NDPC Newsletter

National Dropout
Prevention Center/Network Newsletter:
Learning Styless & Student Achievement
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process communication model®

NEWSLETTER

Learning Styles

Learning Styles and Student Achievement

T HE FOCUS OF THIS ISSUE IS LEARNING STYLES—
PREFERRED WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING, THINKING, AND
PROCESSING INFORMATION. THIS IS ONE OF THE 15
EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES THE NATIONAL DROPOUT PREVENTION
CENTER RECOMMENDS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF DROPOUTS.
THERE ARE SEVERAL DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLE THEORIES
THAT ASSESS DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE COGNITIVE PROCESS.
THE MOST COMMONLY USED OF THESE THEORIES IS THAT
DEVELOPED BY BANDLER AND GRINDER. THEY SEPARATE THE
LEARNING PROCESS INTO VISUAL, AUDITORY, AND TACTILE/
KINESTHETIC MODES OF RESPONSE. THEIR RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT IF TEACHERS WILL PRESENT THE MATERIAL
TO BE TAUGHT IN ALL FOUR MODES, THEIR STUDENTS WILL LEARN MORE AND UNDERSTAND IT BETTER.

U nfortunately, this is not done in most classrooms. Michael Gilbert's research and that of the editors have demonstrated that most educators teach the way they were taught or the way they would prefer to be taught. Gilbert also discovered that 90 % of educators are auditory or visual learners. For these reasons, they predominantly use auditory or visual methods in teaching the subject matter. Not surprisingly, those who are auditory or visual learners tend to do well in these classrooms, and those who are tactile or kinesthetic learners do not. These tactile and kinesthetic learners frequently get into distress when no one teaches the way they learn. They get discouraged, act out, get into trouble, and drop out. This can be alleviated if teachers will include activities that appeal to all types of learners.

Another school of learning styles is that developed by Dr. Russell French and is based on a person's perceptions and senses. The styles are print, aural, visual, interactive, haptic, kinesthetic, and olfactory. Other learning style factors to be

considered are whether students are concrete or abstract learners; learn best actively or reflectively; or whether they learn better when they work alone, with one other person, or with groups of people.

Another school of learning styles was developed by Dr. Taibi Kahler. He found that people perceive the world in one of six ways, either through their emotions, through their thoughts, through their opinions, through their reactions to the world around them (i.e., whether or not they like their environment), through their actions, or through their reflections. According to this school, environmental, emotional, psycho-logical, and personal connections are also important learning style factors to consider. For example, those who perceive the world through their emotions learn best in an environ-ment in which they feel comfortable. One of the editors taught high school chemistry for several years in a windowless basement room known as "the dungeon." Students who perceive the world through their emotions entered the room in distress and had a difficult time

concentrating. When a new science wing was built with windows in the classrooms and a comfortable environment, the grades of these students improved one full grade. It is also important to this type student that their teachers and classmates like them. Those who perceive the world through their opinions may not care what the environment is like or whether their classmates like them, but they have difficulty learning from teachers they do not respect or who do not respect them.

All of the learning styles schools stress the need for teachers to use several different delivery methods so that every student has an opportunity to learn. As we have noted above, most often teachers present material in the style in which they are most comfortable. If we want all students to succeed, teachers must use several different delivery methods. This issue of the newsletter hopes to offer solutions towards that goal.

—Judith Ann Pauley and
    Joseph F. Pauley, Guest Editors
    judy@kahlercom.com and
    joe@kahlercom.com

Why Don't They Listen?

by Michael B. Gilbert

Have you ever wondered why some students just don't seem to listen? They don't follow instructions. They don't hand in their assignments as expected. They just don't do things right.

They do hear you, but they may not do what you want them to do or how you want them to do it. What may be happening is that teachers structure the learning environment more for teaching styles than for learning styles. Teachers teach as they were taught or as they would prefer to be taught. Most teachers use predominantly visual or auditory lessons and materials. About 90% of teachers prefer these learning modes for themselves. They are less likely to include learning by doing—that is, tactile or kinesthetic activities.
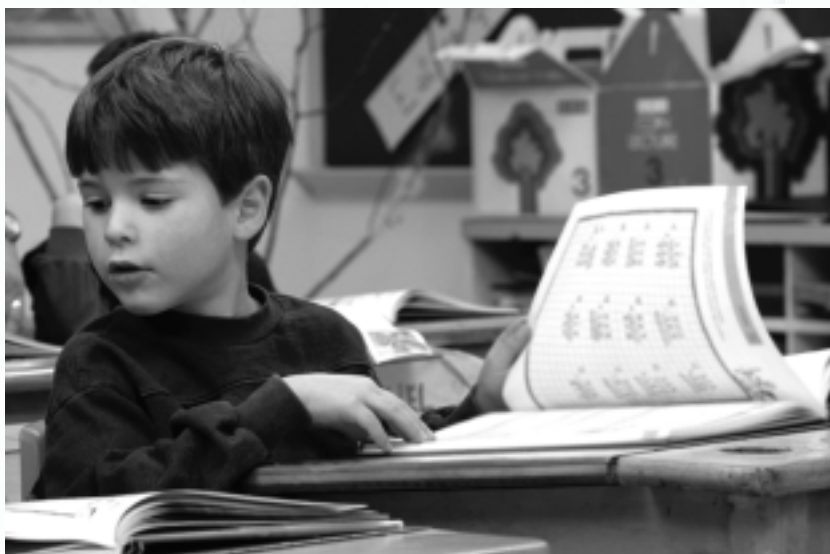
Many students who appear not to listen prefer to learn by doing. When asked, teachers put these students into a group that they might call "Most Difficult to Communicate with." The students are actually distressed by being in situations where it is difficult for them to get their needs met. In fact, many of these students are labeled (mislabeled?) Attention Deficit Disordered (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disordered (ADHD). They may have difficulty in classrooms that do not accommodate their learning preferences.

It is not surprising that these students do not perform well. They are likely candidates to drop out. In fact as they enter the world outside of school, they may have continual difficulty in their job choices, unless they find a work situation in which they can get their needs met.

School and jobs guide performance with expectations. Those in positions of power and authority set these expectations. Failure to comply with those expectations has consequences—either through reprimands or exclusion.

Students who do not comply may receive bad grades or just be frustrated. Either outcome can lead to self-exclusion. "Why bother? I can never do anything right." Those energetic, externally motivated students usually perform less well in

their grades—that is, they do not meet teacher expectations. What may be happening is that they are judged negatively because they prefer to learn in ways that are not offered in many classrooms.

What energizes these types of students is playful contact or many activities with quick payoffs. They enjoy an exciting environment. This does not mean they cannot function if there is no excitement, but they won't "sit still" for long if they are not stimulated in exciting (external) ways.

The key to working successfully with these students is *shifting*—moving from your frame of *preference* to that of your students. If they can get their learning (and other) needs met positively, they are less likely to get into negative behaviors.

More specifically, provide an environment where different types of learning are not only acceptable but also encouraged. Structure activities that allow all preferences to be accommodated—learning by listening, seeing, *and* doing. It may be challenging, at first, but you will delight in what students can accomplish if they are not distressed and are on task.

—Michael B. Gilbert, Ed.D., is a Professor of Education at Central Michigan University, eaclprof2@chartermi.net

Network Notes

Meet Our Guest Editors

■ Our guest editors are Dr. Judith Ann "Judy" Pauley, the CEO of Process Communications, Inc. in Bethesda, Maryland, and her husband Joe Pauley, the Vice President for Education of Kahler Communications, Inc. in Little Rock, Arkansas. Judy taught chemistry and physics in various high schools and universities in the United States and Asia for 42 years. She has been named outstanding science teacher three times for her ability to reach and teach all students. Joe has many years teaching experience at all levels and for the past 16 years has been helping teachers reach all students by successfully applying the concepts of Process Communication in the classroom. The Pauleys teach education courses as visiting professors at various universities from Maryland to California. They have authored several articles and have contributed to three books. They are co-authors of *Here's How To Reach Me: Matching Instruction To Personality Types In Your Classroom*.

Board Changes

■ The National Dropout Prevention Network welcomes Mr. Derek Baum, Director of Operations, Rosen Hotels and Resorts, Orlando, Florida, to the Network Executive Board.

New Editors for the *Journal of At-Risk Issues*

■ Meet Dr. Judy A. Johnson and Dr. Alice Fisher of Sam Houston State University, the new co-editors of the *Journal of At-Risk Issues*. Dr. Johnson, who has more than 25 years of experience in the field of education, has directed student research from undergraduate to postdoctoral levels (edu_jaj@shsu.edu). Dr. Fisher has 3l years of service in the field of education and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling at Sam Houston State University (edu_axf@shsu.edu).

In this mailing you will receive your copy of their first *Journal*. Perhaps you were able to meet Judy and Alice in San Diego, where they conducted several roundtable discussions on preparing manuscripts for publication. Should you wish to submit an article to the *Journal*, you can find guidelines on the web site, www.dropoutprevention.org.

Co-Editors of the *Journal of At-Risk Issues*
Dr. Alice Fischer and Dr. Judy A. Johnson
of Sam Houston State University

Crystal Star Award Nominations Sought

Nominations are currently sought for the three National Dropout Prevention Network Crystal Star Awards:

1) **The Award of Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention** for outstanding dropout prevention programs.
2) **The Award of Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention** for outstanding individuals.
3) **The Distinguished Service and Leadership Award** for outstanding Network members who contribute above and beyond to the Network**.**

This year, the nominations process will be done through email only and are due by June 30, 2003. Nomination criteria and complete instructions for submissions are provided at our web site, www.dropoutprevention.org. Dr. Mary Reimer of the Center staff will be coordinating the nominations process again this year. If you have any questions about the awards criteria or process, contact Dr. Reimer at reimer@clemson.edu.

The 2003 Crystal Star Awards will be presented at the National Dropout Prevention Network Conference in Kansas City, MO, October 26-29, 2003.

Improving Student Attitudes and Performance by Meeting Student Needs

by Judith Ann Pauley

The following article in this issue mentions a program called Process Communication and documents the dramatic successes teachers and mentors are having when they apply the concepts in reaching and teaching every student, especially the hard-to-reach students who are dropping out of school at an early age.

The basis of the concepts is to shift to the student's perception (how they take in and process information), speak their "language," and help each student get their psychological needs met positively. This is not a new concept. Many educators have stated the need to help students get their motivational needs met if we want all students to succeed. For example, Brokenleg, Brendtro, and Von Bockern in their book *Reclaiming Youth At Risk* (1991) state more than 20 times that we educators have to help students get their needs met positively if we expect them to live up to their potential. The Process Communication Model™ developed by Dr. Taibi Kahler, a clinical psychologist in Little Rock, Arkansas, identifies how each of six different personality types takes in and processes information, describes the "language" they prefer, and

identifies specific motivational needs for each type (see chart.)

There are six different "languages" spoken in most classrooms. If teachers want their students to hear them, they have to speak each of those languages at some time during every class period. This includes addressing the learning style of each student as well as using the verbal cues associated with each "language." Research shows that when teachers do this and include something in each class that appeals to the motivational needs of each student, students have a better attitude toward school, learn more, and behave better in class. When teachers don't individualize their instruction by including something in each class that appeals to each type of student, students may get into distress and display negative behaviors which disrupt the class. This interferes with their own ability to learn as well as that of their classmates. It also interferes with the ability of the teacher to teach. Typical negative behaviors (i.e., distress behaviors) of each personality type

Type	Need	Perception	Distress Behavior
Reactor	Recognition of Person/Sensory	Feelings	Makes Mistakes
Workaholic	Recognition of Work/Time	Thoughts	Attacks/Over Controls
Persister	Recognition of Work/Conviction	Opinions	Pushes Beliefs
Dreamer	Solitude	Reflections	Withdraws
Rebel	Playful Contact/ Fun	Likes and Dislikes	Blames/Acts Out
Promoter	Excitement/Action	Actions	Manipulates/Cons

are also included in the chart.

The improvement in student behavior is described as well as improved academic achievement. Initially it may be difficult for teachers to do this because they will be using muscles that are not well developed. However, when they see the difference it makes in the attitude and performance of their students, they will feel the expenditure of energy was well worth the effort. The teachers will benefit because, in the words of one teacher, they "will not be tired any more at the end of the day."

—Judith Ann Pauley,
judy@kahlercom.com.

Giving Young Men a Chance With the Leadership Academy

by Sylvester B. Hopewell

The DeKalb County Chapter of 100 Black Men of America, Inc. operates the Leadership Academy for young males in grades 4 - 12 who attend DeKalb County Schools. This mentoring program is very popular and follows the young men from the fourth grade until they graduate from high school. The

program is divided into two phases: Phase I for boys in grades 4-7 and Phase II for young men in grades 8-12. Currently there are 50 participants in Phase I and 20 young men in Phase II. In the past five years, 20 young men have graduated from high school, and at least six are currently in college. Several of the

young men in college had little interest in education and had to beat the negative influences in their environments in order to succeed. They were able to do this as a direct result of our program.

Although the actual number of adult mentors in the program varies depending on the topic being

(Continued from page 4)

addressed, usually there are from six to ten successful male role models who work with the participants in each phase of the program. On a monthly basis, the boys in the program are taught communication and leadership skills. Additionally, they are exposed to healthy eating habits and career information. Process Communication techniques are incorporated into the communication skills section of the program. The young men are taught what their motivational needs are, ways they can get them met positively, their preferred method of communication, and three different methods of communicating that are preferred by others. In addition, the men who conduct the program work hard to ensure that

they speak to each student in that student's favorite channel and help them get their individual motivational needs met positively according to their personality type.

The results have been very encouraging. There has been a noticeable improvement in the way many of the boys approach their work both in the Leadership Academy and in school. The grades of many of the young men have improved significantly as a result of the program. Over the past eight years, many of the boys in the program who have been labeled with behavioral problems or educational disabilities have improved the way they approach their school and extra-curricular responsibilities. This has

been the result of teachers and mentors shifting to the students' favorite way of communicating and helping the students get their needs met positively.

It appears that a number of the boys in the program are in a rebel or promoter phase and are at risk of dropping out. By speaking to them in their favorite channel and by helping them get their specific needs met, we find that, in general, the boys respond positively to the training and instruction they receive throughout their involvement in the Leadership Academy program.

—Sylvester B. Hopewell is President-elect of the DeKalb County Chapter of the 100 Black Men of America, Inc., mclcsh@emory.edu.

Four Styles to Learning

Compiled by Mary Reimer

According to Bernice McCarthy, developer of the 4MAT system, there are four major learning styles:

- Type One: Concrete-random or imaginative learners. They seek personal associations, meaning, and involvement. These learners want to know *why*?
- Type Two: Abstract-sequential learners. They seek facts, think through ideas, and learn what experts say. These learners want to know *what*?
- Type Three: Concrete-sequential learners. They are common sense learners who like to experiment, build, and apply ideas. These learners want to know *how*?
- Type four: Abstract-random learners look for hidden possibilities, learn by trial and error, and like to construct their own meaning. These learners want to know *if*?

Individual approaches to learning are based on how we perceive and process information. Although

individuals prefer a particular learning style, they do use all the styles when learning. The 4MAT system provides teachers with a systematic way to help all students think and learn well. Each student has a preferred task to match his learning style during every lesson. The students and teachers move through the four cycles of learning: *why*, *what*, *how*, and *if. Why* activities provide concrete motivation in an innovative way to create interaction and discussion on what is felt, and seen. *What* activities provide for reflective observation in order to think through the concepts and formulate them in an analytical way. Abstract conceptualization, integrated with hands-on activities, is used to answer *How*. Through the process of self-discovery, students answer the question *If*. During this stage, they adapt and share what they have learned.

These four cycles are divided into eight instructional events: connection, examination, imagination, definition,

practice, extension, refinement, and integration. The teacher's role changes as she moves through the cycle from motivator/ witness to teacher/ information giver, to facilitator, coach, to evaluator/remediator and resource. The goal of each lesson is to meet the preferred learning style of students, but also to help them develop strengths in the other styles.

—Mary Reimer, Ph.D., reimer@clemson.edu.

Book Review

Here's How to Teach Me: Matching Instruction to Personality Types in Your Classroom. Judith A. Pauley, Dianne F. Bradley, & Joseph F. Pauley. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2002. [ISBN 1-55766-566-4]

One size does not fit all, and certainly when we look at student learning, we know this to be true. The authors of *Here's How to Teach Me* understand this very well. Based on the concepts of Dr. Taibi Kahler's Process Communication Model (PCM), this guidebook focuses on identifying six different personality styles—"Reactor," "Workaholic," "Persister," "Dreamer," "Rebel," and "Promoter"—and how an understanding of these can lead educators into successfully teaching all the children in their classrooms.

Pauley, Bradley, and Pauley explain to readers how their students can be reached more effectively by communicating with them in a way that taps into their natural motivational needs. For example, students who are "reactors" need to know that *they themselves* are personally liked whereas the "workaholic" learners must know that *their accomplishments* are recognized. What motivates one student may actually turn off another student. Thus the language used in talking with students needs to incorporate words and concepts that are motivating for each of the six types. Likewise, types of learning situations—whether it's peer tutoring, cooperative learning, or direct instruction—also impact students differently, and it is a wise teacher who uses this knowledge to provide multiple settings in order to motivate all students to become engaged in their learning.

An interesting element of this book is its ground-breaking discussion of students (and teachers) in distress. The signs of distress for one personality type can be diagnosed if the teacher knows which type the student is and also knows what to do to relieve that student of distress. Some children are in distress if they have insufficient time alone; others need to be in the spotlight; still others need to be recognized for achievements; and others need to feel personally liked. These motivational needs, if unmet, can lead to typical problem behaviors and a failure to learn, including disruption of the entire class. Using PCM in these situations can provide many frustrated teachers with solutions to "problem kids" in their classrooms—both eliminating the problem behavior *and* enabling learning to take place.

This book goes beyond the usual learning styles approaches by providing a framework for identification of personality style, words used to praise and meet motivational needs, and tools to diagnose and treat students in distress. Written in an easy-to-read format, it can also serve as a powerful reference tool on the educator's bookshelf.

—Reviewed by Marty Duckenfield, NDPC, Clemson University, mbdck@clemson.edu.

Also Recommended:

- Jensen, Eric. (1998). "Learning Styles Made Easy" in Eric Jensen's *Super Teaching*. San Diego: The Brain Store.

- Kahler, Taibi. (2000). *The Mastery of Management*. Little Rock, Arkansas: Kahler Communications, Inc.
- Kauchak, Donald, & Eggen, Paul. (1998). "Student Diversity" in *Learning and Teaching: Research-based Methods*. Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.
- Levine, Mel. (2002). *A Mind at a Time*. New York, Simon & Schuster.
- Seligman, Martin E. P. (1998). *Learned Optimism*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Resources

The Center for the Study of Learning and Teaching Styles at St. John's University
The Learning Styles Network (Dunn & Dunn)
School of Education and Human Services
St. John's University
8000 Utopia Parkway
Jamaica, NY 14439
718-990-6335/6
www.learningstyles.net/

The Learning-Styles Network fosters lifelong academic, intellectual, and personal success through the promotion and dissemination of research, information, publications, and other resources focusing on learning, teaching, and productivity styles.

Kahler Communications (Washington, D.C.)
A Division of Process Communications, Inc.
6701 Democracy Boulevard, Suite 300
Bethesda, MD 20817
301-983-8447
www.kahlercom.com

This site has an outline of the concepts of Process Communication and several stories from educators giving the results when teachers use the concepts of Process Communication in the classroom.

Events

April 23-26, 2003   **Minneapolis, MN**
National Service-Learning Conference
National Youth Leadership Council
Weaving the Fabric of Community:
A Celebration of Service-Learning
www.nylc.org

April 30 - May 2, 2003   **Atlanta, GA**
Project-Based Learning Conference
Co-necting to Kids, Featuring Kids Who Know and Do
www.co-nectingtokids.net

"Learning Styles" Has Changed My Life

by Aaron Hatfield

Throughout my life, I have had problems concentrating and sitting still for long periods of time. This was especially true when I was in the classroom. I was always the child that received Cs in conduct on my report cards. I had many timeouts and loss of breaks simply because I was a very sociable little kid. I first realized I wasn't the assumed "model student" in my first school experience, kindergarten. I had the privilege of standing in the corner during class in front of all of my friends because I wanted to draw a goose of my own and then color it rather than merely color a picture of a goose my teacher handed us. She told me I was being unruly and then made me take my place in the corner. I never comprehended why doing something a little different was so wrong. I feel that if a student does not learn like the others but can grasp concepts better by doing them a different way, then why should they be punished?

Now that I'm in college, I have had trouble finding my place in the teacher education program. I disliked school in general, but there were some classes I never missed. Those were the classes that let me work freely, though these classes were few and far between. In the other classes I always seemed to be lost and could not keep up with the other students. I eventually became comfortable with the fact that I didn't fit into the whole teacher thing. The only time I felt like I belonged was in the actual elementary schools where I observed. The teachers would always tell me that I was so good with the "trouble makers" that they had in class. They were no trouble at all for me because that "trouble maker" was me 15 years ago, and I knew from where they were coming. I am currently taking a course in learning styles, and it has changed my whole outlook on life as well as school. I

> *Most importantly, if teachers knew that every child must be taught differently, more students wouldn't feel they didn't belong in school, as I did.*

really enjoy this class and have learned more about myself than anything else. I have thought of myself as not the brightest in the world sometimes, but since I have taken this class, I have a new understanding of how I learn.

In this class, I have learned about other peoples' learning styles as well as my own. This class has taught me that I'm not dumb; I just learn differently from the majority of students teachers are accustomed to teaching. If I had known this information earlier, I would have seen things differently in school. I think that, if this information could reach high school students, it would have a tremendous impact on them as well. They could then understand that they too have their place in the educational experience as well as the world. Just because you don't fit in with the "norm" at school doesn't mean you're unintelligent; it only means you have an individual learning style. I think that if all students understood how they learn, they would want to go to school and not drop out. Most importantly, if teachers knew that every child must be taught differently, more students wouldn't feel they didn't belong in school, as I did. If students recognized this, then more of them would feel the need to further their education by going to college. They will also understand that their way of doing things is not the wrong way, but simply *their* way of doing things.

Through my own experiences in the learning styles class, I have learned that it doesn't matter what your personality is because everybody is different in how they learn as well as what they think is the right way to do things. The most significant thing I have learned is that, because every person is different, every person cannot be taught the same way. However, every student can learn if the teacher matches the teaching style to the student's learning style.

—Aaron Hatfield is a third year student at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee.

This article was submitted to us by Dr. Okie Lee Wolfe, education professor at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee. Dr. Wolfe states, "The following essay was submitted by a student after he attended my learning styles class. He learned who he was, what his learning style was, how his style differed from those of his teachers, and for the first time, understood why he had struggled throughout his school career." Okie@wwgap.net.

Viewpoint

When I first began working with high school dropouts in 1988, I was struck by how they did not fit any of my expected stereotypes of at-risk kids. It was my job to prepare a group of 17-21-year-olds for the GED, teach drivers' training, and supervise work experience in a community agency setting. The first things I noticed were how many of my learners really valued learning and how many of them had some type of creative talent.

At the same time, I had returned to graduate school and was learning about Russell French's framework for the seven sensory perceptual modality learning styles. (See www.learningstyles.org/ for more.) The combination of all these experiences and ideas led me to do my doctoral research with those who had left school early and were both creative and preferred learning styles not generally rewarded in the traditional classroom.

What I found was that there were many more bright, creative dropouts in the Adult Basic Education population than one would expect statistically and that they were using their creativity and unusual learning style strengths to cope and thrive in settings more conducive to the ways they enjoyed learning. My criteria for interviewing these learners was that they scored above one standard deviation in creativity on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking and that they prefer sensory perceptual modality learning styles as assessed by the MMPALT (Multi-Modal Paired Associates Learning Test)—criteria that are not generally rewarded in the traditional school setting, specifically the visual, interactive, haptic, or kinesthetic styles.

These learning styles are not encouraged in the traditional classroom because they either annoy most teachers or do not match teacher learning/teaching styles. The visual learner needs constant visual stimuli to learn. These learners like color, movement, and detail. This is not surprising in the "Visual Age" we live in where children teethe on Nintendo and are soothed by videos or TV. They are usually punished or accused of not paying attention when they doodle, draw, or gaze out the window. The irony is that the visual process they crave may actually serve to focus their attention. Interactive learners want to talk about what they are learning as they go, also annoying to most teachers. Haptic learners love to learn by moving their hands and building or making things as they learn; somehow the hands serve to assist these learners in encoding information. Kinesthetic learners love movement and to learn with the whole body. They are agile and coordinated. Because they love movement and hate sitting, teachers may label them erroneously as "hyper." Although we may encourage learning by movement in the primary grades, by high school students are supposed to be quiet and sit still in class.

What is the bottom line? Not surprisingly, the 164 dropouts I interacted with and the 12 interviewed loved to learn, wanted to learn from experience, liked to use people as resources rather than teachers, preferred to use "real-world" objects and activities to learn, liked to do research on their own, and loved to discuss their findings with others. Doesn't this sound like educational approaches we already know about? Approaches like gifted education, constructivist learning, adult education, or mindful learning could all work for these dynamic learners. Let's make it happen for them!

—Donna Browning, Department of Educational Psychology at Mississippi State University, browning@ colled.msstate.edu.