

A Participant's Workshop Experience

Putting the Person in Personalized Learning

Workshop participant and past contributor to 2e Newsletter Julie Skolnick offered to share her experience as a participant in the event described in this issue's "News from the 2e Center" column.

It came to my inbox one morning, from the 2e Center in Studio City, California — an announcement that Susan Baum and Robin Schader were conducting one-day workshops sharing four tools they developed for practitioners (educators, counselors, and therapists) to help them put "the person in personalized learning." "Wait a minute," I thought to myself. "A full day, at the Bridges Academy with the Susan Baum and Robin Schader from the 2e Center? Is it ridiculous for me to travel across the country for this?"

Having just returned from Israel two weeks prior, I hesitated for a moment, but just a moment. Obviously, I would take advantage of this amazing opportunity. So much of my own practice is about strength-based strategies and finding and developing talent. Getting to take part in rolling out a suite of tools Susan and Robyn spent years developing was, as they say, a no-brainer.

The morning of the workshop I was feeling pretty proud of myself. Look at the effort I made to fly across the country, not to mention endure two delayed flights along the way! It was when I arrived on the Bridges Academy campus and found out another participant came in from New Zealand (yes, New Zealand!) that I realized I wasn't the only professional delighted by the opportunity to learn from founders in our field.

We began with introducing ourselves and explaining why we are interested in the 2e population. No one wakes up one morning and says, "I'm going to work with twice-exceptional kids!" Each of us around the room understood exactly what the others had to say — our journeys, our passions, and visions. Immediately, we felt a connection, not unlike the first step in the personalized learning we were about to discuss.

We learned about and practiced all four tools, one at a time, filling them out ourselves — including Susan and Robin. We went through Robin's *My Learning Print*® (think of a fingerprint), a student's own personalized map for what makes that individual tick and "ticked off" about learning and teaching styles. This document generates a goldmine of ways to personally connect to a student and to make teaching and counseling impactful and learning more meaningful.

We proceeded to review the tools *C.L.U.E.S* and *Creating Possibilities* for understanding personalities

and working styles; and we connected these styles to successful strategies. We laughed as the presenters identified popular songs and attached them to each personality type:

- The seven dwarfs' "Hi ho, Hi ho" for the *Practical Manager* type
- Tom Lehrer songs for *Learned Experts*
- The Star Trek theme song "To boldly go where no man has gone before..." for the *Creative Problem Solver*



Workshop leaders and participants



Putting the Person in Personalized Learning, concluded

- Barbra Streisand's "People Who Need People" for the *People Person*.

Susan and Robin role-modeled how to use the tools. An added bonus was participation by a real, live Bridges Academy student. I found it hard to believe he wasn't a "plant" in the workshop – there to show us what a personalized education does for kids and how adults can interact with students in a respectful and meaningful way. This young man was poised and patient, and he provided an awesome example for us to watch as Susan and Robin (and we all) interacted with him. They listened, prompted, and were genuinely interested and appreciative of his input and involve-

ment. The truth is, he came by that morning to see if he could help out with the workshop. When they didn't need his help, he asked if he could stay and participate right along with us. Of course he could! For sure, he enriched the experience for everyone.

Personal connection is the A-number-one strategy I teach parents and professionals in order to make learning stick and to durably address challenging behaviors. Exploring the tools and watching them applied in real time made this workshop worthwhile and effective. I can't wait to use the tools in my practice with parents, educators, and professionals and to spread the word about raising self-esteem through identifying interests and strengths, and making connections.

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