



Models of Teaching: A Solution to the Teaching Style/Learning Style Dilemma*

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Teachers in an elementary school decide not to match students with teachers. Instead, the teachers learn a variety of styles.

Every spring, countless elementary school teachers and principals face the task of making student assignments for the following year. Some principals avoid the problem by moving whole classes, and others have only one or two teachers per grade and therefore limited choice in pupil assignments. Most elementary school principals and their staff members find themselves attempting to "match" (or optimally mismatch¹) at least some students with some teachers.

Frequently the matching is based on the recommendation of a child's present teacher and the intuition of the principal. In several elementary schools in Greenwich, Connecticut, parents' opinions are also solicited. But just how do teachers, parents, and administrators determine which teacher's style will be most appropriate for which

child? How is each child's learning style measured?

A group of teachers from the Parkway School in Greenwich, who were dissatisfied with their own methods of grouping children and who were interested in learning more about the possibilities of matching teaching and learning styles, formed a committee in the fall of 1977 to study styles of learning and teaching. Their goal was to

¹ See: David E. Hunt, *Matching Models in Education*. Ontario: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1971.

* While the conceptualization and planning for the staff development program described in this article took place before the publication of ASCD's *Selected Learning Experiences: Linking Theory and Practice* by Bruce Joyce, this author happily acknowledges her debt to the earlier works by Joyce and his colleague Marsha Weil.

find ways to improve the process by which students at Parkway School were assigned to a particular teacher. After eight months of study, the committee concluded that the problem confronting them was extremely complicated and that their efforts had yielded questions, instead of a solution. Among these questions were:

1. Which learner characteristics are most important in attempting a match with a particular teacher? Is conceptual level (however defined) more relevant than emotional maturity or motivational orientation?

2. How do you measure conceptual level, or maturity, or motivation?

3. How would you decide what to do if you *could* measure learning styles? If a child's conceptual level is 1.4 on Hunt's scale,² what does that tell you about his/her ability to function in a particular classroom? Or, if a student responds more readily to extrinsic rather than intrinsic rewards, should he/she be assigned to a teacher who relies on extrinsic reinforcement or to one who encourages children to value intrinsic rewards? Or, if you discover that a child's preferred sensory mode is visual rather than auditory, how do you know which teacher is more likely to utilize visual modes of presenting materials and concepts?

4. What happens to all your matching if a teacher moves, takes a leave of absence, or retires?

The committee became convinced that sufficient data about matching pupils to teachers did not exist. But their lack of success in reaching their initial goal did not discourage them from trying to provide each child with an individual learning environment. Perhaps teachers could learn to use a variety of teaching styles or strategies and thereby meet more of the needs of more of their students.

At this point, I became a consultant to the Parkway teachers. Their principal, Tom Brown, played matchmaker: I was looking for a school in which to introduce models of teaching³ as an approach to staff development, and the Parkway committee was looking for someone who could help them learn about varieties of skills and strategies. Together we began exploring the models or strategies that would help the Parkway

teachers expand their individual repertoires of teaching behaviors.

Models of Teaching

Models of teaching are strategies based on the theories (and often the research) of educators, psychologists, philosophers, and others who question how individuals learn. Each model consists of a rationale, a series of steps (actions, behaviors) to be taken by the teacher and the learner, a description of necessary support systems, and a method for evaluating the learner's progress. Some models are designed to help students grow in self-awareness or creativity; some foster the development of self-discipline or responsible participation in a group; some models stimulate inductive reasoning or theory-building; and others provide for mastery of subject matter. Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil have identified more than 80 distinct models of teaching from which a teacher can choose⁴—provided that the teacher knows the models exist and that they meet his/her needs for creating various learning environments.

My function, then, was to help the Parkway teachers:

1. Identify a range of desirable teaching skills and strategies, and determine which ones they wished to acquire;

2. Identify those models that contained or represented the teaching skills and strategies they had selected as desirable; and

3. Learn to use the models to accomplish their individual goals.

Application of Models of Teaching

The Parkway teachers discovered that they would not have to learn a large number of models in order to increase their ability to provide alternative learning environments for their students.

² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³ See: Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil. *Models of Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972. Second edition in press for 1979.

⁴ Bruce Joyce. *Selecting Learning Experiences: Linking Theory and Practice*. Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1978.

While some models create a particular learning environment, others can be used to achieve a variety of goals. Two models that are particularly useful to a teacher who wants to provide a variety of learning environments for students are the Inductive Thinking Model⁵ based on Hilda Taba's work and the Role-Playing Model⁶ developed by Fannie and George Shaftel. Together, these two models outline strategies for (a) teaching concepts from the simple to the complex; (b) providing structure or negotiating it with students; (c) selecting topics and materials for study or permitting students to select part or all of them; (d) fostering the development of empathy; (e) encouraging participation in group discussions and activities; (f) helping students formulate and test hypotheses; and (g) enabling students to engage in creative problem-solving and testing of alternatives. In addition, by learning to use these two models, a teacher practices modulating the cognitive level of a discussion from the factual to the conceptual to the theoretical, serves as a facilitator and clarifier of student discussions rather than as a source of information, and creatively uses incidents that occur in the classroom as concept or role-playing material.

Other models provide teachers with strategies that are not usually taught in teacher training programs. These models are valuable not only for achieving the goals appropriate to the model, but also for introducing variety into the classroom. Among these are Rogers' Non-Directive Model,⁷ where the teacher reflects feelings to help the student solve his/her own problems, and Gordon's Synectics,⁸ a model for developing metaphorical thinking in creative problem solving. Other models—because of their potentially powerful impact on student behavior—can also alter the climate of a classroom. Among such models are Skinner's Behavior Modification,⁹ Dewey/Thelen's Group Investigation Model,¹⁰ and Glaser's Classroom Model.¹¹

Engaging the Entire Staff

The Parkway committee tried not only to improve and expand their own ways of teaching, but also to involve the entire Parkway staff. To capture the interest of their colleagues, they suggested that I make a presentation in which I

would stress the usefulness of several models of teaching in meeting a goal of the school's Planning Team: To "stress the interrelationship of cognitive and affective growth in the academic setting." Since each teacher was required to "approach one unit primarily from the affective point of view" and to describe in an article for the school newspaper the relevant activities undertaken, and since several teachers were concerned about finding strategies appropriate for meeting this goal, why not bring to their attention those models that provide for affective as well as cog-

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nitive outcomes? If the teachers could acquire new strategies that were exciting and challenging and were also useful in achieving a particular school goal, perhaps most of the faculty would decide to participate in the in-service program the committee and I were proposing.

Modeling the Model

Because teachers—no less than children—possess unique learning styles, we agreed that a staff development program that provides teachers

⁵ Hilda Taba. *Teacher's Handbook for Elementary Social Studies*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1967.

⁶ Fannie Shaftel and George Shaftel. *Role-Playing for Social Values: Decision-Making in the Social Studies*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967.

⁷ Carl Rogers. *On Becoming a Person*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1951.

⁸ William Gordon. *Synectics*. New York: Harper and Row, 1961.

⁹ B. F. Skinner. *The Science of Human Behavior*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1956.

¹⁰ John Dewey. *Democracy in Education*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1916; and Herbert Thelen. *Education and the Human Quest*. New York: Harper and Row, 1960.

¹¹ William Glaser. *Schools Without Failure*. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

with a variety of teaching strategies for use in their classrooms must also provide various ways that teachers can acquire those strategies. We planned a two-tiered approach for our first offering: we proposed "mini-courses" designed around teaching goals (stimulating inductive thinking, fostering responsible participation in a group); teaching skills (providing reflective feedback, negotiating structure with students); and curriculum areas (social studies, language arts). We also suggested that teachers create their own approaches to learning about several models of teaching. This way we would appeal both to those teachers who prefer to choose from among predesigned learning experiences, modifying them when necessary, and those teachers who are more comfortable designing their own learning experiences, either alone or in consultation with an instructor and/or their peers. We hoped to "model the model." By giving teachers the opportunity to choose what they wanted to learn and to design how they would learn it, we might also be helping them understand how students might respond to a variety of options. Just as we hoped the teachers would learn to do in their classrooms, we tried to anticipate some of the probable needs for structure, sequence, and content, and also to rely on the "learners" to give us feedback about their own learning styles.

Evaluation

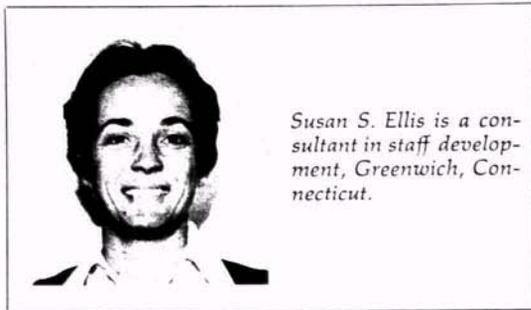
Models of teaching can also help teachers evaluate themselves. Built into each model is a mechanism for measuring or evaluating the student's learning, and built onto the models, as Joyce and Weil have designed them, is a mechanism¹² for observing and evaluating the teacher's performance of a model. Just how a teacher chooses to use that mechanism is an individual decision. Several Parkway teachers wished to engage in collegial observations and found the models useful for that purpose: a model provided an agreed-upon framework for determining a goal, the steps he/she took to achieve that goal, and the success of his/her efforts. Other teachers preferred to use my services as a consultant for private evaluation sessions. Because Parkway School has access to a videotape machine, these teachers could tape a lesson and then review with

me their objectives and their performance. Still other teachers preferred to evaluate their own performance without outside help. This method may appear questionable to some supervisors since there is no way to determine how accurately such teachers observe and evaluate their own behavior. It does, however, provide teachers with practice in following a particular strategy with well-defined steps and then in comparing their actual teaching behavior with their intentions. Eventually, as teachers become more comfortable with models of teaching and with the evaluation process, some may choose to share their experiences with others. In any event, "development" cannot be forced on teachers. We do not expect any teacher—no matter how skillful—to fully engage the efforts and enthusiasm of every student. Likewise, we cannot expect any staff development program—no matter how varied the offerings—to elicit the whole-hearted participation of every teacher.

Conclusion

Instead of attempting to make matches between teaching and learning styles, we are recognizing and capitalizing on the variety of styles that teachers possess and that they can acquire. We are also attempting to provide the children of Parkway School with a variety of learning environments that will be responsive to their individual learning styles.

¹² See: Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil. *Social Models of Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977; Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil. *Information Processing Models of Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977; and Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil. *Personal Models of Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1977.



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