

Recently I gave Starting Strong to a young teacher. I did so because I've often wished I had known about Prospect and the work of Pat Carini earlier in my working life. I came to Prospect late—I was already 50 years old and had been teaching for more than 25 years. In my youth, I had studied the work of Paulo Freire. With other young educators in informal study groups, we spent many hours reading, discussing, and searching for connections between Freire's philosophy and his approaches to literacy instruction in rural Brazil and our own work teaching adults in urban North American neighborhoods. Looking back, the similarities between what I learned from studying Freire and what I learned from the work of Pat Carini and Prospect's Descriptive Processes can be summed up by what my partner, Steve Shreefter, often said about Prospect: it's a stance.

For both Paulo Freire and Patricia Carini, the role of educators begins with our engagement as listeners and observers. We aim to be part of a teaching-learning community where knowledge is not "deposited" but created by the dynamics of the group. Paulo Freire, Patricia Carini, and the Prospect Descriptive Processes all teach us that "knowing" the students in our communities is a deep, many-layered endeavor. It doesn't have an ending point but is part of our ongoing inter-relationships—with ideas and information, with stories, and with each other.

Pat would often say: everyone in the group is important to the group. This was a living philosophy for her. Pat impressed me many times with her memory of each person she met. When she'd meet us again (sometimes months or years later), she'd ask us detailed questions about our work and our lives. She remembered, and we felt valued.

I am grateful for my memories of Pat--her slideshow (with commentary) of the Prospect School (which I saw many times, always a little different), her presence with us in small study groups at Summer and Fall Institutes, the treasured correspondence she and I had after Steve died. In these times of data-driven and profit-driven education, remembering Pat is remembering our humanity. She continues to remind us that teaching and learning is not about test scores, but humans nurturing each other in a respectful way. Seeing the maker in the made and the complexity in each person.

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