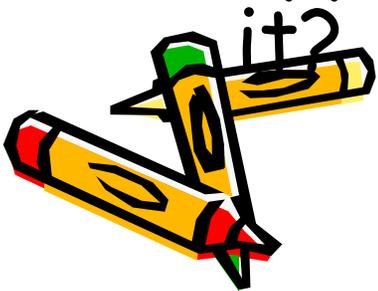
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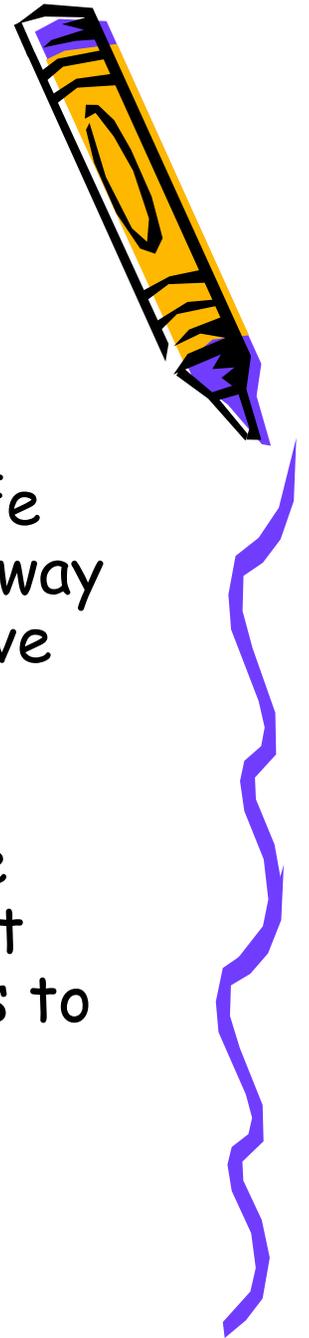
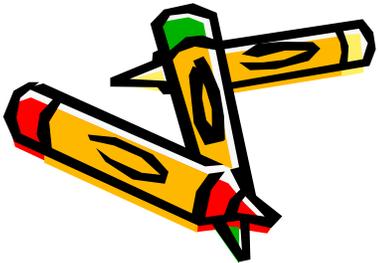
# Why what . . .

- How many of you have had the experience of looking through a stack of first drafts or other exercises and wondering whether the students could possibly have been listening as you taught them, especially when the evidence suggests that they apparently disregarded and didn't do



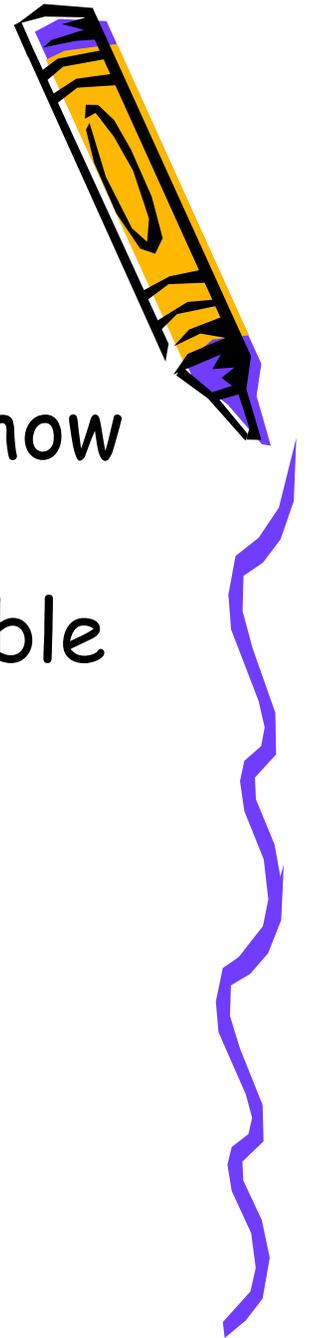
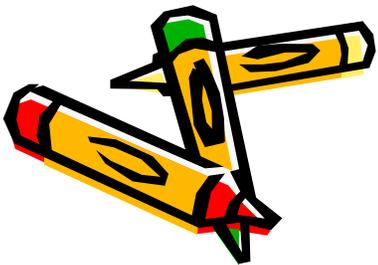
# Why what . . .

- Processing. It's all about processing.
- Adult learners process in light of their own life experiences, experiences that may get in the way of what you're trying to teach them. They have entrenched models and modes of learning.
- Novice learners may lack completely life experiences that would help them to learn the law, so they substitute ineffective, make-shift processing. On the other hand, they have less to get in the way of learning.



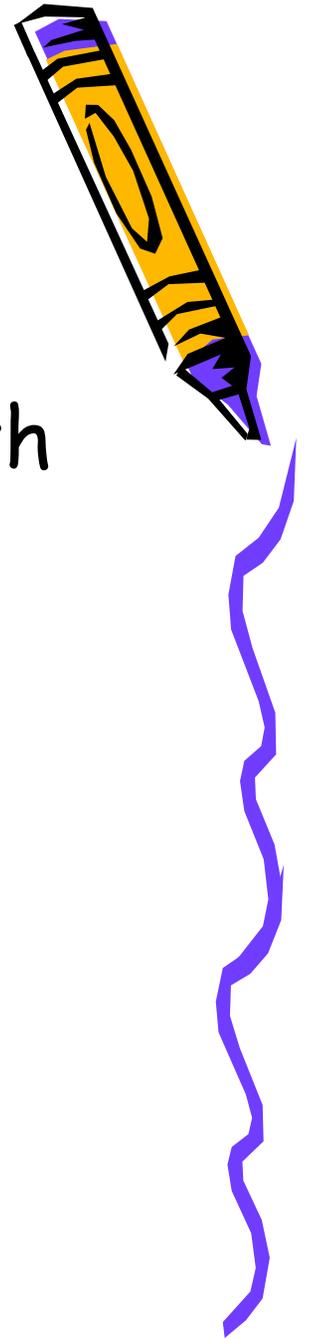
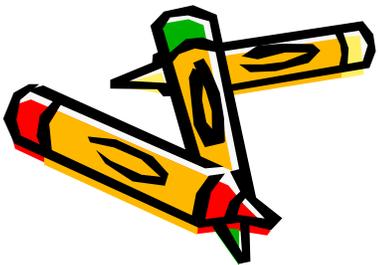
# Why what . . .

- Your task, then, is to teach them how to process.
- First, start off with easily digestible lessons.
  - Small
  - Familiar
  - Blandly palatable



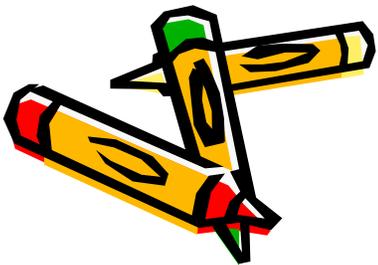
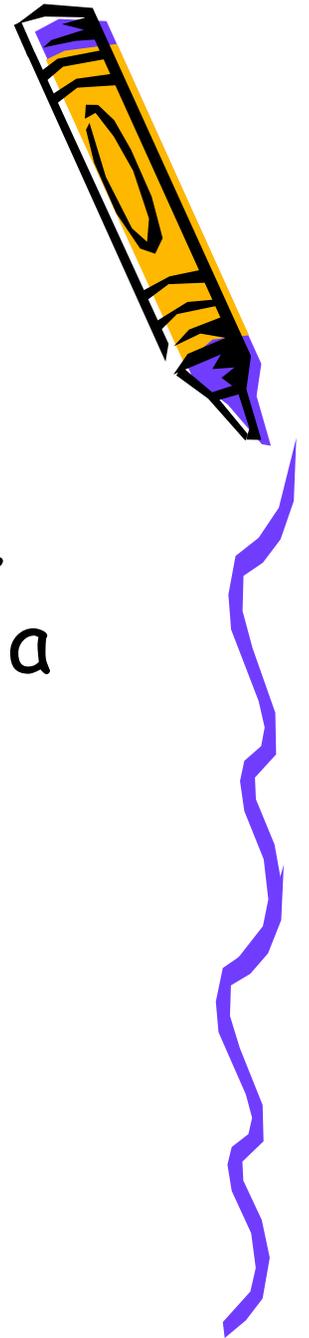
# Why what . . .

- Second, increase the challenge with bigger "bites."
  - Larger
  - Less familiar
  - Chunkier and tastier

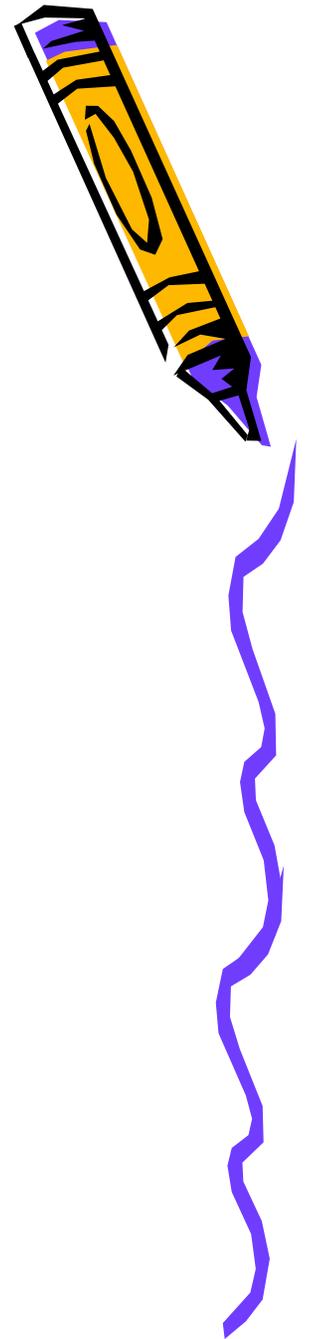
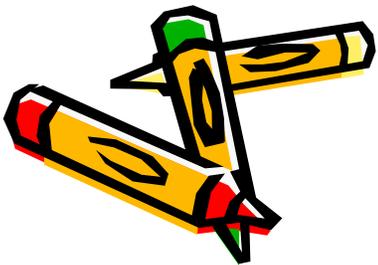


# Why what . . .

- Third, "feed" them the same thing that you'd feed yourself! (Just be prepared for the result to still be a tad messy.)

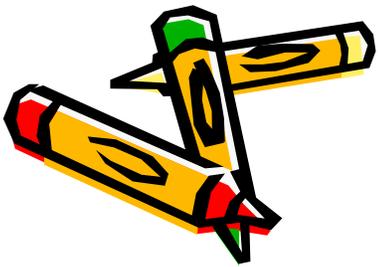
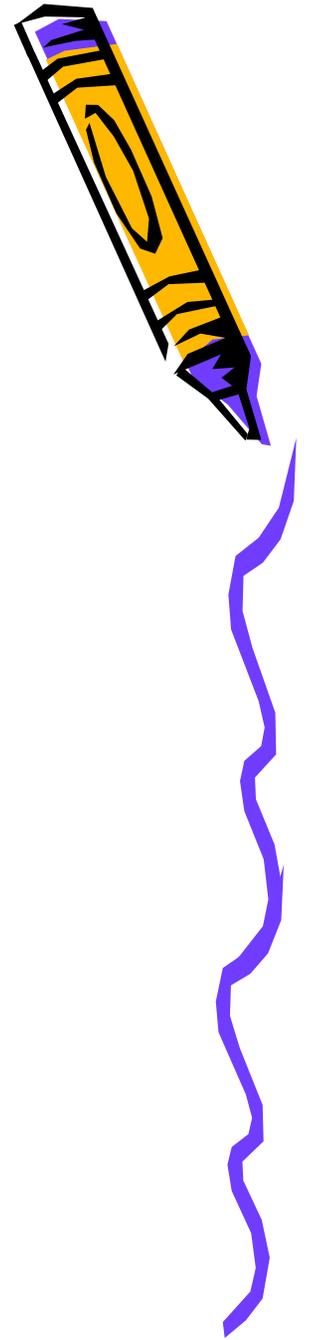


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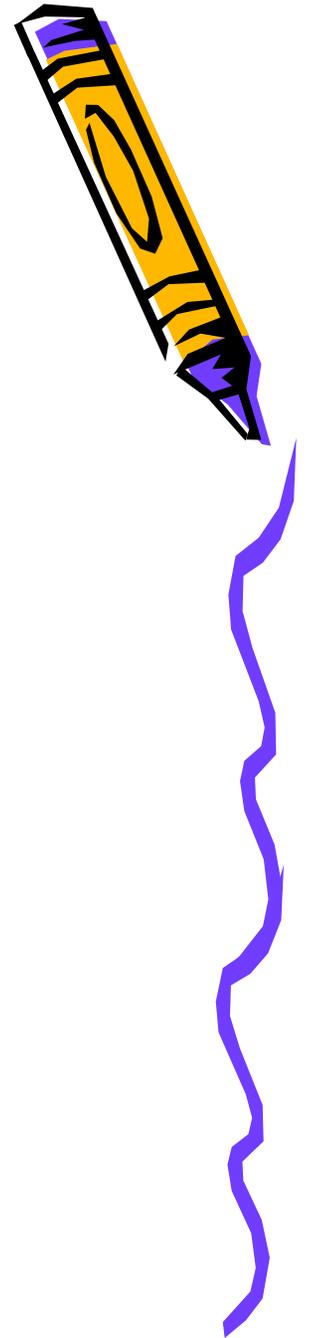
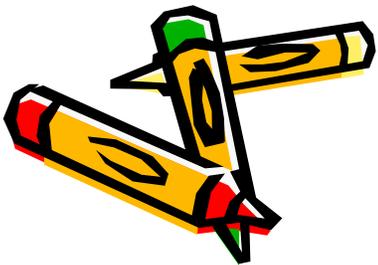
# Respecting and Fostering Autonomy

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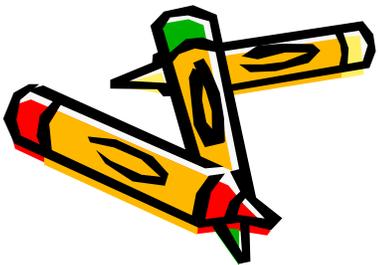
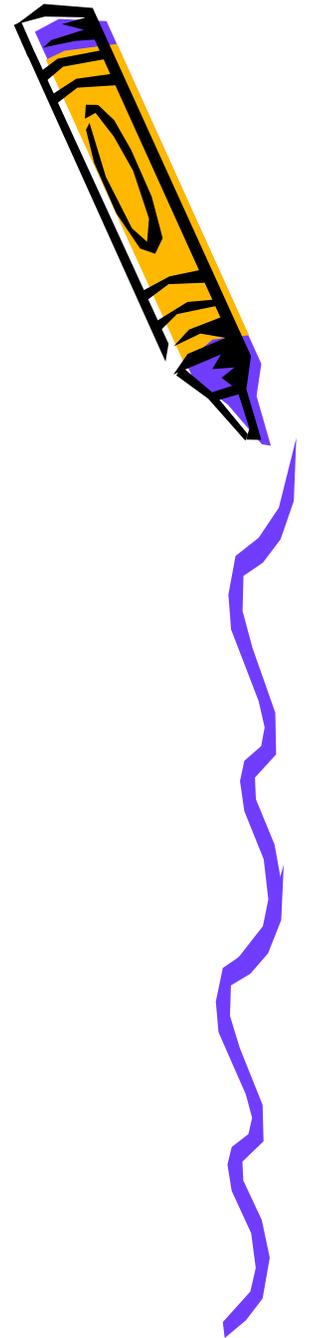
# Ways to Respect and Foster Autonomy in the Law School Classroom

- Engage students
- Shift focus and responsibility
- Praise effort
- Offer choices



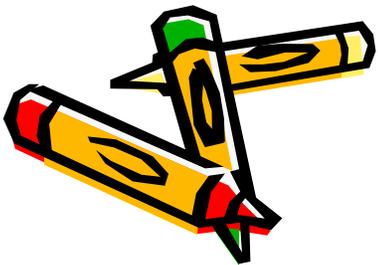
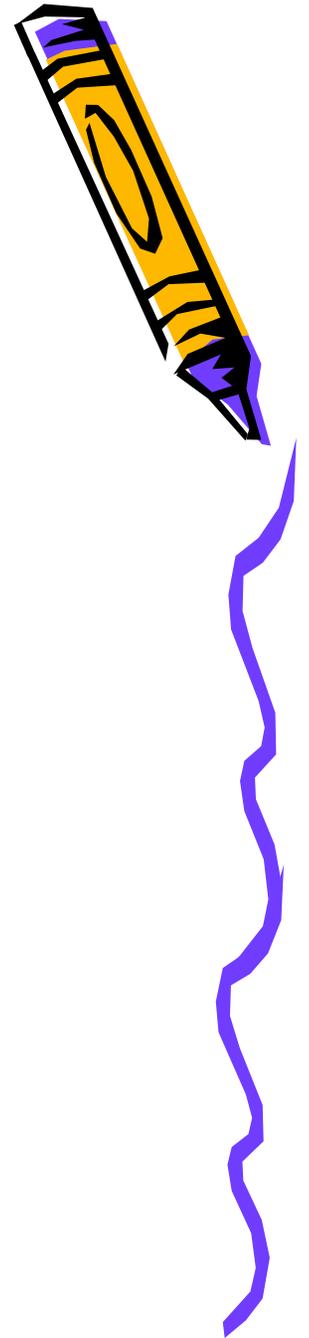
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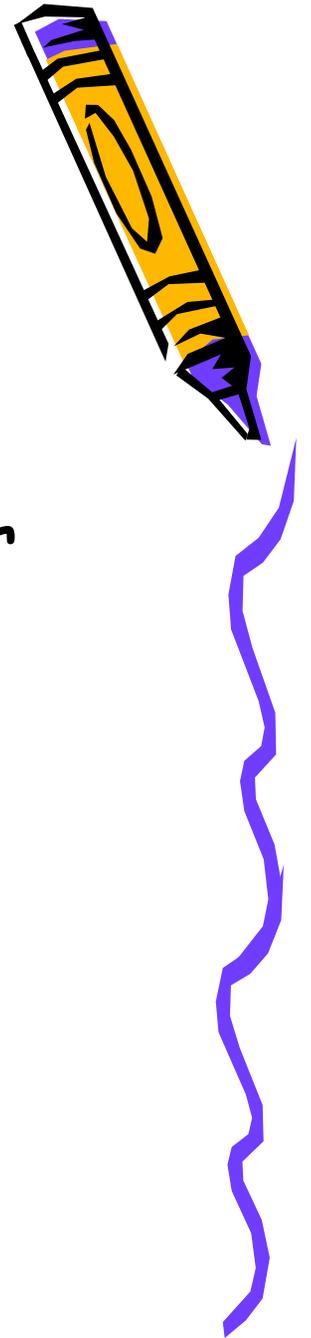
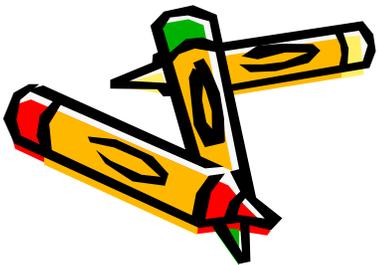
# Resorting to Tactics I Swore I'd Never Use

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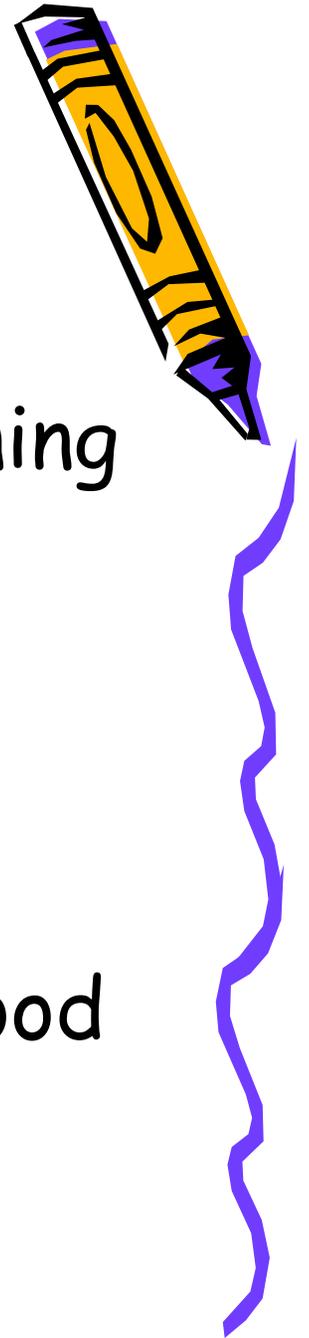
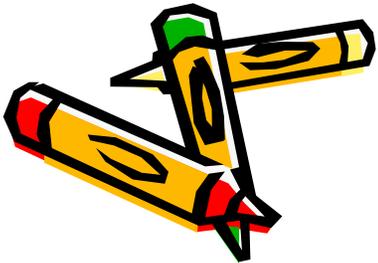
# Resorting . . .

- There's nothing like experience to temper one's claims that "I'll never do that."

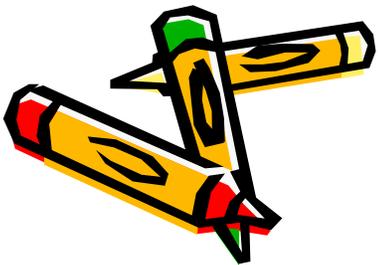
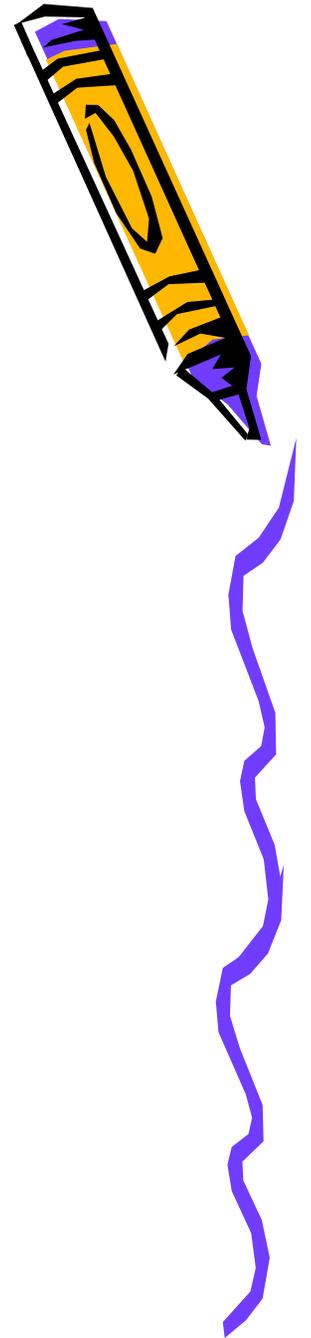


# I never thought I'd . . .

- Use their fact pattern as the running example in class.
- Believe that less is more.
- Make achingly explicit the relationships I want them to see.
- Accept that 90% is, sometimes, good enough.

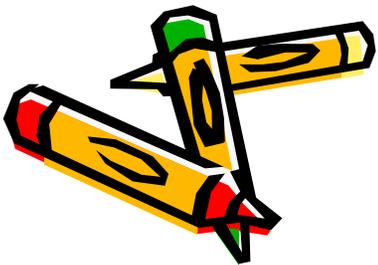
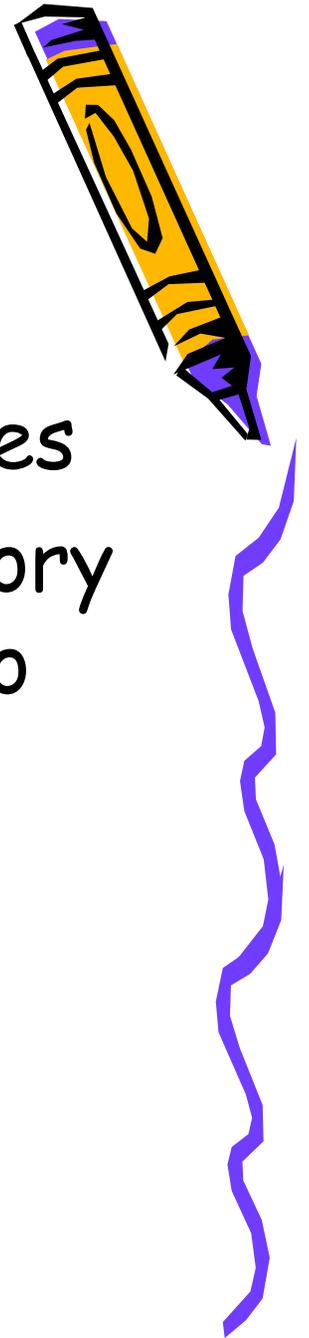


What have you done as a teacher that you never thought that you would do?



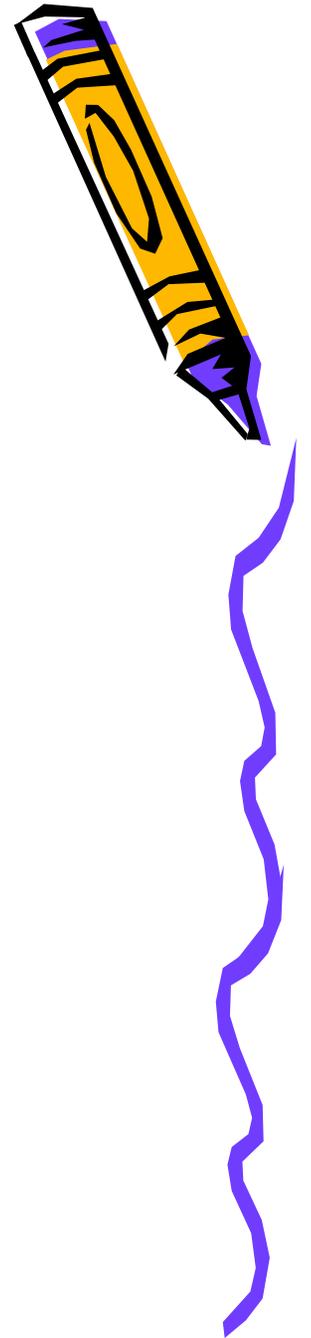
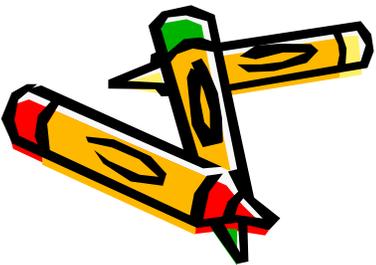
# Related Theories and Research

- Daniel Pratt's Teaching Perspectives
- The Teaching Perspectives Inventory measures teachers' orientations to their roles as managers of the learning process.



# Teaching Perspectives, cont'd

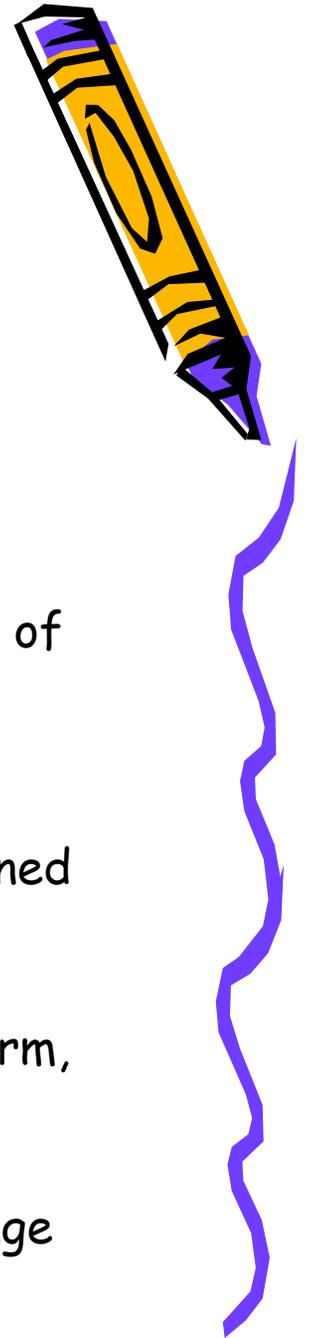
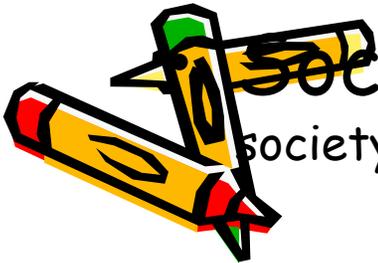
- Identifies five ways to view and manage learning:
  - Transmission
  - Apprenticeship
  - Developmental
  - Nurturing
  - Social reform



# Pratt's Five Ways to View and Manage Learning

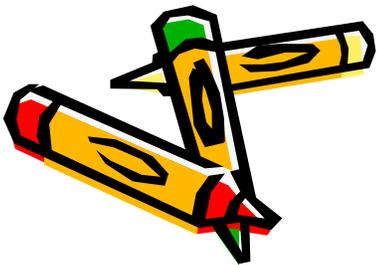
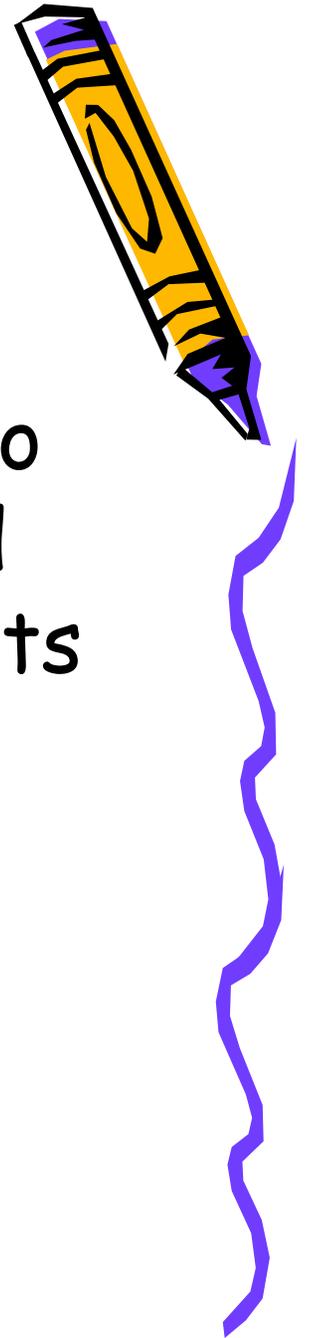
- **Transmission:** effective teaching requires a substantial commitment to the content or subject matter.
- **Apprenticeship:** effective teaching is a process of enculturating students into a set of social norms and ways of working.
- **Developmental:** effective teaching must be planned and conducted "from the learner's point of view."
- **Nurturing:** effective teaching assumes that long-term, hard, persistent effort to achieve comes from the heart.

**Social Reform:** effective teaching seeks to change society in substantive ways.



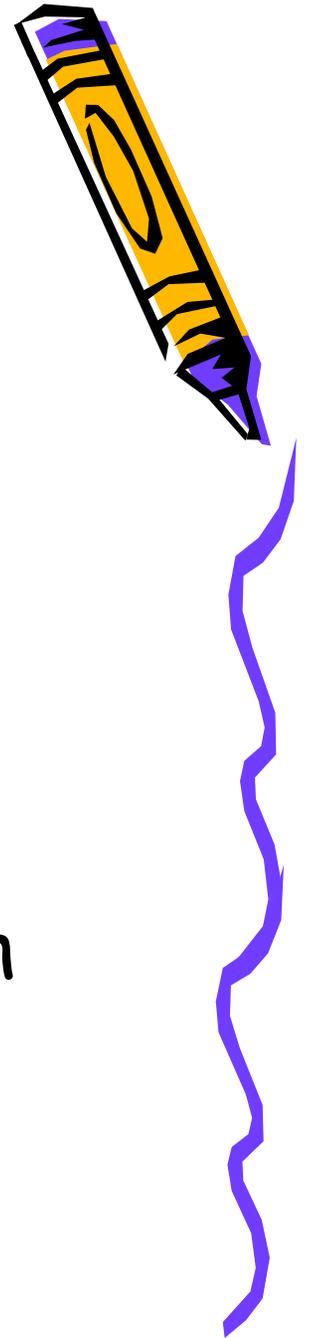
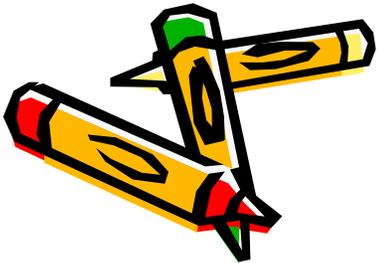
# Further thoughts

- What/who are your law students to you? How you see them—what and whom you compare them to—affects how you think about them and how you teach them.



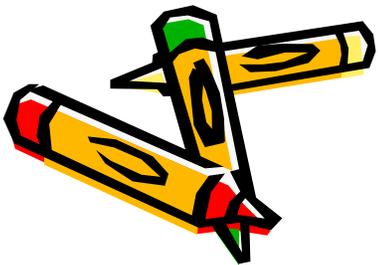
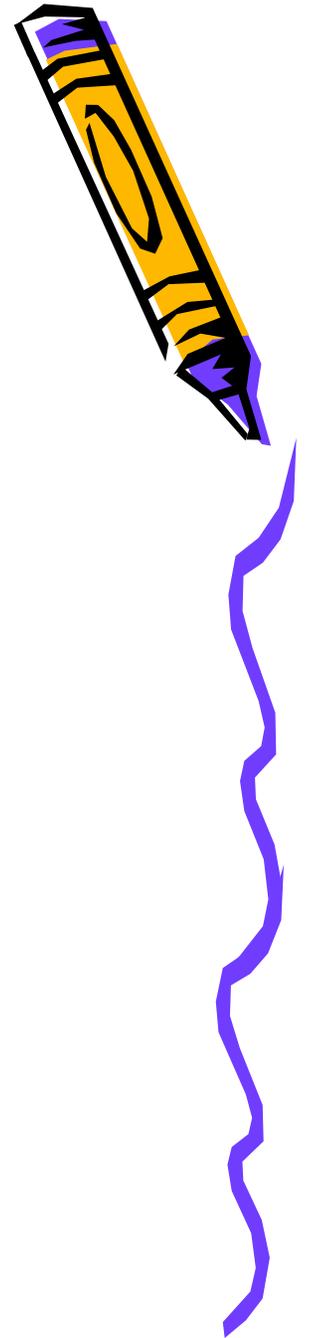
# Activity

- Let's pair-and-share and explore these ideas a little bit. With a partner, chat a bit about your analogy/simile for your students: who are they to you, and how does that identity affect how you teach them?



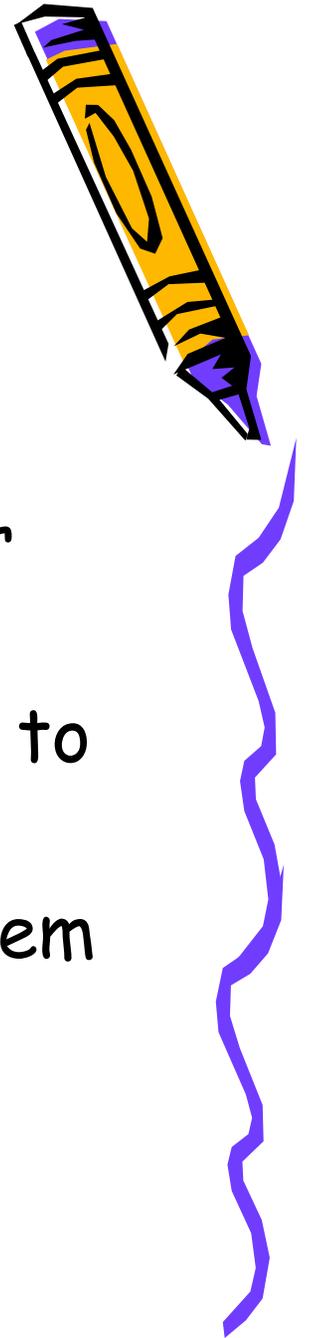
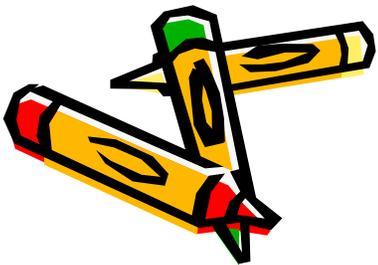
# Why It's All Worth It (or, How Fast They Grow ...)

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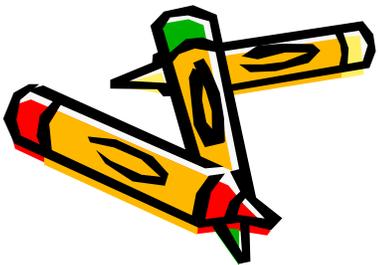
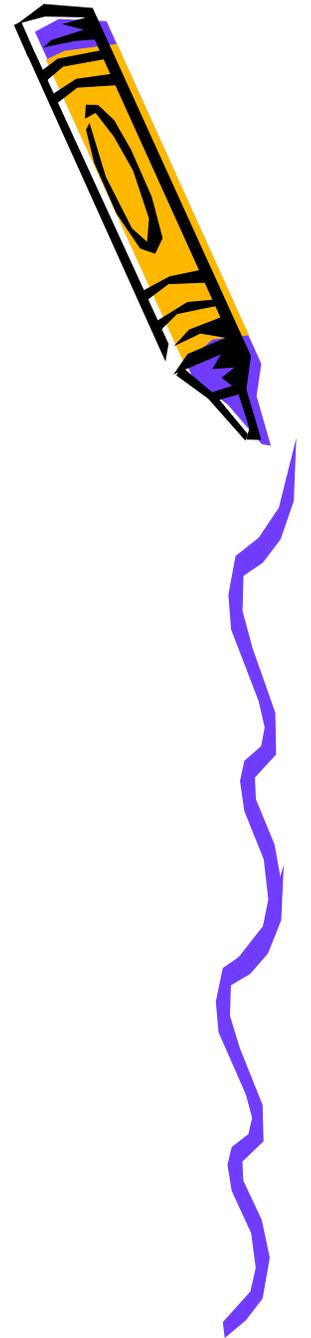


# Why It's All . . .

- The student who makes law review . . .
- The student who calls from her summer job . . .
- The student who comes back in the fall to say thank you . . .
- The students, each and every one of them . . .



What has made it all  
worth it to you?



Thank you!

