

Center for Learning Connections

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NEWSLETTER

Winter 2009/10

From the Director

By Julie Jacob, Director

Cultural anthropologist Jennifer James spoke recently at a conference for college administrators and exempt staff. Her presentation was titled "The Adaptive Executive: Unprecedented Change." I really resonated with how she identified the typical human response to change: malaise, tiredness, thinking that the past is better, anxiety, inability to establish priorities, rage, and instability.

According to Jennifer James, change and stress reduce the brain's creative capacity by 25%. She said that challenges experienced today by most of us require us to be adaptable, authentic, and to have the qualities of character, emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, creativity, and influence. She defined "influence" as the ability to tell a compelling story, and suggested that now is the time for myth-switching. It's time to create a new story that supports the change we want and need to see. Giving up old myths however can be very difficult. It requires character, stability, confidence, grace, and the ability to notice that truth changes.

At the Center for Learning Connections, new fiscal realities for our clients have significantly challenged many of our assumptions as we approach and design our projects, products, and trainings. One well-received CLC response to the challenge is Leadership: The Experience 4 Series.

The 2009-2010 LEXP 4 Series is designed for leaders at all levels, to gain the skills and tools needed in these days of lean budgets. Monthly sessions provide engaging presenters in the morning, complemented by a panel of practitioners in the afternoon. Visit our web site for a wide range of webinars, workshops, conferences, and project resources:

www.learningconnections.org

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High Tech or High Touch?

By Dean Summers, Project Manager

Modern technology has become a total phenomenon for civilization, the defining force of a new social order in which efficiency is no longer an option but a necessity imposed on all human activity.

Jacques Ellul

I've been all over the Web trying to locate a certain quotable quote by the French philosopher, Jacques Ellul. The quote that leads this article is on topic, but it's not just what I was looking for.

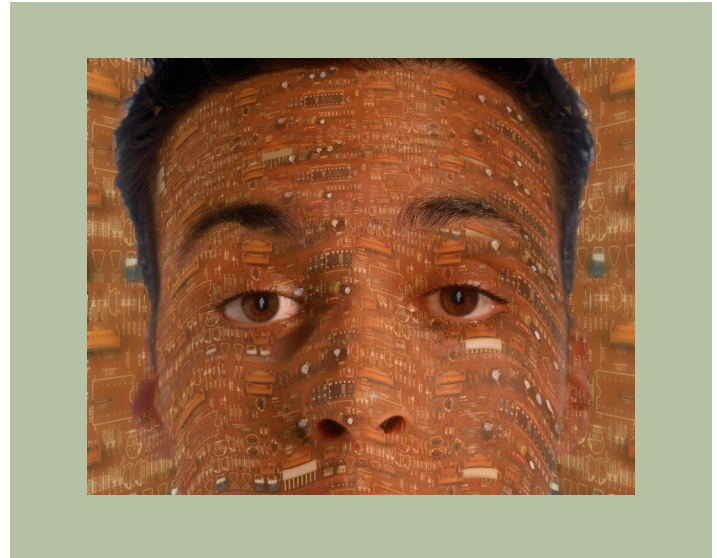
During World War II, Ellul served in the French Resistance. Then, after the war, upon resuming his former profession as a lawyer, he served as an advocate for French citizens accused of collaborating with the enemy. In contrast to many of his compatriots, Ellul saw the accused as human beings who should receive humane treatment.

For years, Ellul befriended "at risk" youth, helping them to become, as he put it, "positively maladjusted." He believed that being too thoroughly adjusted to conventional society was neither good for people, nor good for society.

The illusive quotable quote has to do with a warning against the intimizing of technology and technicization of intimacy. (I wonder if that's easier to say in French!)

I remember someone saying that Ellul was concerned that people can lose the human touch by becoming emotionally fixated on technology. Think of an intimate group of friends together in the same room, ignoring one another because they are all text-messaging their friends.

That kind of thing happens even in the helping professions, where you'd think we'd place the highest premium on person-to-person encounter, presence, and dialog. But, even here, we can lose the human touch. "Next!"



Dependable Strengths turns that around. Dependable Strengths is short for the Dependable Strengths Articulation Process (DSAP). DSAP is a time-tested process for helping people talk about their value to an organization or community. Applications of the process include self-efficacy, goal setting, job search, career satisfaction, teambuilding, and organizational development—the work of the helping professions.

Strengths articulation is a high-touch, human solution to the very human problem of preparing for a successful future. But strengths articulation is often confused with strengths identification. And, as you know, there are a number of high-tech products on the market that can help you identify your strengths in no time at all. "Click Here," and you're ready to be labeled—and shelved. "Next!"

Strengths articulation includes strengths identification, but it goes far beyond strengths identification. People do need to identify their strengths, but they also need to own their strengths, and they need to be able to talk about their strengths in ways that will get them hired, and promoted, and happy in their work, with life-giving connections to family, friends, and neighbors.

You can't make that happen with a high-tech solution. You need a high-touch solution. You need Dependable Strengths.

For more on Dependable Strengths®, visit: www.dependablestrengths.org



CLC is Expecting!

By Cal Crow, Program Director

After a quarter century of providing workshops, conferences and other activities covering a myriad of topics, CLC has decided to add another "center" to the family. It will be called the Center for Efficacy and Resiliency (CER), and will have a simple mission. To help organizations create cultures of efficacy and resiliency that help people to maximize their potential. The rationale for such a center is clear:

We know that self-efficacy (my belief that I am able to perform a task or manage a situation) is a major predictor of success in school and work. We know what contributes to it, how to increase it, and how to destroy it. (Note: Self-efficacy is not the same as self-esteem, which is a feeling. Self-efficacy is a belief.)

We know that resiliency (my ability to overcome obstacles and rebound from setbacks) is also a major contributor to success. We know that everyone is born with it. We know how to increase it, how to help people maintain it throughout their lives, and how to stifle it.

Individuals and organizations can improve their success rates significantly if they learn how to increase their self-efficacy and resiliency. Following are examples of how such a center can be of service to individuals.

- ▶ It can assist WorkFirst parents who doubt their ability to become self-sufficient.
- ▶ It can assist ex-offenders who really wonder if it is possible to find employment and integrate successfully into the community.
- ▶ It can assist students at all levels who find it easy to give up when times are tough and classes are "hard."
- ▶ It can assist educators and other helping professionals who wonder if they will ever be successful with "hard to reach" students or clients.

A Center for Efficacy and Resiliency can also assist organizations that do not have a culture of self-efficacy and resiliency. Examples include:

- ▶ Educational institutions that want to improve achievement levels and retention rates
- ▶ Organizations seeking assistance to deal with turbulence and change
- ▶ Organizations wishing to acquire and make better use of the collective knowledge of their members
- ▶ Organizations that would like to take the risks necessary for a successful future



The payoff from helping individuals and organizations become more self-efficacious and resilient can be significant. Some possibilities:

- ✓ Higher student achievement levels
- ✓ Lower dropout rates
- ✓ Fewer attendance and discipline problems in our schools
- ✓ More motivated students and employees
- ✓ A reduction in violence, crime, and recidivism rates
- ✓ Improved quality and productivity in business and industry
- ✓ Improvements in staff morale
- ✓ More effective decision-making
- ✓ A reduction in the number of people needing public assistance

Many of the topics that CLC has addressed during the past several years have a connection to self-efficacy and resiliency. Because of this common thread running through so much of what we already do, a logical next step seemed to be to create a center driven by those two major correlates of success.

Delivery is planned for February, 2010!

Professional Development through Self-Awareness

By John House, Special Projects Director

As educators, workforce professionals, and leaders, there are times in our careers when we experience a disconnect from what we say we believe. Our mantra becomes, “Do as I say, not as I do.” We develop blind spots that negatively affect our performance personally and professionally. The alternative is to invest in a strategy of self-awareness. Tools that can help include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Extended DISC, Dependable Strengths Articulation, and the Strong Interest Inventory. The Center for Learning Connections has staff experienced in the use of each of those tools and has helped a great many educators, workforce professionals, and leaders gain improved self-awareness.

Other tools that foster reflection and learning include conferences, targeted training, and workshops. Such tools can widen your field of vision to help you overcome the blind spots and avoid the pitfalls. The Center for Learning Connections specializes in setting up events that help you engage in regular self-awareness and self-improvement. These include the CLC Building Skills Conference as well as conferences and trainings managed by CLC in partnership with The ASSOCIATION, the Non-Profit Staff Development Coalition, the Center for Dependable Strengths, and the work of CLC’s Dr. Cal Crow, who leads workshops on managing change, building teams, and achieving goals.

Sometimes the situation calls for a deeper, more extended form of reflection and learning. Short-term, just-in-time training is not always enough. CLC’s Leadership: The Experience offers an extended, aligned series of learning opportunities for anyone with leadership responsibilities. Other such opportunities are provided by the CLC-managed Puyallup-Sumner Chamber of Commerce Leadership Institute. The Leadership Institute takes a cohort of emerging local leaders through a one-year course that covers a full array of key leadership issues.

And then there are situations that call for a more personalized approach to managing and change. For those situations, CLC offers professional coaching to individuals and groups that seek intensive, personalized self-improvement plans. Recently, I put to the test my own ability to align what I say and do. As a CLC Special Projects Director, I coordinate a variety of projects. Currently, one of my primary responsibilities is the Washington State Transition Math Project (TMP). The TMP is a math reform initiative that seeks to foster post-secondary college readiness in math for all students (www.transitionmathproject.org).



As the coordinator of a reform initiative, my job requires skills in communication, organizing, administration, and management—math not so much, except for budgeting. Even so, as the coordinator of a math reform initiative, I reflected on the fact that some of my own advanced math skills were a little rusty. How could I be compelling and authentic with students about the need to take more math and more rigorous math when I too exhibited some math-avoidance behavior? So, I recently set out to improve my algebra skills by completing a series of developmental evening college math courses. These past eighteen months spent as a student have been eye-opening. Hearing from my classmates the complex reasons behind their failed attempts at math informs the outreach work I do with parents and students. Seeing the challenges instructors face daily, and how hard they work, informs my coordination work with them. Experiencing math homework, tests, and study groups firsthand helps me be more realistic and authentic when communicating the importance of math despite the work for the student.

By taking those classes, I’ve been able to practice and reflect on math attributes, the habits of mind that educators overwhelmingly endorse for math success. Those attributes include persistence, taking responsibility, attention to detail, and intellectual engagement. Fostering math attributes is key to ensuring that each student has the opportunity to plan for a successful future. As a result of widespread endorsement of the attributes, the Student Attributes for Math Success (SAMS) project was created with funds from College Spark Washington. CLC is honored to help coordinate SAMS for the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges where work is now underway to foster math success attributes among students throughout Washington State.

I have seen firsthand how intentional personal growth enriches professional growth and vice versa. Throughout Washington State and beyond, the Center for Learning Connections provides ongoing support toward self-awareness and self-improvement for educators, workforce professionals, and leaders who value “Do as I do.”

NPSDC: your advocate for staff development

By Anna McCain, Project Manager

"I know the tremendous challenges that non-profits are facing with their budgets being cut, due to reduced funding for their programs, together with the ever increasing need for their staff to be trained to meet increasing demands on their job responsibilities and expectations to perform... the NPSDC truly is a wonderful resource for non-profits especially in these uncertain times..."

From a trainer who delivered a recent NPSDC workshop.

Throughout 2009, the NPSDC Committee has worked to keep the staff-development focus active in its constituent organizations. It has not been easy. Nevertheless, earlier this year, the committee engaged in a process to advocate for the importance and value of staff training and development.

Advocating for staff development reinforces NPSDC training:

- ▶ Encourages innovation
- ▶ Strengthens skill development and staff expertise
- ▶ Builds staff retention by showing that each organization cares for its employees
- ▶ Supports each organization's core mission
- ▶ Helps each organization to keep pace with the dynamics of the changing workplace, client/customer base and their needs

The committee agreed that, when communicating to each organization's leadership about the importance and value of staff training and development, especially through the NPSDC, it is crucial to recognize that:

- ▶ NPSDC workshops are results oriented
- ▶ NPSDC engages quality trainers who are willing to develop customized, relevant, and effective training curriculum
- ▶ NPSDC training is often more cost effective than in-house training
- ▶ NPSDC training is targeted and specific to address identified high-priority skill-building needs
- ▶ Participants at NPSDC workshops are encouraged to consistently commit to skill application and sharing of key learning

Above all, the message rang loud and clear: investing in training is investing in your staff!

The NPSDC Committee is currently planning staff development activities for 2010, based on the results of the recent annual Staff Training Needs Survey. In light of the budget cuts faced by our constituent organizations, we will be carefully exploring ways to continue to deliver NPSDC workshops that are cost effective and highly relevant. Check out NPSDC's web site for update and information on upcoming workshops: <http://www.learningconnections.org/coalition/workshops.htm>.

Over the past five years of our operation, there has been an increasing interest by non-member organizations from different workforce sectors (other than non-profit human services) to become a part of NPSDC. In light of this, the NPSDC Committee has decided to begin extending membership (in phases), starting January 2010, to other types of non-profit organizations in Western Washington. An electronic invite will be sent out in December.



For information about NPSDC and its workshops, contact Anna McCain: amccain@highline.edu

And visit the NPSDC website:
www.learningconnections.org/coalition



Non-Profit Staff Development Coalition

The ASSOCIATION: An Historical Perspective

By Kati Hays, Project Coordinator

The Center for Learning Connections has partnered with The ASSOCIATION in providing professional development opportunities to administrators and exempt staff at Washington's Community and Technical colleges for more than twenty-seven years. The ASSOCIATION is the professional development organization for ALL administrative, exempt/professional employees of community and technical colleges in Washington State. We keep our members current on significant issues in higher education through three conferences a year that combine nationally recognized speakers with local system experts.

The ASSOCIATION was established by a group of college presidents, state board personnel and the Northwest Program Development Center (now the Center for Learning Connections) on May 12, 1982, "to promote professional growth and development for Washington's community college administrators and the state community college system... [The] organization also strives to develop and promote leadership and managerial perspectives on issues relating to higher education" (from a 1986 conference brochure).

In addition to addressing cutting-edge issues, the ASSOCIATION has provided considerable financial assistance in the form of scholarships to college students and classified college staff to help them pursue careers in the community and technical college system. Since 1987, twenty-three Earl Norman Awards have been presented to administrators who have made outstanding contributions to The ASSOCIATION and within the college and the community and technical college system. Additionally, thirty-four employees received The Distinguished Service Award over the past fourteen years.

Serving as the executive office for The ASSOCIATION, the Center for Learning Connections continues to pursue the vision of The ASSOCIATION founders. Together, during these trying economic times, we have made efforts to make professional development opportunities more accessible, both in delivery modes and cost. Since the summer of 2008, more than 1,516 people from thirty-six colleges (including State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and District offices) have participated in ASSOCIATION events.



The thoughts of one administrator who has been involved for years exemplifies our mission:

I have been attending ASSOCIATION meetings since...1991. Consistently, I have appreciated the professional and highly respectful conferences that were ASSOCIATION-sponsored events. I learned about the system through engaging with a cross-disciplinary array of community and technical college professionals. This added to the richness of the experience for me, because I came to understand, via a system perspective, how things fit and work together.

Attending ASSOCIATION conferences helps me do my job better and to grow and develop as a professional. Conference planners always utilize powerful keynote speakers who share perspectives on a wide number of pertinent, contemporary issues facing us as community and technical college administrators and educators. Break-out sessions are with smaller groups, thus becoming easier to discuss topics with educators from across the state, and sometimes with other states and countries.

For more information, contact Kati Hays:
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or visit:
www.learningconnections.org/association

