



TeachingPalooza

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This week the School revealed some important things about our organizational culture through the TeachingPalooza. It showed a real commitment to improving our teaching, and that alone is a good thing. At the same time, however, the event also demonstrated some broader features of our culture that cut across all of our work—not just our teaching. Those things are important to our success and they reflect why I love working at the School.

People at the School are focused on continuously improving their work. The quality of our teaching already is high, and yet people dedicated a lot of time to sharing information about how we might be even better. There was lots of good information for teachers of all experience levels, and I suspect the day was especially helpful for some of our less experienced teachers. The event sent a strong message—teaching is important and we need to do it well, and we always need to care about getting better.

The different sessions also demonstrated a profound respect for our clients and the challenges they face. One session was devoted explicitly to understanding the needs of our students as adult learners, but other sessions also revealed a special sensitivity to the stresses of their jobs and the importance of gaining their trust. The focus was on them, not on us. Each session showed thoughtfulness about the circumstances under which different teaching methods might be most effective given the needs of our clients. This aspect of the School's culture is one of our greatest strengths.

TeachingPalooza showed that people also have a great respect for their colleagues and their



expertise. Rather than bring in an outside expert to demonstrate good teaching, this event was premised on the notion that we should learn from our own experts within the School. That expertise was on display throughout the day, and so was the respect and affection that folks have for one another. When it comes to good teaching at the School, it turns out that you can be a prophet in your own land.

The day also showed a number of our qualities that combine to create a positive culture at the School. There were videos about embarrassing or surprising teaching moments that showed our sense of humor ([Willow](#), [Whitney](#), and [Norma and Greg](#)). Another video featured some of [Bob Joyce's top insights about teaching](#). The sessions illustrated creativity and a strong sense of collaboration between faculty and staff.

It was a good day and I'm grateful to all of the organizers—the Teaching Development Committee (especially Greg and Cheryl), Adam Lovelady, Cindy Shea, the IT staff, and everyone who participated in or contributed to TeachingPalooza. Special thanks to Random for his first-rate videos.



Robin Williams in Dead Poets Society