



## IN MEMORIAM

Randi A. Engle  
Associate Professor Graduate School of Education  
UC Berkeley  
1967–2012

Randi Alexandra Engle was born on May 12, 1967 in Ridgewood, NJ, and grew up there and in Colts Neck, NJ. A 1985 graduate of Marlboro High School, she was class salutatorian and a cross-country and track star. She received her bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1990 with a double major in Psychology and Mathematics after taking an extra year to volunteer as a teacher at the East Hill Farm and School in Vermont and on the Navajo Nation in Window Rock, Arizona.

Randi met her husband Thomas Kuhn while at Dartmouth. After becoming engaged, they confirmed their mutual love of the outdoors by hiking for two months on the Appalachian Trail. They married in July 1991 before moving to Stanford.

Randi received her Ph.D. in Symbolic Systems in Education from Stanford University in 2000, welcoming the family's first daughter along the way. She then worked five years as a post-doctoral researcher at the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. During this time, the family welcomed their second daughter and Randi found her spiritual home at the First Unitarian Church in Pittsburgh. There she continued a lifelong love of music as an active member of the family choir.

Randi subsequently joined the faculty of the Graduate School of Education at Berkeley in 2005, in the area of Cognition and Development. She was recipient of numerous professional and academic honors and awards, including an NSF CAREER grant, a Hellman Family Fund award, and a dissertation fellowship from the Spencer Foundation. In 2011, she was promoted with tenure to the rank of Associate Professor.

Professor Engle's research was focused on two of the most important issues of educational theory and practice – the question of what makes for productive disciplinary engagement and the question of transfer. These are, in many ways, the central issues with regard to educational practice. Transfer has, for many years, been the elusive holy grail of psychologists and educators. What counts in learning is not merely being able to reproduce what one has learned in the classroom, but being able to use and apply that knowledge in a range of circumstances outside the classroom. How to understand transfer, and how to foster it, are central to the theorizing of teaching and learning. The question of transfer is deeply interrelated with the question of learning mechanisms: how students learn to engage with a discipline in the classroom shapes the ways in which they conceive of and use disciplinary ideas, both in and out of the classroom. Hence the theoretical characterization of what makes for productive disciplinary engagement is not only of theoretical importance, but of paramount practical importance as well.

Engle's approach to these issues is unique, powerful, and increasingly influential. The vast majority of the educational and psychological literature has concerned itself with issues of learning and transfer as issues of

disciplinary content, asking what disciplinary ideas the individual must engage with in order to develop deep understanding. Engle takes what is called a situative perspective, asking instead, what are the practices of intellectual communities that have the property that their participants, by virtue of interacting within them, develop powerful disciplinary habits of mind? Although disciplinary knowledge is still at the core of inquiry, the question is how individuals develop the attributes of powerful thinkers. This includes, of course, having at their disposal the intellectual and other resources (the tools of the trade) that constitute fundamental knowledge of the field. In addition, however, Engle argues that it means learning to problematize situations and become disciplinary sense-makers; developing authority and the sense of self as sense-makers that allows for reasoned conjecture and exploration; and internalizing the norms of the discipline in ways that hold oneself accountable to disciplinary standards.

In terms of instruction and mentoring, Engle practiced what her research suggests. She was a devoted teacher and mentor, investing a great deal of time and energy into her teaching and student supervision. Her teaching included the creation of a signature graduate course centered on designing, implementing, and researching classroom instruction consistent with the principles of her theory. More broadly, Engle created vibrant intellectual communities that included her mentees and others. They served as exemplars of productive disciplinary engagement.

On Oct 26, 2012, Randi Alexandra Engle, 45, of Berkeley, CA died at home with her family after a 2- year battle with pancreatic cancer. She was a passionate and dedicated mentor, teacher, and researcher.

Judith Warren Little