

Learning, Transfer and Impact

Jane Vella

Global Learning Partners

jane@globalearning.com

Here is an example of a design that worked for learning and immediate transfer (as well as long term transfer) and, we hope, impact (always in the future). You tell me: What do you see here that made for learning, transfer and sizable impact?

GLOBAL LEARNING PARTNERS FALL 2008 MEETING

WHO

Seven Partners: Karen Ridout, Peter Noteboom, Jeanette Romkema, Darlene Goetzman, Peter Perkins, Marian Darlington-Hope, Valerie Uccellani. Staff: Joan Dempsey and Debra Cagwin

WHY

An occasion, a gathering, an opportunity for a quantum leap. I have been invited to share some thoughts on learning.

WHEN

Ninety minutes in the a.m. Monday 9/08/08

WHERE

A room at Karen's home

WHAT

Nine participants' history of learning with GLP

A paper: **NEW THOUGHTS ON LEARNING and TEACHING Signs of Dialogue Education™:**

1. Inclusion
2. Design: preparation
3. Substantive new, relevant content
4. Engagement through learning tasks
5. Open Questions: consistent, patient
6. Productivity : a new creation
7. Potential for transfer
8. _____

WHAT FOR

By the end of these 90-minutes, all will have:



- **Named** the date of our meeting GLP (JUBILEE) and one “learning”
- **Read** and **analyzed** the paper **NEW THOUGHTS ON LEARNING and TEACHING** (below)
- **Reviewed** and **added** to the “signs of Dialogue Education™” from our experience and study
- Selected one of these signs that will be most useful to you as you examine your work in GLP and in the world

HOW: Learning Tasks

1. Meeting GLP and learning (Time Line)

Put your Post-it Note with your name on this timeline stating when you met Dialogue Education™ or GLP. We’ll read the entire timeline.

In threes, **share** one pre-eminent learning you personally have had as part of this GLP endeavor. **Write** that on a note and **put** it with your name tag on the timeline. We’ll hear all.

2. New Thoughts on Learning and Teaching

Read and **highlight** what strikes you about the concept in my three page paper: “New Thoughts on Learning and Teaching” (below).

In those same threes, **share** what you highlighted. What questions arose for you as you read? We’ll hear all.

In those same threes, **name** what you see as an eighth (or ninth etc.) essential sign of Dialogue Education™. We’ll hear all.

3. Your Works and the Essential Signs

In your threes, **project** ways these *essential signs* might be useful in your work in Dialogue Education™: designing, teaching, marketing, communications, documentation, evaluation, management.

e.g. management

1. “**design**” - preparation of team meetings
2. “**productivity**” - new constructs and new products

4. Synthesis

Listen and **respond**.

This workshop has been designed to model what I am “teaching”. Thanks for your responses to my e-mailed Learning Needs and Research Assessment (LNRA). They helped me focus and also showed me what not to try to do.

I aimed the design at all nine of you (**inclusion**) and the learning tasks involved everyone.

I spent much time in **design and preparation** – a great deal of indirect time, that is – not actually writing the design but thinking about it, mulling over it, cutting it back and focusing on a single set of content rather than a wide review.

The new, substantive content came from me, not a text. I was tempted to use a text or some famous educator. For example, I considered Donald Oliver (my favorite), and Belden Lane's ***The Solace of Fierce Landscapes***, and other books I've been involved with recently.

But this set of content is from me – from my experience, study and observations. That's bold!

The Seven Design Steps keep me from going on and on...and assure real **engagement**. You did the work. Therefore, you might have learned! The Four I's come into design for me:

- Inductive work: #1
- Input work: #2A
- Implementation work: #2B
- Integration work: #4.

In my responses to your work, I kept **open questions** in mind, so I did not go on and on, but could turn it back to your learning, not my brilliant teaching!

#2B invites **productivity**, as does the dialogue around the signs in #2A. While #3 deals with both productivity and transfer.

As you see there are many "signs" of Dialogue Education™ in this workshop. That is what we want to be on the lookout for. That is what we want to strive for to ensure authentic learning for authentic response.

Thanks for this invitation and this opportunity, and for your generous responses.



Global Learning Partners staff and Partners learning with Jane.

NEW THOUGHTS ON LEARNING AND TEACHING: Signs of Dialogue Education™

by Jane Vella

We do not ever stop learning. My own struggle is to filter and choose what I learn at this point in my life. In this paper I will share some of my new thoughts on learning, and on teaching.

These are new thoughts and yet they have roots in my own personal history and in the history of this beloved enterprise we call Global Learning Partners. Each of those words: Global Learning Partners Inc. - is newly significant: Global: we are known and esteemed in South Africa, Thailand, Chile and New York City! Global also signifies applications - from WIC mothers to professors to development specialists in health and housing. We are indeed global. Partners has rich meaning - many levels of significance. The Seven GLP Partners with Staff, Fellows, Associates and Certified Teachers act in that global arena. We all partner in learning - continuous, documented, strenuous learning.

I remember an event in the mid-nineties at Avila Retreat Center. During one of the Learning to Listen Learning to Teach courses, Mary Hoddy, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, was working with her colleague Jay Eckleberry to do their first design. Mary was overwhelmed by her realization, as she used the principles and practices in design, that what she was trying to do was essentially different from what she had been doing as a teacher all her life. She wept. She wept without ceasing for a long time while her patient partner consoled and waited on her. When she stopped weeping, she explained, "I was grieving the death of the professor."

That's learning at "the cellular level" to quote Karen Ridout. That's a constructivist moment - Mary took Paulo Freire's concept "the death of the professor" and felt it, consumed it, made it her own so that it shook her to tears. That's the kind of learning we are designing. That's the only kind of learning that will address the needs of the 21st Century for a new moral order, for a comprehensive peace, for an end to nuclear weapons, for ecological concern, for structures of economic equity.

A Founding Proposition

We call this education system "Dialogue Education™". Whatever we call it, we know it is founded on a single proposition: **learning** is the purpose. What kind of learning? We mean learning that is personal, engaged and contextually critical, shared by teacher and learners alike. I will do anything, anything to assure learning. As Mary Hoddy discovered, that sometimes means not teaching.

When staff are dealing with new clients or with the Partners, **learning** is the purpose. When Jane is invited to offer a ninety-minute session at the semi-annual GLP Partners' conference, **learning** is the purpose. When you are faced with a group of adults who need to decide how to organize a community in Tanzania to set up mosquito nets in every home, **learning** is the purpose. There is no human encounter that is not the realm of Dialogue Education™.

This was not explicit in my initial work at teacher. I learned how to **teach** in the Teachers College where I did my undergraduate work. In graduate school I learned how to revere brilliant teachers and return their brilliance to them somewhat tarnished in my blue book

renditions. I continue to dream of a teachers' college where Dialogue Education™ is the norm!

Even when I started JUBILEE Popular Education Center here in Raleigh in 1981, the workshops were on Adult Education: How to Teach Adults. We did not even talk about learning that much. Over the years, because we were using Dialogue Education™, I learned the proposition that was initially implicit: **learning** is the purpose.

Thanks to Peter Noteboom and Peter Perkins who, in 1998 dove into murky waters to save the sinking ship that was JUBILEE (and me!), and kept this enterprise breathing, we have been able to learn together not only the explicit founding proposition, but also some clear essentials.

Signs of Dialogue Education

Whatever we call this system, we can agree that in every context, the following signs are evident and necessary:

1. Inclusion
2. Design: preparation
3. Substantive new, relevant content
4. Engagement through learning tasks
5. Open Questions: consistent, patient
6. Productivity : a new creation
7. Potential for transfer
8. _____

By **inclusion** I mean that everyone is addressed and involved in the learning process. Everyone is different; each person's preparation and readiness level is distinct and idiosyncratic; each learner's context is unique. Inclusion accepts all this and moves us to design for universal access.

By **design: preparation including Seven Steps and LNRA** I mean all the hard work we do to design a session – a course, a lecture, a workshop, a class, a meeting. The Seven Design Steps are a treasure and some connection with a sample of the learners to survey their perceptions is what we mean by LNRA – learning needs and resources assessment.

Any time spent in design is time spent in honoring what we are as Dialogue Educators and the proposition that moves us: **learning** is the purpose.

By **substantive new, relevant content** I mean that we have done our homework, learning not only what the learners need to meet the situation but also what the cutting edge research on that content is. The effort of learning is great: what they are learning must be significant, current research.

By **engagement** I mean that we always involve the learners in some kind of learning task – always. Sometimes that is explicit: sometimes not. I tell a vivid, riveting story: the group is engaged and the story itself demands a response from the listeners. That's implicit and it is engagement. The explicit aspect is in the selection of the story and the skill with which it is told. In Dialogue Education™ learners are learning when they are engaged.

By **open questions: consistent, patient, learning tasks** I mean consistent attention to the design of conversation or dialogue or learning tasks so that the “other” is the Subject or decision maker. This is a subtle sign, and a vital sign. When closed questions, or ambiguous “fishing” questions are asked, the learners know they are not Subjects, decision makers, but objects of the teacher’s power. The purpose is **learning**.

By **productivity: a new creation** I mean that the learning is evidenced by some product: a decision, a written summary of the new content, a synthesis, a three-dimensional design, a plan to meet and continue the conversation. Without a product, learning can be too subtle, too informal, and too cognitive. The product is a link to both evaluation of the learning experience, and to the potential transfer.

By **potential for transfer** I mean that the confirmation of learning evidenced in the “product” assures teacher and learners that they can take this new content into their lives and work. Transfer is the evaluation term coined by Paula Berardinelli in her “theory of impact”. It means the new knowledge, skill, or attitude is used in the learners’ context sometime after the learning event.

The twelve principles and practices named in ***Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*** are, I believe, contained in these seven signs of Dialogue Education™. If and when you see these signs, I suggest folks are using the principles and practices of Dialogue Education™ – even if they have never read any of my books or done a single GLP course.