Letters

Expert Teachers May Have Balanced Brains

I read the conversation with David Berliner with great interest (October 1986), and was particularly fascinated with Berliner's interest in expert teachers' ability to manage many things simultaneously, sum things up quickly, vary their program, and conceptualize at several levels. I suggest to him that teachers who demonstrate these competencies, which add depth and vitality to their teaching, are simply right-brain dominant during teaching.

A researcher might ask, for example, if mathematics and biology teachers are left- or right-brain dominant, or if they are equally strong in both spheres? Although the rationality, control, and logic of these disciplines suggest that they appeal to left-brain dominant persons, some biology and mathematics teachers, more hemispherically balanced, would be able to conceptualize thinking patterns, change pace and direction quickly and without notice, and respond to the subtle stimuli that appear in many classrooms. As an administrator and former teacher, I have long believed that a great dissonance occurs when a teacher who is dominant in either the right or left hemisphere interacts with students in a classroom who possess an opposite dominance. Perhaps, however, individuals with equally dominant hemispheres can deal both with the logic and reason of the sciences and the multiple stimuli of the classroom. It might even make them expert teachers.

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Learning While Driving
With EL on Tape

Educational Leadership on tape is the best thing that has happened to me since sliced bread! I have always found the journal to be thought-provoking, timely, and informative. However, finding time to sit down to read it without interruptions was impossible.

I can't tell you what a joy it is to jump in the car, turn on my tape, and learn something new before I even arrive at work. It prepares me for a day with administrators, teachers, children, and their parents.

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Flexible Teachers Reach Children Through Their Strengths

So many educational researchers urge teachers to use a variety of methods ("Let's Be Realistic About Flexibility in Teaching," October 1986) because students of all ages learn in ways that differ significantly from each other. Not only do people learn and retain identical knowledge differently, they also achieve statistically higher achievement and attitude test scores when the method of instruction complements their individual learning styles.

Determining which method to use has little to do with the teacher's values, beliefs, approved lists, or personal suitability; it has everything to do with which children in the group are likely to learn best that way. Teachers may choose to teach directly those students whose styles match theirs, but it is their responsibility to provide the others with resources or methods that permit them to learn through their strengths.

It is not difficult to use different methods with different students; it is just different. Most teachers can do it when they are shown; those who cannot should not teach. That's where they need to be flexible; they should consider a new career—one in which they can "do their own thing" rather than teach every student effectively.

References to support my statements are available on request.

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Give Hunter Her Due
Administrators Want Better Instruction, Too

Patrick Welsh's column (Voices, October 1986) used pejoratively some of the buzz words associated with Madeline Hunter's Instructional Skills Model, to show how the model should not be used.

Those of us committed to Hunter's work would like to see Welsh give the model its due. Hunter's intention has never been to "box teachers into sponge and closure activities." Perhaps Welsh intended to "raise the hackles" of some teachers already defensive at the notion of administrators working to improve instruction.

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Comments on Educational Leadership articles are welcome. Address letters to Editor, Educational Leadership, 125 N. West St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Letters may be edited for brevity and clarity.

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