

So, Wadda You do?

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Roxanne Miller

Hi! I'm Roxanne Miller, Civic Communications Specialist with University of Missouri Extension and Co-Chair of the 2006 Midwest Research-to-Practice conference. You will be listening to Dr. John Henschke, Extension Continuing Education Specialist and Associate Professor, University of Missouri-St. Louis and Dr. Joe Levine, Professor Emeritus of Michigan State University.

John Henschke



This is John Henschke, and once again I want to welcome you to the Midwest Research-to-Practice conference at University of Missouri-St. Louis in 2006. And, we're looking forward to having you. We're looking forward once again to this exciting conference. And, Joe Levine, our keynote speaker, is online and here ready to say a few things to us.

Joe Levine

Thanks John. You know, I really appreciate the invitation to talk. I gotta tell you this conference is a little scary because way too many people know me. And, I only have about eight different things that I usually say. So, it's sort of difficult pushing myself to figure out number nine here. But I'm liking the challenge. And, one of the things I've been playing around with – I gotta be truthful – I haven't yet prepared the keynote address. Here we are – we're talking, it's June right now – and my gosh, the conference is October. You dreamers, come on. Sometime the end of September, I'm going to be working like crazy.



Anyhow, let me share with you, one of the things that was running through my mind, and it was under the heading, so "wadda you do." And, I spelled the "wadda" with a w-a-d-d-a, wadda you do. That came to me because that was a question that was continually asked of me throughout my career. So, wadda you do at the university? And, it seems that was always a challenge whenever I heard that question – a challenge to come up with an answer that the questioner wanted. So, wadda you do? And I wanted to make it sound good. I wanted to make it sound descriptive. But I was having a real rough time. Because



people who are concerned with the education of adults have a real problem in answering the question, "So, wadda you do?" Because, did I want to tell you that I teach adults? No, I really didn't, because that was not my concern. I wasn't wanting to say that I teach adults. I think what I wanted to say was I was **helping adults learn**. And this goes back to Malcolm Knowles and andragogy and all of that discussion we've had for so many years.

So, for me - so wadda you do – I would work hard to figure out some way to communicate this idea. I wasn't just a teacher. I was someone wanting to help people learn. And, that was really important for me. And, I ended up what I would usually say. "Oh, wadda I do? My area is adult learning." I would say it like that.

My area is adult learning. I never really told them what I did because I did so many different things. I think we as adult educators are concerned with lots of different things. And, the basis of our concern is, most often, how do we help adults learn. I'm retired now. I gotta tell you it's wonderful. First of all, I don't have to answer the question anymore. "So, wadda you do?" And I just look them in the face and say, "I'm retired." I'm still doing, I think, most of the same stuff I was doing before. I'm trying to help people learn. But now, I feel I don't have to be nearly as concerned about answering the question. And, it's very exciting. It's very empowering. I think that we in the field need to best understand ourselves in responding to the question, "So, wadda you do?" I think that's a key question that we need to understand. And, I think as we get involved more and more with technology, the question of "wadda we do" is even more difficult to answer. Because I think sometimes with the brightness of the technology that we use, we begin to blur on "wadda we do."

So, one of the themes I'm playing in my head – and I don't know if this is even going to make it to my lips at the conference – but one of the themes I've been playing is this idea of "wadda you do." And, the empowering idea that I don't have to answer it because now I can do what I think is important. I don't have to feel responsible to answering the question for others.

So, stay tuned. I hope everyone will be there in October - like I will be - to hear what I'm going to come up with, because I'm challenged with this idea and hope to share some further thoughts on this whole question on what we in the field do especially in light of the technology. For some of us, it has empowered us. For some of us, it's been like a steamroller flattening us. So, "wadda you do." John?

John Henschke

Sounds exciting, Joe. And, I'm looking forward to it and going to be interested in what you have to say and how we can interact with it. Thanks very much.

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