Cedric Colby Cole thoughf he'd newr be wann again. As a cnptk at an Ausfrian prison cmnp during World War Ll, his supplies were minimal and accommoda-
tions &. But a fellow prisoner shaoed Cok and hisfnendshow f o stitch a bkmket from discarded matenials. Scrounging
mound campI Cole found Ameriam GI
olim drab, Italian trousers of rich, heavy
gray flmnel, and bits of Gennan, Serb,
F d and Brifish uniforms. 'We imme-
diately all agreed to assemble that variety intoacreation ofaes~~12~~ll11~ utility," Cokzurofe. "As the blankef begun
to tahshape over those weeks and months,
weal1 got caught up in a creafiw fervor."
The resulting quilt was a United Nations
ofjzbrk and a thing of beauty. But we
than that, the project was a scrap of hu-manity the men auld grasp in circum-stances that could destroy their souls.

Design and community share a critical role in this war story of hope and achievement. No one had to be taught the importance of working together and valuing the abilities and knowl-edge of each member of this rag-tag club; it was a given that they could raise their hopes and their comfort by using the sum-total of what they knew and could do. Creating that outlookin the beginning design dass starts with the teacher's approach to learning, and the most important element is recogni-tion of the student's existing data and skill base--recognition of thestudent's ties to the community.

We meet the beginning design student on the edge of the wider world. These are people with a lie's experience, and our instruction will be effective only if we can make connections that are real, relevant and reliable, the way the blanket functioned for the prison-ers of war. As we test our students on

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what we want them to learn, they test us on our ability to relate and connect to their experience.

My teaching goal is to cram as much as possible into my beginning design lec-tures. I draw on painters, sculptors, photographers, printmakersI basket-weaversI quilt makers, writers, film-makers and installation artists as well as architects and designers. Partly, the hope is that throwing enough material at the students will create a situation where some of it will have to stick. But one of my main goals is making con-nections; with all of this stuff, students always have stories to tell and com-ments to make about much of what is

shown. Their experience is alive in the classroom. When I introduce new material they are more willing to re-late because of the earlier connections in the wider world.

The method of teaching is obviously ~ LIS~ as important as the content. As students have access to more technol-

ogy in their K-12 classes, the old fash-ioned stand-in-front-of-thdss-and-talk approach may be as limited in making connections as a lack of mate-rial. Next semester I expect to use a newlywired classroom wherestudexits will beable to send me electronic feed-back as I teach. E-mail now makes comments and criticism of my lectures and my approach immediate and en-lightening. Now it actually is possible forthestudents to teach meafter1 have taught them, and my day seems in-complete when I do not have five e-mailmessages waiting from my stu-dents. Rushing into this brave new world of teaching, with some fear and trepidation (but also great hope), I trust Bill Gates is right when he says, 'The limits wiII be your creativivi not the tools."