



On April 15, 2010, the De Anza College Office of Instruction, Office of Diversity and ICCE, and Office of Staff and Organizational Development presented their annual conference devoted to student success. The event, “What’s Love Got To Do With It,” brought together both students and faculty and was a huge success. To facilitate an extension of the ideas generated that day, Tom deWit was invited to present on June 10, 2010, at a followup event he called “The Space In Between.” Tom arrived with his team of collaborators from the Faculty Inquiry Network who staged the space by placing numerous soccer flags all around the front of the room--a visual metaphor for the “labyrinth of attitudes.”

### **Labyrinth of Attitudes Activity**

The opening activity invited student and faculty attendees to read and consider the following quote from James Baldwin:

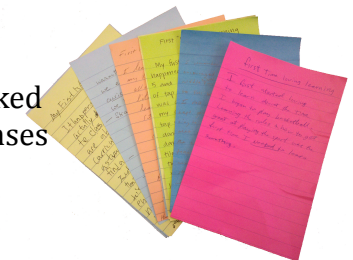
*“The person who distrusts himself has no touchstone for reality—for this touchstone can be only oneself. Such a person interposes between himself and reality nothing less than a labyrinth of attitudes. And these attitudes, furthermore, though the person is usually unaware of it (is unaware of so much!), are historical and public attitudes. They do not relate to the present any more than they relate to the person.” (The Fire Next Time p. 44).*

After analyzing and discussing the quote in its own right, attendees were then asked to apply the quote to the arena of Education. To enrich that discussion, a short text-film meditation was also shown (<http://www.vimeo.com/12447220>). On colored handout stickies, attendees then wrote down their responses to the question: What attitudes can fill up the space in between teacher and student or student and institution? The responses broke into two general categories: negative and positive attitudes. (The responses can be found below.)

The dialogue then deepened around a series of questions:

1. What do you do as a learner or as a teacher to inspire a labyrinth of attitudes?
2. How do we defy the inertia we work inside of?
3. How do we engage and honor the labyrinth so that learning is a creative, effective and positive experience?

These questions lead into a discussion of the role of Love in Education. Attendees wrote responses to a prompt that asked them about their “First Kiss”--that is, the first time they recall really loving learning. (The insightful and moving responses can be linked to [here](#).) The ensuing discussion served as an effective springboard into the second half of the day.





*What attitudes can fill up the space in between teacher and student or student and institution?*



Passive  
 Annoyed  
 Generations of failure  
 Sadness  
 The dead zone  
 Discouragement  
 Hunger  
 Lose love  
 Irritated  
 Sever learning

Want  
 Authority  
 Out of touch, teachers and students  
 Silence  
 You're boring, I'm not boring  
 Ignorance  
 Procrastination  
 Fear  
 They are lazy

Capacity  
 Poser  
 Arrogant  
 Not good "at math"  
 Obstacles  
 Culture  
 Hard ass

Confident  
 Absorbing  
 Feeling kindness  
 Appreciation  
 Expression  
 Refreshment  
 Playfulness  
 Creativity  
 Engagement  
 Fun

Connected  
 Brings the love  
 Keep the fire lit  
 Capable  
 Touchstone/ foundation  
 Love learning → self motivated  
 Flags are hierarchical power—abstract representations of power in institutions  
 Social scene  
 Interest in subject

Applicable to your life  
 Learn with any obstacle  
 Relatable/ interesting/ fun  
 Overcome obstacles  
 Expression of self not only in classroom  
 Flags are needed  
 Critique the flags

