Unlocking the Will to Learn: Teachers and Students as Partners

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Abstract

This study reports the classroom performance outcomes when teacher and students have formed a partnership to develop and use learning strategies based upon their awareness of each others' learning-teaching modalities. Through a recursive three-month laboratory experiences, researchers studied the effect which knowledge of teachers' and students' learning modalities has upon classroom management, instructional planning, sense of self as a teacher, sense of self as a learner, and academic performance. Data sources included student portfolios, audio tapes, video tapes, and student projects. The findings suggest that forging student/teacher will increase student performance and teacher adaptability while also decreasing disruptive classroom behaviors.

The Need for Learning Partnerships

Facilitating learning within the child is the primary responsibility facing every classroom teacher. James (1910) frames the challenge in this manner:"The task of the teacher is to stir-up connections within the pupil's mind to keep the pupil exercised in the direction of learning" (83). As educators enter the twenty-first century, the most critical challenge facing them remains reaching the learner. What needs to occur in order to increase student growth and achievement? Smith (1995) cuts right to the heart of the issue when he suggests, "Instead of talking all the time about what teachers should teach and what students should learn, we should talk about what teachers and students should do. We should be talking about experiences they should be mutually engaged in" (590).

The Essence of Learning Partnerships

Sagor typifies these "mutual experiences" as "structure(d) opportunities in each child's daily routine that will enable him or her to experience feelings of competence, belonging, usefulness, potency, and optimism"(38). And he cautions, "Instilling positive feelings in students will not result from pep talks or positive self-image assemblies, but, rather, from planned educational experiences. " What is needed is the forming of a partnership between student and teacher - one which consists of "frequent personal contacts......an interpersonal bond marked by stability, emotional concern, and continuity" (DeAngelis, 1995, 5). When students work with adults who continue to view themselves as learners, who ask questions with which they themselves still grapple, who are willing and able to alter both content and practice in the pursuit of meaning, and who treat students and their endeavors as works in progress, not finished products, students are more likely to demonstrate these same successful learning behaviors (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, 10).

What can be concluded from these thoughtful admonitions is that educators need to study the potential salient effects which forming partnerships with learners can have upon the learners' ability to initiate and sustain learning to a successful end. Stephanie Pace Marshall (1996) eloquently describes such partnerships as, "a personalized learning covenant......evolutionary in nature to the human learning experience and created through a mutual investment in learning. "

A Conceptualization of Learning which Supports the Partnership approach

The partnership agenda is a demanding agenda requiring both parties to communicate, reflect, and participate in an action-process which begins by establishing how learning occurs within each party involved in the partnership. The traditional model of learning has held that the child absorbs information through his/her cognitive processes. Those cognitive processes equal the child's intelligence or innate aptitude for learning. In this model intelligence has been linked most directly to cognitive input primarily in the form of reading, writing, computation and problem-solving. This model is based upon gathering information, retaining information and retrieving information to apply to specific questions at a given time and in a given format. Teachers use this approach because it is the one with which they are most familiar. The teacher takes his/her own awareness of what has made him/her successful as a learner, adds the clinical experiences gained during teacher preparation, and applies this to the students in the classroom. The teachers using this model perceive their role providing information; they perceive the learner's role as one absorbing the information in the format and/or manner presented. This model of learning creates dependency not partnership (Caine & Caine, 1997, 97-98).

An alternative conceptualization of learning is the Interactive Learning Model (Johnston, 1994), which holds that learning is more than a cognitive activity. The ILM suggests that the interaction of three mental processes (cognition, conation, and affectation) produces

four interacting patterns of behavior within each learner consisting of sequence, precision, technical reasoning, and confluence.

The sequential portion of these interacting patterns causes the learner to seek step-by-step directions, organize and plan work carefully, and complete the assignment from beginning to end free from interruptions., the precise portion to seek detailed information and to process information carefully and accurately; the technical portion to work autonomously, "hands-on," unencumbered by paper and pencil; the confluent portion to avoid conventional approaches and develop unique ways of completing any task.

Over the past four years, a 28-item self report instrument has been designed to measure the degree to which the learner uses his/her interactive learning patterns. Simply termed the Learning Combination Inventory, the LCI uses four scale scores (each representing the degree to which the learner "Uses first, " "Uses as needed, " or "Avoids" each of the four patterns) and three open-ended questions to quantitatively and qualitatively capture a student's cognitive, conative, and affective interactive learning combination. The possible score ranges are the following: 7-16 = I avoid; 17-25 = I use as needed; and 26-35 = I chose to use this first.

The LCI, by its very format, invites learners to report the patterns of their learning process. The sentence descriptors are designed to have the learner choose what describes and what does not describe his/her patterns - specifically cognitive, conative, and affective. The open-ended questions encourage the learner to express and expand upon the issues of learning which are key to him/her. Structured as it is, the Learning Combination Inventory provides a focal point for talking about learning in a manner which is understandable to the student and the teacher alike.

Since the purpose of this instrument is to begin a learner-teacher dialogue, the activities which follow the student's completion of the inventory are used to establish a dialogue and to create an atmosphere in which the learner can negotiate and discuss learner-specific strategies for adapting the learner's combination of patterns to the learning requirements. The LCI not only identifies the learner's interactive patterns, but gives a "voice" and a sense of empowerment to the learner. This is the place to establish mutual understanding and respect by hearing the concerns and struggles of the learner and separating them from issues of personality and misperceptions of lack of motivation to learn. The LCI provides a place to start within the comfort zone of the learner and then moves into more challenging assignments with a new confidence. As Palmer (1982) suggests, "A learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible...things like exposing a lack of understanding, testing ideas, challenging information - [None of these] can happen in an atmosphere where people feel threatened and judged" (np). The study here reported specifically focuses on the performance outcomes of students when teacher and student form a partnership by which they jointly develop and carry out learning strategies as a result of their awareness of each other's learning-teaching modalities.

Subjects and Methodology

Using the methodology of a recursive laboratory experience, these researchers studied the effect which knowledge of teachers' and students' learning modalities have upon the development of teacher-learner partnerships. The three month process engaged 22 teachers from eight schools (four school districts) in working partnerships with 154 of their students whom they had identified as most challenging to teach. These students fell into one of the following categories (contrived for the purpose of this study): "The Student Who Drives Me Nuts" "The One I Can't Reach" "The Know-It-All" "The Where Did That Idea Come From? " "The Organizer," and "The Enigma." The specific activities in which the teachers and students participated included the following activities:

1. Introduction to the Interactive Learning Model
2. Administration and Interpretation of Teacher and Student LCI scores
3. Selection of Key Learners for Portfolio Development using
    1. Situational Analysis - analyzing the needs of the learner
    2. Intervention Strategies - matching strategies to student needs
4. Considerations and Mid-course Adjustments
5. Data Gathering and Interpretation
6. Presentation of Insights

After reading *Unlocking the Will to Learn* and after receiving training in the administration and use of the Learning Combination Inventory (LCI), teachers assumed responsibility for their professional growth by developing and implementing a plan of action involving effective teaching/learning strategies appropriate to the students they had chosen to target.

During the three month period of the study, 16 teachers returned four times for four hour staff development sessions while 6 returned 10 times bringing student portfolios, audio tapes, video clips, and student projects to demonstrate the nature and effectiveness of their new teaching/learning strategies and their students' responses to them. Teacher-participants then consulted with one another on how they could refine their techniques. These laboratory sessions also allowed the researchers an opportunity to have the participants focus on the inclusion of special needs students, cooperative learning, assessment measures, teacher-student-parent interactions, and interdisciplinary learning. At the conclusion of the three months teachers presented their cases focusing particularly on changes which occurred in instructional planning, academic performance, classroom management, sense of self as learner, and sense of self as teacher as a result of the teacher-learner partnership.

Data

The data consists of audio-tapes, video-tapes, student portfolios, teacher reflective journals, and case studies as submitted by the participants in this study. A total of sixty-four cases were presented by the participants during the concluding session of the three-month study. Selected cases are reported here.

Teachers and Student as Partners

Case I: Maryann G., Teacher of 3rd Grade, Evesham Township Public Schools

The following is a transcription of an audio-cassette recording of Mary Ann's presentation of "The Student Who Drives Me Nuts"

> I am going to present first the case of the "The Student Who Drives Me Nuts". Sean's scores are Sequential 24, Precise 25 Technical 35 and Confluent 26. He's very difficult to deal with. Hates all written assignments and is very verbal and likes to share many things. He'd rather build or make things. He loves to tell stories. He went to Disney World with his family and showed five pictures to the class. It took him 45 minutes. And every picture involved him discussing everything that happened before the picture and everything after the picture. And because he's very dramatic, the kids loved it. They think Sean's different. They don't dislike him, they just don't understand him. And he likes being different.
>
> He has a desk that's with his group and a desk that's separate. I gave him a

second desk not as a punishment but because we had discussed this. When he was with the rest of the group, he'd get nothing done. And that's because the rest of them distracted him, according to Sean. And it was just because they were near him. So I gave him another desk to sit at when he chose to, to complete an assignment. And he has completed a lot more while he's been there. Over time, he's gotten better interacting with the rest of the students. And they are liking him more.

Another strategy that Sean and I came up with was to allow him to be out of his seat if he were quiet and didn't disturb others. One day I looked up, and he was quietly walking back and forth in the back of the room. He had completed his work and was waiting for others to complete theirs. Instead of being fidgety and distracting others, he decided to use our "stretch time" strategy. I approached him after a few moments and asked if everything was all right. "Oh, no problem. I'm just wondering and pondering'" he said. I felt then that we had reached a new level of comfortable communication and trust.

When I looked at Sean's LCI's scores and that he scored so technically, I think I was able to understand why I was seeing the "loner" aspect of him. I knew he could learn, but his work, formal written work, was just was awful. It said so small in amount. Because of that, I developed the strategy with him of using tapes. When we first had an essay test, I knew that what he had written on the test wasn't what he knew about the material. So I talked to him about it, and he said that when he wrote, after a while, he realized he wrote too much and he wouldn't have enough time to finish the last question, and his hand was already beginning to hurt him. He said he was going to back to the first question to finish, but he ran out of time. And that's when you [Chris] and I discussed doing oral tests. And since I knew that the highly technical learner prefers to show what s/he knows by telling the teacher - without using paper or pencil I thought, here's an opportunity to see if that is true. So to begin with, when he was to take a test that required lots of written answers, I would send him into an adjourning classroom with a tape recorder and the test. He was to respond on the tape, and I would later listen to the tape and grade his responses. I thought the audio cassettes would come out disjointed, but he carefully read the question on the tape announcing its number first. Then he would speak at length. His answers were phrased exactly as if they were written, but they were much more complete than if he had to write them. And I told him, after a few times of this, he would have to go home and write it out so then he could have unlimited time to write out the answers for me. So he was very happy with that arrangement. He also could use the computer to word process his transcriptions. As a result of this strategy, his social studies grade changed remarkably. I have shared this approach with another of his teachers, and she intends to use it also. She was amazed at how much Sean knew that he was able to share on tape but not in a standard written-testing mode. Working with Sean in this manner has changed my perception of him enormously. He is a child who needs to see the big picture and needs space and a place to be off by himself to re-charge and re-group. He is a very capable learner who is becoming a more successful student.

I must say that I have taught for 18 years, and my major concern is that we, the teachers, don't take our students into consideration enough. My scores are Sequential 26 Precise 28 Technical 13 and Confluent 20. I have come to recognize that the sequential and precise learners whom I had labeled as "Ideal Learners" are not the most intellectually gifted children. But they get to be in the top classes because their learning patterns happen to match the teacher's sequential and precise learning patterns.

Case II: Tammy G., Teacher of 5th Grade, Evesham Township Public Schools

The following is a transcription of a video recording of Tammy's presentation of "The Student Who Drives Me Nuts"

My scores were Sequential 25, Precise 27, Technical 21, and Confluent 19. I want to talk about Alex. He's a very capable student, but he was very frustrated with writing. His writing scores were very poor, and he usually shut down at a writing assignment. He loved to express himself through art, but even the quality of the art wasn't very good. He was comfortable talking in front of the group and sharing his ideas, even when they were way out there. Sometimes his ideas had nothing to do with what we were talking about, but he was always excited about his idea, so I thought his scores would be highly confluent. His scores are Sequential 19, Precise 15, Technical 34 and Confluent 26. His technical scores surprised me, but it did help me understand him better. His written answers to "What frustrates me most?" was "I don't like writing a lot." "I would make myself a project," to show how he learned, and he would "build a diorama or 3-d projects that had to do with what we learned," as a means of teaching others. He is a student from Canada who has been here for two years. He has been diagnosed LD and diagnosed ADD by a physician. He's been given medication, but his parents aren't convinced that has worked well for him. He also received occupational therapy every week.

Even with a score of 15 in Precise, I have found Alex remembers details when he wants to. We were doing something about Chemistry. And I talked about atomic numbers, and his hand went up. He said, "I know about atomic numbers. Like the atomic number for gold is 79." So I looked it up and sure enough he was right. I was surprised he knew it because most people don't know it. He had seen a program about it on public television, and he thought that was interesting.

Every marking period, the boys and girls have to give a book report to their small group. You're going to see what Alex did for his small group. My kids work on it at home and then bring it in. And they bring in props, but it is usually a minor part of the project. Alex spent three whole choice-time periods, (a total of an hour and one half), working on this project. It was driving me crazy, but I thought I should let him do it. I thought he was spending too much time building this creation, but it really helped him understand the story, so I let him do it. The written work of the project was horrible, and we need to work on that, but I don't know that without this [project], he would have been able to do as well as he did.

Watch him in this video as he presents his story, how he gestures with his hands. He said to me, "I don't need to build two castles for this story, because I can just move the castle to the other side, and it could serve as the other castle." [What follows is a transcription of the video which she then showed. Note the degree of expression used which the teacher is convinced would never had occurred if he had been required to write a report].

Alex: This is the story of the boy who fooled the dragon. Here's the set up I made of the story. First, there were two sons who lived in this wood cabin. One day, the father had enough and he kicked them out. When the King heard about this, he sent his guards out to get the older son who was known for doing wonderful tricks. The guards came running out of the castle. And they said, "You have to go get the white horse in the dragon's castle." When

he went to the dragon's castle, the horse made a little noise and woke the dragon up. He looked down and gave the horse a whack because he woke him up. Luckily Larrick was in there, but the dragon didn't know this. So as the horse ran by where he was hiding, Larrick took the reins and rides off to the King's castle. When he got to the King's castle, he gave him the horse. And then the King said, "You have to go get the magic blanket." So he went back to the dragon's castle. But this time he got caught and the dragon seized him. He decided to keep him until morning to cook him for dinner. Well, Larrick played another trick. When the dragon's wife was going to cook him, he pushed the wife into the boiling pot of water. And then he could get away. Then he stole the magic blanket and came back to the King's castle. And then the King said, "You have to get me one last thing, the dragon's head.""But on one condition," Larrick said, "That you make your daughter my wife." The King thought nobody would be able to do that, but Larrick knew a few tricks. So Larrick accepted the offer and stayed in the forest for a bit. Then when the dragon came there, Larrick had this orangey beard so the dragon didn't know [him]. Larrick had a box with him. When the dragon came over to where Larrick was, Larrick said the dragon couldn't fit in the box. The dragon didn't like that, and he disagreed, so he got into the box. So Larrick put the lid on. Once the dragon was in there, it was pretty tight, but Larrick pressed hard . He wanted to put more pressure on there so the dragon wouldn't come out. And he brought that back to the King. When the King opened the box, he got pulled in, and the dragon ate him. Then Larrick came, and he married the King's daughter's, and she became his wife, and he became King. The End.

Tammy: As difficult as it was, he wouldn't have been able to follow along without this thing [the three foot x two foot diorama consisting of a forest with trees, a large winding pathway, and a castle with two distinct sides and entrance topped with turrets.]which he created. That piece of it was so important for him. For someone like him, 19 Sequential and Precise 15, it helped him recount some of the detail and sequence the story. I have learned that I need to be more patient and let him build those things.

Case III: Nicole and Melissa, Teacher of 5th Grade and Inclass Support Teacher, Evesham Township Public Schools.

The following is a transcription of a video recording of Nicole [Sequential 21 Precise 29 Technical 12 Confluent 18] and Melissa's [Sequential 34 Precise 25 Technical 18 Confluent 21] presentation of "The Know It All" and "Where did that Idea Come From?"

The Know It All

Nicole: This is Aaron's [house]. He's Sequential 24, Precise 31, Technical 33, and Confluent 20. As you can see on the house he built, he grew ivy and the roof has tiny shingles. There's a great deal of detail. Now Aaron's very autonomous. He's highly technical and highly precise person and uses lots of detail to put together his project so neatly. And he accused everyone else of copying his work.

Melissa: What we've learned to say is, "yes, and that's a real accomplishment because you have created a very good model for everyone else."

Nicole: And when he started school, his mother said that Aaron wouldn't be very receptive to cooperative learning. And now, he's sharing his markers with

other students. He's really come a long way. He'll ask me questions, and I'll tell him to ask somebody else, and he'll go to that group, but not invite himself in. He has no people skills. He'll wait for people to notice him and then ask him if he has a question. And he's constantly bringing in things which he has done at home and wants to show us.

Melissa: That's how technical learners show what they know. "I will show you."

Nicole: That's interesting because he's such a bright child, but he initially comes off as arrogant child. I know now that it's his preciseness, but frankly that's how he became my prime example of a "Know It All" He phrases his questions in a way that makes you feel put to the test. For example, he frequently will begin a question by saying, "Isn't it true that...."

Melissa: That's the preciseness in him.

Nicole: And having him sit next to Erin and have them banter back and forth is a great leap for Aaron. And they work nicely together.

Melissa: We have been successful developing strategies, and the children have learned strategies to use to talk to and work with each other.

Where did that Idea Come From?

Another example of that [learning to work and share strategies] is our "Where did that Idea Come From" Case. Joey's Sequential 26, Precise 23, Technical 13, and Confluent 26. He has been referred to an Occupational Therapist for handwriting which is fine motor skills. After he took the LCI, we looked at his scores and what he wrote in short answers and we said, "These don't match. " We don't observe Joey as Sequential or Precise as he scored. His Confluent and Technical scores appeared to be very accurate. His written answers make it clear that he is full of quick "one-liners, " a real comedian. When we talked to Joey about how he answered the questions, he said that's what everyone was always telling him he needed to be - more organized and more correct with his answers! When we did the house project, we observed [captured on video tape] that he had Kelly assemble his house project for him [Kelly's Sequential 25 Precise 25 Technical 32 Confluent 15.

Nicole: [Referring to the video which is playing as she talks] Joey follows directions. He can do that. But he wouldn't do projects. And now that I have the understanding that it makes him uncomfortable to do that, I won't feel that he's goofing off. Because before, I would have said, "You didn't do you're project. You had to get her to do your project for you." Instead I realize that was a big thing for him just to hold the glue stick [to build the house], to assist her and have her assist him.

Melissa: Now we understand the reason for alternative assessments because if we say that the only way of assessing his knowledge of habitat or housing or what we need for shelter, is to build one, Joey is certain to fail. And that's why just building projects is harmful to the kids' sense of who they are as learners. But by combining it with writing about it or doing the research more learners can succeed. Look at Joey's house. It is the most unusual; the most unusual design and color. But then again it's not surprising to see a highly Confluent student color differently. Then when you turn the house around what do you find - a set of golden arches. His isn't an ordinary building; it's a McDonalds on the edge of color!

Nicole: I have learned that when you know what a student's learning pattern is, it helps you feel good about the student. What I mean is sometimes I feel guilty because there are students you just don't like because they get on your nerves. Once I understood that it's the way they are because that is how they learn, then I learned to relax and really not be put off by the student. Instead I've learned how to help that student put together a way that makes learning work for them. That may include working with someone similar to them in learning patterns, or it may mean sitting down and talking through our differences. All I know is I like the feeling of being more patient and more accepting.

Case IV: Lorraine P., Teacher of 5th Grade, Alloway Township Public Schools

The following is a transcription of a video recording of Lorraine's discussion of how she has formed a partnership with her students as a class

Lorraine: I can now see how children, especially those who are different than I am, approach learning. So now that I recognize some of their values and some of what they'd prefer to do, I think I can be more understanding, and more flexible as a teacher. I've also allowed them to see myself as a learner and we can help each other and give each other strategies as well as the other children. Sometimes I tell them how I would approach a problem. Sometimes, when I write, I tell them how I'm doing it. Or how I organize my work, so they can see how I work. Because I am very sequential and precise. So especially, I have a boy who is extremely confluent and some technical, who is one of my lowest scores in precise. And we work very quietly and show him some strategies I use. And I think all discuss how we did things in school because they were comfortable for us.

John: And do you discuss things that were uncomfortable?

Lorraine:Yes. I tell them as a sequential person, it is very difficult for me to do something different. Except, in my classroom, I am now more willing to try something new.

Case V: Michael B and Esther B, Teachers of 6th Grade, and Sandra D., Teacher of 7th Grade, Alloway Township Public Schools

The following is a transcription of an audio cassette recording of Michael, Esther, and Sandy's presentation of "The Student Who Drives Me Nuts"

Mike: Can I go back to the individual students and their differences? A lot of it revolves around us as individual teachers. Now this particular student, Courtney, [Sequential 25 Precise 28 Technical 14 Confluent 28] I know very well because we were constantly interacting with each other. But the issue was one of conflict in terms of when I wanted her to react in a math class. When I wanted her to do her math work, it became an extremely laborious, time-consuming, organizational task that would take a third of the class period before she would even get started. The same thing was true on a test. I interpreted that as resistance, that this is something she was avoiding, that

she didn't like to do. And so I interpreted it as she was thinking of every little thing she could to aggravate the situation or avoid it for her own sake, or again to create an issue of focusing on me in the classroom. Even in talking with her parents, they also saw this with her math assignments. It was only after she had taken the instrument, did I see that she is extremely precise--much more than I'd ever suspect her to be. And extremely sequential. Knowing that, now I can do a few things to help her, like instructions I can give her. And that's when the real learner would kick in. The other was that she was highly confluent, and she'd be discussing and going out there. And she wouldn't know where she was going, but she'd go somewhere. But with math, she couldn't do it. Maybe it was a subject in which she was not successful in. While immediately her real learner, came through, all of a sudden, it was, "This had to be here and this had to be there. And then we can get started. " And once she was started she'd be fine, but the preparation was extremely time-consuming. And knowing what I now know about her after seeing her scores was a tremendous eye-opening experience for me, because while I saw someone who was extremely successful just as dominating in one way, what I saw in my math class was just a refusal to do something and in reality, she really wanted to learn, but when it came down to it, she had to go back to her natural learning process of organizing and working thoroughly and precisely. **Sandy**: And in my class, her papers are filled with little eraser smudges because her sentences have to be correct. And if she's using pen, she has to use white out. And she'd could write until the sentence was perfect. And she couldn't go on to another problem until it was dry. Frankly, until I understood her LCI, I would say she was the one student who really drove me nuts because she dominates the class with her rapid flow of ideas. Now that I understand her learning patterns - specifically that she has so many in the use first category - she is truly a strong- willed learner. The other students understand this about her now and they have even commented on how she is learning to wait for others to express their ideas.And the other day she actually said, "Excuse me, I shouldn't have butted in when you were speaking. " This is progress. Not only did I notice this, but her classmates commended her for it also. Esther:I remember her writing last year and feeling she was trying to derail me or herself so she wouldn't have to get it done. She would spend more time asking, "What's another word for...? " And she would go to the Thesaurus to look it up. And she was constantly checking her spelling. And I took it as little strategies she had developed not to make the assignment "happen. " The group then discussed Courtney's LCI scores noting how the scores explained her classroom behavior and opened doors of communication and understanding which had been closed to her. Courtney's scores fall within the "I Use This First" range on two of her four learning patterns with a third pattern only one point away from "I Use this First!" She is high in sequence, high in precise, and high in confluence. As a result, she is a very "strong-willed" learner. After seeing her LCI scores, Mike, her former math teacher, commented, "Now that I understand her level of preciseness, I realize her need to have exact words to express her thoughts." He further commented, "Learning about her mixture of patterns has been a tremendously eye-opening experience for me. What I had failed to understand was she would begin her learning by using one pattern in literature class, another in writing and still another in math. I had only been seeing one side of her." Her literature teacher commented, "Using the LCI has given me an entirely different picture of Courtney. Not only do I understand her better; she understands herself. Now I can work with her better and so can her classmates."

Discussion

What these cases and the tens of others not reported here suggest is that when teachers and students form partnerships based upon the knowledge of each other's learning patterns, they are able to create an atmosphere in which they have the opportunity to formulate specific techniques or strategies for using their learning patterns effectively. As one teacher wrote in his reflective journal, "I first found the LCI extremely interesting for myself . My students also were intrigued by the instrument, and once they saw how their results so accurately reflected what kind of learner they were, they were hooked. We now discuss our LCI's openly in class, and we are trying to make the connection of how this self-knowledge will benefit us all. Of course, a benefit I overlooked, and one that is indirectly obtained through the entire process is that the students now realize that I, as a *teacher*, actually *do* care about how they learn and who they are as individuals! This is not always overt nor obvious to students. I have gained their respect on another level, and it has nurtured our classroom relationships in yet another way" (Evans, 1997).

The data further suggest the importance of understanding a learner's *natural strategies* for learning in order to teach a *new strategy* to the learner (Winne, P & Marx, R. 1980). A fifth grade math teacher wrote, "I learned that talking with the students about my own learning pattern helped them get a different perception of me. The students actually said that they can now learn how to do things in a more sequential manner, and it has allowed them to do better on their math work. It actually has improved their grades." A fourth grade teacher wrote this account of improved student achievement as a result of working as learning partners:

> For Leon assignments were a lost cause. He literally lost track of everything - time, materials, directions, and interest in learning. His report card consisted of primarily D's and F's. His LCI scores indicated his avoidance of sequence and his reliance on his technical reasoning. With that information in hand, his teacher and he began to strategize. He teamed up with a highly sequential student who helped him organize himself. His teacher describes the transformation. "He has learned to seek advice on how to begin assignments and how to meet deadlines. He has a special place where he keeps his most important papers, and he now carefully records his assignments in his assignment book - something he simply didn't do before! He has also learned to feel successful by demonstrating his knowledge through his technical skills. On "River Run Wild" he chose to construct a diorama which he completed on time and met all the requirements. This was a first! In the cooperative group project he took pride in constructing a bridge. I could see how comfortable he felt working with the tools. He got great feedback from the group too! This marking period he has earned all C's. We both feel we have succeeded. We have formed a real learning partnership. "

The most dramatic record of teacher and student partnership occurred when the teachers who had participated in this study helped to author the following two codes concerning learning responsibilities. These lists of behaviors suggest the depth to which the teachers and students have embraced the partnership concept of classroom learning:

A Code for Responsible Learning

As a result of knowing my Learning Combination, **I will**:

1. **Value** and respect the Learning Combinations of others whose learning processes are different from my own;
2. **Talk** to my teacher and my classmates about the processes of learning which are

unique to me;

3. **Listen** to other students when they describe how they learn best;
4. **Discuss** with my teacher or a classmate the frustrations with learning that I am experiencing rather than displaying my feelings inappropriately;
5. **Exercise** greater patience with my teacher, my classmates and myself as together we learn how to learn successfully;
6. **Help** my classmates by encouraging them when they are discouraged or confused about a learning assignment;
7. **Work** together in groups in a way that allows each member of my group to use his/her Learning Combination best;
8. **Put forth my best effort** to demonstrate what I know in a manner which allows the maximum use of my Learning Combination;
9. **Grow** in my willingness and ability to use those patterns of my Learning Combination which I currently avoid; and
10. **Make** a promise to myself that - each day - all year - I will be the best learner I can be!

The partner document to the Code for Responsible Learning entitled A Code for Responsible Teaching follows:

A Code for Responsible Teaching

As a result of knowing my students' Learning Combinations and my own, **I will**:

1. **Value** and respect the Learning Combinations of others whose learning processes are different from my own;
2. **Talk** about the processes of learning using simple terms and clear examples to which students of all ages and Learning Combinations can relate;
3. **Listen** to the spoken and unspoken messages students are conveying about how they learn best;
4. **Observe** student behavior noting the difference between behavior which is an outgrowth of frustration with learning and behavior which is intentionally disruptive;
5. **Exercise** greater patience and more understanding of student learning behaviors I previously found difficult to tolerate;
6. **Maintain** high standards of performance while allowing students to use different learning processes to arrive at the same learning goal:
7. **Group** students in order to maximize the use of their Learning Combinations;
8. **Assess** student work by allowing students to demonstrate what they know in a manner which allows the maximum use of their Learning Combinations;
9. **Provide** students with learning experiences which are relevant, challenging, and engaging of their learning processes; and
10. **Make** a difference - each day - all year - one learner at a time.

Significance

What does all of this suggest concerning the process required for developing true learning partnerships? The outcomes of this study suggest that having the teacher *understand* the learner as a learner - and having the teacher and student work together as partners so that the learner understands him/herself - holds great potential for the long-term facilitation of student learning. Glickman's (1990) point is well taken. "Teachers need to think about how students think, listen to them describe what helps them learn, and care with their colleagues activities and methods that get closer to active learning [in the manner in which the students describe they learn" (6). Or as one teacher wrote, "The integrity of teaching is in doing what is best for the student regardless of the current trend, the administration's need for documentation or pressure from the community. Our paramount responsibility is

to the learner. We must be open to their way of doing things, their interests and their needs. Only by empowering the learner can we teach in the truest sense of the word" (Whitmore, 1997).

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