

2001 Moffett Memorial Award Winner Named in Baltimore



As part of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Convention in Baltimore, California teacher John Creger was presented with the

2001 James Moffett Memorial Award. A teacher at American High School in Fremont, California, Creger won the award for his proposal to create materials that would document for dissemination a reflective project known as the Personal Creed Project.

Creger, whose writing project affiliation includes a summer institute with the San Jose Area Writing Project, designed the Personal Creed Project to inspire reflective thought in his students. Briefly, the project asks each student to consider who and what have shaped him thus far, what he feels he now stands for (his personal creed), what kind of person he may become in ten years, and how he might make his life count for others. It begins with a series of reflective essays and culminates in a presentation, through which students demonstrate an understanding of themselves. This presentation, which each student is required to make before his classmates, can be done in a style of the individual's choosing. Creger assigns the project to his sophomores, catching them at what he calls "an ideal time for a person to reflect"—the midpoint of their high school years.

The project grew out of a chance conversation with a student some years ago and has taken root with both Creger and his students. Sophomores who have not yet taken part in the activity anticipate it; juniors and seniors—as well as students long graduated from American High School—often ask about it, considering

“... students need to see a more direct connection between their classes and the rest of their lives. And . . . a more personal connection to life in the classroom.”

—John Creger, from his James Moffett Memorial Award project proposal

the project an important part of their high school experience. “The presentations and the reflective essays that lead up to them are the most impressive and affecting classroom experiences I have witnessed in the decade and a half since I became a teacher,” Creger, who teaches English, stated in his proposal.

Creger's proposal impressed the Moffett Award review committee—made up of teachers from NCTE and NWP. In her letter to Creger announcing him as the recipient of the award, Janet Swenson, chair for NCTE's Conference on English Education (and director of the Red Cedar Writing Project, Michigan) wrote that the panel deemed Creger's proposal “the most

representative of the thoughts and ideas that continue to make the works of James Moffett an invaluable resource for teachers of the English language arts.”

With the award, Creger intends to create a booklet with supplemental materials to guide colleagues interested in creating their own versions of the Personal Creed Project with their students. Further, Creger proposed, the book will explore the value of the project and examine how the project fits into what he calls a two-legged curriculum—a model of curriculum planning that attempts to balance the academic and the personal at every stage of classroom and curricular planning.

Both the project and his curriculum ideas wrap nicely into a direction of thinking that Creger has pursued since his graduate days at San Francisco State University. Then, as now, his emphasis was on creating conditions for deepened motivation in students by designing activities, courses, and curriculum to bring in perspectives on the “big picture,” particularly in response to their “big questions” about life, reality, and the universe. His approach evolves from, as Creger says, “the surprising ways the universe keeps finding to deal with my old big questions and bring me new ones.”

To learn more about the Personal Creed Project or the two-legged curriculum, contact John Creger at jcreger@jps.net.