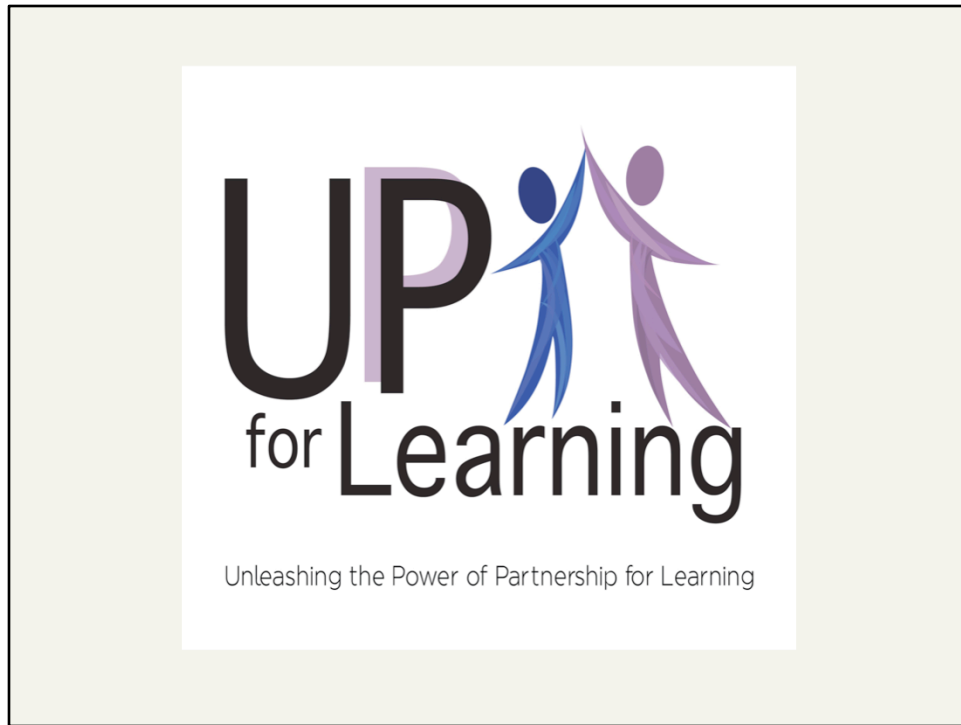


This morning I am going to share with you some reflections about engaging learning, and in particular, the case of the missing “R”

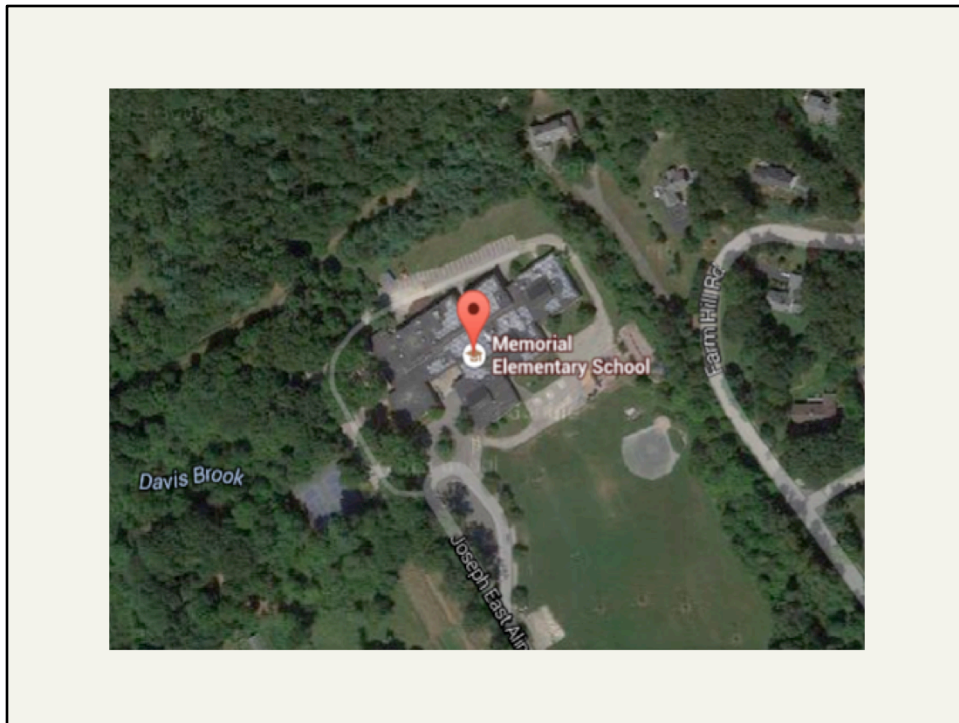
I don’t know how many of you were ever fans of Nancy Drew mysteries,(or the Hardy boys) but the defined my early childhood summers, reading on the porch. So I wanted to introduce a little mystery into your lives this morning, as we together solve the “Case of the Missing R”. By the way, the three known Rs which contribute to engaging learning are “rigor, relevance, and student-teacher relationships”



I come here in my role as the founder and executive director of a Vermont based organization called UP for Learning – which stands for Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning. We are entering our 7th year in existence, and have been providing support to middle and high schools around the state. Some of you may have heard of the Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together initiative, or the Getting to Y – Youth Bring Meaning to their Youth Risk Behavior Survey initiatives. Those are both under the umbrella of UP for Learning.

I would like to introduce myself and also introduce the “missing R” through a personal story. I believe that all of us, if given the opportunity, could rewind the video of our life stories and freeze frame 1 – 2 – 3 moments or events that changed the course of our lives. This story is one of my moments, and it speaks to the power and potential of personalized learning and flexible pathways.

Our focus is to elevate student partnership in both learning and decision making. We are working closely with the Agency of Education to help schools around the state to be able to effectively build public understanding and support for Act 77 – but more about that later....



I grew up in Natick, MA – and was one of 600 in my class.

In my senior year, a new innovative course was created called something like “Child Development”.

It met for a double block each day. For 2 weeks at a time we learned about child development and teaching. For the next two weeks, I student taught in a 1-2 grade classroom in a local elementary school – Memorial Elementary.



This was my class of 23 first and second graders.

You will see Mr. Gouveia in the upper left hand corner – a rather formidable looking man I might add. I was rather intimidated initially.

Early on, he let me develop thematic units for the students. For instance, I developed a unit to teach French – one of my more successful teaching feats. I can still see the faces of the children as they picked up their nametags in French – Frank because Françoise and Ellen became Eloise...and they entered into the magic of their new personas through language – as you well know, I experience with Mr. Gouveia the joy of those moments when you have nailed it.

I also had some contrasting experiences. Like the day when I decided to make potatoe lattkies with the students because the date coincided with a jewish holiday. Mr. Gouveia actually left me with the students as he ran an errand at the main office of the school. Things seemed to be going well, we had made the batter and it was in the blender....



My guess is that many of you have experience a slo-mo moment where you can see impending disaster unfolding but can not intervene? Well this was mine.

During Mr. Gouveia's absence, as the batter was being mixed, I turned to see one of the students captivated by the blender....and reaching for the cover. Just as Mr. Gouveia was

returning to the classroom, that cover was removed and you can well imagine the scene....

Needless to say, I was horrified at what I had (or had not) done – and fearful of Mr. Gouveia's response – my concern that I had failed him – broken his trust in me.

You might imagine my relief, when I witnessed his laughter at the scene and readiness to help clean up the mess with me.

I learned so much in that internship experience, about

- 1) how challenging it is to be a teacher,
- 2) how motivating it was when I was in a position to do work that felt authentic to me,
- 3) how learning was both about "nailing it" as well as learning through what felt like utter failure
- 4) how invaluable it was to have a caring guide by my side, who believed in my capacity, let me take risks and supported me to learn from whatever the outcome was -

- Majored in child psychology in college
- Student taught in England for a semester post-graduation
- Pursued a Doctorate in Education
- Retrained as a school psychologist as a mid-life pursuit to return to a set-aside-passion
- Founded my own non-profit organization to help teachers and students work together to create engaging learning opportunities together – sharing responsibility both for learning and decision-making in our schools.

So how did this influence my life so profoundly?

And if I had to pare this back to the heart of why this year long experience was so memorable and profound, it was because of the element of “the missing R” ...



Drum roll please



It was true shared responsibility.

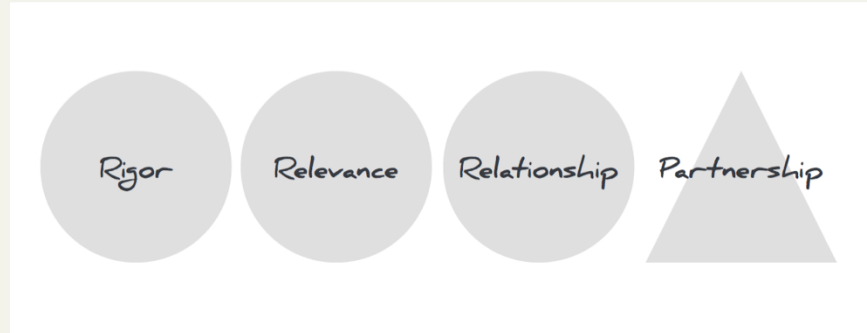
I was vested with significant responsibility and there was a powerful implicit message that told me even if I wasn't sure I was competent, other people believed I was and that let me take

risks to grow and learn.

I knew that I would get as much out of this opportunity as I put into it – and I worked harder in this course than any other during my high school experience.

When we think about that age old adage, "The person doing the work is the person learning" - there as no doubt that I was learning.

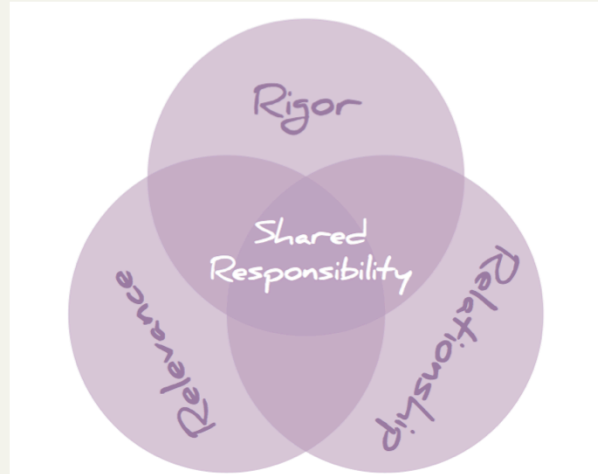
Engaging learning begins with...



Then a student named the 4th R



Shared responsibility brings new depth and “color” to the 3 Rs



Even good practices just get better with the overlay of this 4th R.

For example, consider in the rigor domain how good it is when students assess their own learning with a clear rubric you have developed....

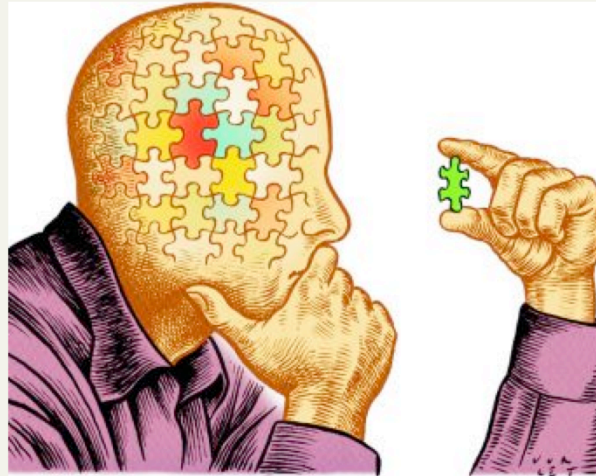
But how much better it becomes when they have a chance to participate in creating that rubric, and then self-assessing their learning.

Consider how effective it is to find a strong metaphor between a current event and what you are studying in social studies class...

But think about how much is added when students themselves co-teach a part of your social studies unit based on their chosen area of focus and research which they found that links the
past to the present

In terms of relationships, consider the opportunity of moving from the strong relationships you have with students in individual classes and content areas, to a relationship with a student which is founded on exploring their broad-based interests and goals and helping them create a personalized learning plan that you help them actualize.

Metacognition:
the ability to reflect on one's own learning within a
student-teacher partnership



Learning is enhanced through meta-cognition, or the ability to reflect on one's own learning within a student-teacher partnership.

Researcher John Hattie (2012) conducted an extensive meta-analysis of key variables affecting learning and concluded that “the remarkable feature of the evidence is that the biggest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching, and when students become their own teachers” (Hattie, 2012). Others describe this capacity of being a “learner of learning” as meta-cognition.

When students develop the skills to predict and self-assess their learning on an on-going basis, teachers can be highly effective guides or “activators,” continually calibrating the level of challenge and relevance based on their strong relationship to the learner. “It is the feedback to the teacher about what students can and cannot do that is more powerful than feedback to the students, and it necessitates a different way of interacting and respecting students” (Hattie, 2009). Current research highlights the importance of active learning by means of an ongoing student teacher partnership (National Research Council, 2000).

Learning is active

Learning must be active & it is near impossible to share responsibility in learning without becoming more active as a student.

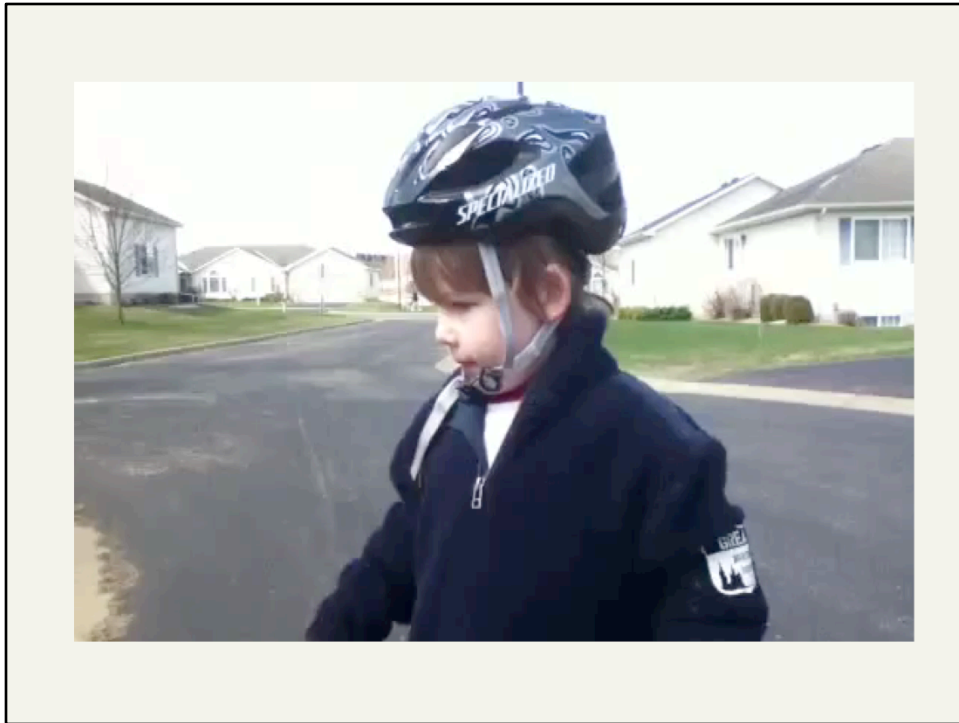
Shared responsibility requires a partnership in learning, moving the role of students along a continuum from passive to active participants in their education. When students become active participants in their learning, research has affirmed that their brains are better able to process, retain, and transfer their learning to new situations (National Research Council, 2000; Recanzone et al. 1992, 1993; Ruytjens et al. 2006; Weinberger 2008; Winer & Schreiner, 2011). “In the brain, the mental manipulation required to construct understanding fuels the neuroplasticity that yields durable, long-term memory “ (Willis, 2014).

The act of struggling to solve a problem is directly related to the amount that is learned and its durability (Brown, Roediger & McDaniel, 2014). When students share responsibility in their learning, they are more likely to perform better academically, have a more positive self-concept, sustain better relationships with their peers, have a greater sense of responsibility, and demonstrate higher rates of college graduation (Zelden & Collura, 2010).

Student motivation & engagement is enhance with increased levels of responsibility and control over their learning.

Student motivation and engagement are enhanced with increased levels of responsibility and control over their learning.

Students are more likely to be motivated and engaged in an activity when they feel they have a voice in how the activity is carried out and how it concludes (Eccles & Wigfield 2002; Hinton et al. 2012). Intrinsic motivation is fostered when students share in the responsibility of co-creating their educational experience. “Fostering student voice—empowering youth to express their opinions and influence their educational experiences so that they feel they have a stake in the outcomes—is one of the most powerful tools schools have to increase learning.” This important finding arose from an extensive literature review conducted by Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) to identify ways to increase motivation and engagement.



I now invite you to begin to think about your own hopes and aspirations for your PLPs and implementation of Act 77. I would ask you to think specifically about the role of shared responsibility in this life event and in your current goals.

I am going to show you a video, lasting only a little more than a minute, that embodies much of the essence of the potential of Act 77 implementation. As you watch this video, please be thinking about the role of shared responsibility in this experience, and other qualities or attributes you want to have within your PLP implementation.

You will then have time to talk in groups of 3 at your table about your reflections.

You just never know....

- Foster natural curiosity
- Explore a developing interest
- Find a passion

As you know, personalize learning plans, utilizing flexible pathways will look as different as there are students creating them.

I would anticipate a mix of rich classroom experiences to mastering core content, along with stories like mine, where learning will also occur in differing contexts I would like to just share one ah-ha I had recently about Act 77.

A student who had been on a school team which was working on Act 77 implementation noted that it was all about letting students pursue their passion. A wise colleague of mine, Daniel Baron, suggested that there will be a predictable continuum of opportunity with personalized learning plans, reminding us all that passion is a high bar to set for the outcome of PLPs.

Instead he noted that first and foremost, they are designed to foster the natural curiosity of students – letting them test out things that they are curious about. Some of this testing through PLPs will lead to a deeper interest, which they might pursue (or might not).

Finally, this deeper interest may evolve into a passion – for some, like me, that will be over the better part of a life time.

