

## **One size doesn't fit all: Achieving accountability through application of learning patterns**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter reviews a relatively new approach to understanding the brain-mind connections associated with learning. The Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup> Learning Connections Inventory<sup>©</sup> (which helps students and teachers to identify personal learning combinations of four patterns) will be discussed in detail. The major premise of this chapter is that when teachers and students work together to identify learning patterns and access them appropriately, students will learn to assume responsibility for increased learning and performance. Further, because students will know how to access patterns and create strategies for different kinds of assessment situations, they will perform better on various measures of achievement. Students and teachers will have the accountability that is demanded of them.

### **Introduction**

In increasingly diverse educational settings, standardization is becoming the norm. In the era of No Child Left Behind legislation, the focus is on identifying student achievement not through individual learning but through scores on standardized tests. This continues to be true even though “educational researchers have found that such tests have proven to be of dubious value in predicting one’s ability to perform on practical tasks that really matter” (Sacks, 1999, p. 2). Even though one size doesn’t fit all, accountability is more and more determined by the ubiquitous standardized test. Knowing this does not change the fact that students are often judged more by their test scores than by their actual learning. Students can learn to decode tasks and apply appropriate patterns to complete them, however.

One size fits all is a phrase I have come to loathe. It is frustrating enough when it is applied to clothing because we all know that people come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but worse when it is unconscionably applied to teaching and learning. This phrase

is an indication that we do not fully acknowledge the individuality of each and every learner. One size does not fit all, or even most, when it comes to our attire. Why is it that assessment of student learning, which we are all held accountable for in our nation's classrooms, seems more likely to be of the one size fits all design than it is to be differentiated to meet the needs of today's diverse classrooms? In order to meet the diverse needs of today's and tomorrow's students, every teacher and teacher candidate must be taught how to work with students to achieve intentional teaching and intentional application of learning strategies.

### **Differentiating Instruction**

Even though for a very long time we have heard that children learn differently from each other, and attempts have been made to explain the differences, standardization is the rule rather than the exception when it comes to measuring student learning. Learning in schools generally revolves around reading text and taking tests. In its own way, it is very patterned. Outside of school, learning looks very different. In the "real" world, people are expected to take in and process information, make decisions and produce results, all in ways very different from regurgitation of information on tests or single measures of the learning of all individuals. Tomlinson (1999) makes two statements that should be our mantra as we work with teachers and teacher candidates in assisting them to be prepared for the challenges of diverse classrooms. Where differentiated instruction is in place, she says, "teachers engage students in instruction through different learning modalities [and] teachers are diagnosticians, prescribing the best possible instruction for each student" (p. 2).

It is not simply about what students learn; it is about how they learn. Knowing the goals of an individual lesson as well as those of the overall goals of a unit and the curricular goals of a course is a first step towards differentiating instruction. Intentional teaching requires us to know about both our students and our curricular goals. While we may have the goal of having all students arrive at the same destination, perhaps proficiency on a high stakes standardized test, getting there should be different—one size does not fit all. Pettig (2000) says “differentiated instruction requires from us persistent honing of our teaching skills plus the courage to significantly change our classroom practices. . . .we can slowly shift from the one-size-fits-all paradigm and adopt a differentiated instructional approach” (p. 18). The key to differentiating instruction is determining the learning patterns of individual students. When teachers and students understand what goes on in their brains and minds when learning happens, they will be empowered to take charge of their own learning. Differentiated instruction is a response to differentiated learning and differentiated learning is the product of each person’s unique learning patterns combination. Students and teachers share the responsibility for creating the environment in which learning happens. Learners are unique, but they must function in academic worlds where their success or failure is measured by some form of standardized test. If every student processed information and demonstrated knowledge in the same way, this would not be problematical, but this is not the case.

Each and every student brings a contextualized way of looking at learning to every situation. It is possible to assist students to make brain-mind connections so that they use their learning potential with intention. Strategic teaching and strategic learning begin with strategic thinking. Nowhere is strategic thinking more important than on the

kinds of standardized tests that are currently mandated under No Child Left Behind legislation. If students are to be prepared for the kind of strategic thinking they need to do for the tests, they need to possess a certain amount of metacognition: self knowledge about how they prefer to demonstrate what they know as well as the ability to access an appropriate pattern to complete an assigned task. Strategic thinking begins with the identification of patterns.

If we want to build a new highway, we look at traffic patterns. If we want to build a new building, we look at use patterns. It follows that if we want to build new learning, we must look at learning patterns. Each of us has a personal, interactive learning cluster through which we make connections and carry on those internal conversations that lead to our demonstration of what we know. When we understand our learning connections patterns, we can develop appropriate strategies for demonstrating knowledge.

Schools and standardized tests demand the use of particular patterns, and if we lack the awareness either of what the patterns are or how to access them at the appropriate time, we are likely to be identified as either unlearned or not proficient. One size does not fit all; it does not even fit most. Every child must be given the opportunity to meet his maximum potential. One thing teachers can do is to identify the particular learning patterns of the students in their classrooms. This can be done very simply and in a cost-effective manner through the use of the Learning Connections Inventory<sup>©</sup> designed and used in the Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup>.

### **Looking at Learning**

Since the 1980s, psychologists and education practitioners have identified a variety of ways to look at how humans learn. Among them are things like multiple

intelligences, learning styles, and personality measures. Most teachers will have heard of learning styles and modalities. They will often identify themselves and their students as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners. I am never confident that these are not simply terms they have heard and apply without any real understanding. After all, unless we are blind or deaf, we are all visual or auditory learners at some point in our educational journey. If we were not, we would quickly fall behind. It is learning how best to use our visual and auditory skills that helps us to become more successful learners. Many teachers and their students will also identify themselves as left-brained or right-brained or posit that they have some strongly developed intelligence from Gardner's multiple intelligences theory<sup>®</sup>. This knowledge is an excellent foundation, but each is only a single point of view or piece of the puzzle that is the brain-mind connection we identify as learning. There is a program designed to help teachers and students to identify their unique learning combinations and to design instruction and assessment to enhance learning of every student. As a response to her concern that learning styles and personality measures and learning modalities are only part of the picture of learning, Dr. Christine Johnston developed the Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup> (LML) as a way to help all learners identify their unique learning pattern combinations and to recognize what this means in the way they approach learning and assessment tasks.

Teachers and students examine their beliefs and assumptions about learning.

Using the language of LML, [students] approach learning with meta-awareness; they become intentional learners. Essentially, the LML process, by engaging the learner in reflective practice. . .enables teachers and students to improve their performance.” (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004, p. 145)

With the Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup>, students and teachers will share a vocabulary to talk about learning and to plan for productive outcomes.

Learning becomes a partnership with teachers and students sharing goals and outcomes. The ultimate goal in understanding the LML Process is the focus on “taking responsibility for making learning work” (Johnston, 2005, p. 3). Using the Learning Connections Inventory<sup>®</sup> (LCI), and the Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup> help teachers and students to determine the degree to which a person uses four different learning processes (patterns) as they act and interact within a learner’s mind. “Both students and teachers grow in their understanding of how to align strategies with the requirements needed for successful accomplishment of various tasks” (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004, p. 173). Helping students to recognize those patterns they prefer to use in demonstrating their learning will help those students to develop their metacognition about which combination of patterns will enable them to successfully meet the challenges of the *No Child Left Behind* era in school and in the real world beyond.

### **Origins of Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup>**

Dr. Christine Johnston sought a way to help students identify the ways they demonstrate learning and to help them be more accountable in knowing exactly what particular learning tasks demanded of them. In using the Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup>, says Johnston, we will be pledging ourselves to “making a difference each day, all year, one learner at a time” (2000, p. vii).

Because this understanding of the diverse learning patterns of our students is integral to our teaching, Johnston wanted a user-friendly, cost-effective method of assisting teachers and students to identify patterns of learning choice. Over a period of

nine years with over 9000 6-18 year old students and 5000 adult professionals, Johnston developed and refined the Learning Connections Inventory<sup>®</sup> (LCI) for use with children at the elementary and secondary levels. Further testing and use led to the development of a professional version for use with adults in education and additional forms for use with adult professionals in other fields. A further modification was designed for use with families to help them understand their interactions. In every instance the inventory includes 28 Likert scaled items and 3 open-ended questions. It generally takes about one half hour to complete and self-score although there is no time limit. Because inventories do not have to be sent away for scoring, results are immediate. Written responses to the open-ended questions help students and teachers to identify cue words and phrases typical in each of the four Let Me Learn patterns. These answers validate the Likert determined patterns or identify areas to investigate further. Ideally, these responses would be validated by a trained Let Me Learn consultant or teacher, however user's manuals and guides for use are available so that every teacher can use the LCI. Because this is not a test, students readily accept that the only key is to be completely honest in responding. This is about the chance to tell teachers how they like to learn and to show what they know. Frequently students have "aha" moments when they recognize why they have such an aversion to some assignments but love others.

The LCI is a self-report instrument. It doesn't test a quality; it doesn't determine the capacity to learn; it doesn't measure what a learner knows. The inventory reports what learners selected as descriptions of their learning behaviors. It inventories. It takes stock. It identifies the what and how much of each schema. It is as accurate as the person who reports it is willing to make it. It doesn't diagnose

what is wrong. It doesn't prescribe how to increase an area of deficiency. It simply tallies what is there. It invites learners to express their thoughts on what frustrates them about assignments, how they prefer to show what they know, and how they would have students show what they learned if they were the teachers. The LCI, by its very format, invites learners to report the patterns of their learning process. . . .By interpreting the results of the LCI in light of who the learner is, rather than interpreting the learner on the basis of normed results, the learner and the teacher can use the LCI to carry on substantive conversations about how the learner learns. (Johnston, 1996, pp. 69-70)

Johnston describes what goes on in the brain-mind connection when we are learning as a combination of the cognitive, affective and conative. While these first two terms are readily understood, the conative is a piece that is often overlooked. Simply, it is the doing part of the whole that goes along with the thinking/knowing cognitive process and the feeling, affective process. It is important to have students honestly explore these three elements when they approach a task. We find it easy to express what we feel about assignments; in fact spontaneous outbursts from our students will often tell us exactly what they are feeling. It is also not terribly difficult to get students to talk about what they think, but it is sometimes harder to get them to concretely state what they do to complete a task. The most important thing to remember is that the Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup> helps students to accept responsibility for their own learning. It “emphasizes the importance of taking responsibility for making learning work. In over 10 years of research, involving 40,000 learners, [it] has shown that students can use information about their own learning

processes to focus their effort, make informed career choices, and overcome years of underachievement” (Johnston, 2004, pp. 2-3).

### **Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup>**

The Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup> captures the brain and mind interactions as they work to create a system of learning. In each learning situation, a stimulus enters the brain and from there, neuro impulses are converted into symbolic representations that the mind can process. This processing allows a learner to make connections with information already stored or to store information as new. Four operational patterns are at work in this processing. The patterns work synchronously and in a very personal way in each of us. The mental processes of cognition, conation and affectation are present in each of the four patterns and they interact in each operational pattern to enable us to respond to a stimulus.

Using the internal talk of the patterns (metacognition), these mental operations begin to mull, connect, rehearse, express, assess, and reflect on whether they are interacting and responding appropriately to the learning event with which they are confronted. Each time we accept stimulus into our system, our bodies, brains, and minds are under stress to read the situation and react or respond in a manner that at the very least keeps us safe and at the very most brings us success in the completion of the task we have undertaken. (Johnston, 2005, p. 13)

Developing awareness of this internal “talk” among the patterns will enable us to use our patterns with intention. When we can use patterns with intention, we can raise the probability that we will be successful with an assigned task. Intentional use of patterns is critical in the standardized testing area. It is relatively easy to identify which patterns are

needed to complete certain types of assessment tasks. Using the learning patterns, students are able to decode assignments. A student who is able to correctly decode the message of the assignment has a distinct advantage in being able to complete it successfully. Key words repeat themselves within each of the patterns and students become able to quickly identify the words, connect them with the correct pattern, identify the skill or strategy necessary to complete the task and access that pattern in themselves. They can be taught to circle cue words and code them for pattern needed and then to draw on their own strategy cards to complete a task. Johnston (2005) contends that students can be taught to invest in their own success and to put forth intentional effort to complete a given task. In this way students themselves are held accountable for the results of an assessment. They know exactly what they must do to complete a task and they know which personal strategies they must access, with intention, to make it easier.

Students will ask themselves what a task requires of them and will identify what the task requires of each of their patterns. Additionally, they will begin to recognize and respond to the difference between natural use of a pattern and intentional use of a pattern that would not normally be a pattern of first use. They employ a FIT technique. They will Forge, Intensify or Tether patterns as necessary. In order to fully understand how FIT works, we should take a deeper look at each of the patterns.

Let Me Learn identifies four patterns and the LCI identifies for us our personal learning connections combination. The four patterns are sequential, precise, technical, and confluent. What each of these terms means in terms of what a learner thinks, feels, and does in the act of learning will be explained a bit later. "Each pattern exists in all of us to some degree and contributes to our unique learning combinations" (Johnston, 2000,

p. 35). “Once I know my combination of learning patterns, I can use them with greater intention. I can analyze work responsibilities, learning tasks, and project assignments always asking myself, ‘What processes am I being asked to use? How will I direct my learning processes so that what I do and how I do it matches the expectations of my instructor, my supervisor, or my teammates?’” (Johnston, 2005, p. 16).

Each of the four patterns may be a use first, as needed or avoid pattern as demonstrated by the score on the Likert scaled items of the LCI. When a pattern comes up as a use first pattern (scores between 25 and 35), this means that a learner will gravitate to that pattern to demonstrate learning. It may or may not be the most appropriate pattern for a particular task, but it is the pattern of choice for the student. An as needed pattern (scores between 18 and 24) is one that students can access when appropriate given a little guidance and support even though it might not be the pattern of first choice. The as needed pattern could lie dormant until needed and students could need a little help to find a trigger for “waking up” the pattern at the appropriate time. An avoid pattern (scores between 7 and 17) is just that—one that a learner will avoid using even when it is obviously the best one to use in a given learning situation. It is crucial that students and teachers learn to note the signals that they are using an inappropriate pattern and correct themselves. The program requires students to become responsible for their own learning and the choices they make. School tends to value patterns of sequence and precision and students (and teachers!) who have these as use first patterns will often be very comfortable in educational environments and will be higher achievers. It should be noted that teachers teach to their own use first patterns and where there is a strong

match between teachers and students, overall grades for a class will generally be higher (Nickels, 2002).

Sequential processors are seekers of clear directions, practiced planners, and thoroughly neat workers (Johnston, 1996). They become frustrated with unclear or incomplete directions or changes in requirements once an assignment is underway. They have little patience with teachers who are disorganized or move too fast. They want examples to follow. They need time to go over material that is assigned in class and they require sufficient time (in accordance with their own interpretation) to complete a task thoroughly. They generally want their work to be neat and tidy. Often they will make lists and will either number or bullet items.

Precise processors are information specialists, into-details researchers, answer specialists, and report writers. They want to know all the answers and will constantly request clarification. They want to be “right” and need reassurance that they are. They hate confusion and want lots of details in explanations. Frequently they will ask that directions be repeated numerous times. They become frustrated when they do not have sufficient information to complete a task or cannot find the information they need in their texts. They have a strong capacity for trivia and will often take very detailed notes. They are the students who will, if permitted to do so, answer every question the teacher asks. They like to write answers in the form of tests, quizzes, and reports. They may prefer written manifestations of their knowledge to oral presentation. They need time when they are working on written assignments.

Technical processors place relevance as paramount. They are hands-on builders, independent private thinkers and reality seekers. They love activity and may want to

move around while they are learning. They much prefer hands-on work to doing book work, either reading or writing. They like the challenge of a real world project and want to be left alone to complete the project. They want to live and experience what they are learning about, not read about it. They tend to keep things to themselves and do not particularly care if they show the teacher what they know so long as they know themselves. These are the learners who might do homework but never turn it in because they have satisfied their own need to prove to themselves that they can do it. The technical processor thrives on field trips into the real world to see the relevance of what he is learning. If information is extraneous, the technical processor will discard it. Any task needs real world validation for the technical processor to invest his time in learning it. They keep both physical and mental distance while they complete tasks. They do not like to be part of a group unless the group members allow them to go off and complete some portion of the task alone.

Confluent processors are those who truly march to the different drummer. They are labeled as creative imaginers and unique presenters. Sometimes they seem to be a million miles away from where everyone else is during a lesson. They don't like to be "trapped" in the teacher's ideas or ways of doing things. They might not even listen to directions because they already have their own idea about how something should be done. They like variety in interpretation of assignments and feel confined by having to do something in one certain way. They often chafe at rules and regulations. They like learning to be fun and even artistic and crafty. They love to stand up and talk and might prefer to do a dramatic presentation, participate in a debate or give some kind of oral presentation. They frequently like to write stories, but they write the same way they

would speak. This is the pattern of the imagination. Figure 1 shows some of the things we might expect to evidence themselves when each of these is a use first pattern and Figure 2 shows what we might expect when each of these patterns is an avoid pattern.

**INSERT FIGURES 1 AND 2**

Once the LCIs have been scored, it is important to look for certain types of learners in your classrooms. One particular type is called the strong-willed learner. A strong-willed learner is one who has three or four use first patterns (scores 25 or above). This is the learner who will often let you know that he would prefer to work alone because he knows he can do any of the parts of a project better than anyone else. Having more than one strong-willed learner in a group can be a disaster. It is equally probable that disaster will follow if you put all the strong-willed learners in a single group; you are likely to get as many products as you had group members because each will be unable to compromise with the others.

Another type of learner is the Bridge. This learner has all scores between 19 and 24 and therefore has all as needed and no use first scores. The bridge learner frequently feels that he is not especially good at anything and may simply fade into the background. What the bridge learner needs to understand is the marvelous contribution he/she has to make to group work. While working alone means that this learner can access whatever pattern is needed to complete a task, this skill can be a tremendous asset to a group. It is the bridge learner who is the facilitator who sees the whole picture and is able to keep the plan on target. It is rare to find more than one bridge learner in a class, so if there appear to be several in a class, it is essential to go back over the LCI to determine whether the student had difficulty committing to a choice in the Likert continuum or has conflicting

written responses. If you do find a bridge learner, however, encourage this student to come out of the shadows.

Finally, we identify the dynamic learner who has one or two patterns at a use first level and then any other combination of as needed or avoid patterns. This is the learner we most often meet and the learner who could have difficulty knowing which pattern to use at a particular time for a particular task. Sometimes the patterns get in the way of each other and students need a strategy for accessing the appropriate pattern at the appropriate time. Because of the dynamic quality of this learner, there could be difficulty making correct choices.

### **In the Pedagogy Class**

If our goal as educators is to foster student learning, it is crucial that we have a working idea of how different students, and we ourselves, learn. In a beginning pedagogy course, I start the semester by asking my students to answer a basic question: What does learning look like? Many are surprised by this even though they already have strong reasons for wanting to be teachers. I pose the question in this way because our accountability depends on our ability to recognize that learning is indeed happening. For many, this will be the first time anyone has asked them to figure out how they are going to know if what they are doing in the classroom is actually leading to student learning! For the most part, they have not considered this very crucial piece of what it means to be an effective educator. Before I permit any oral response to the question, I pass out a drawing of an “empty” head with its brain, crayons and colored pencils, and I request that my students fill “their” brain with a personal interpretation of what learning looks like for them. We then do “show and tell” and record on transparencies for later reference, the

statements and key words each contributes to explain what learning looks like. This phase of the instruction I end with Henry David Thoreau's famous quote: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." If I have heard it said once, I have heard it a hundred times in recent years: kids learn differently. If we do not accept that and work with those differences, we are doomed to fail in creating classroom environments where all students have an equal chance to succeed at learning. This is a powerful first lesson in helping students to identify the reason for us to be educators. They see immediately the magnitude of the challenge they are accepting.

Once my pedagogy students have completed their "show and tell" about their brains, they complete and score the LCI. They look back at the statements they made when they described their brains and then find similar statements in their LCI, open-ended written responses. We then connect these to their pattern scores by discussing exactly what each pattern means and what we might hear from students who manifest these patterns as either use first or avoid patterns. (Refer to Figures 1 and 2)

Because I want students to appreciate how these patterns translate into teaching/learning situations, I have them make hats that will demonstrate their personal learning connections combination. It does not take long for their use-first patterns to manifest themselves. I provide activity boxes containing scissors, paste, rulers, crayons, colored pencils, compasses, protractors, construction paper, staplers, and paper clips. I generally stock six of these boxes for an average size class—they must share. This can be a problem for the highly technical student who prefers to work alone and it is common to see a highly technical processor gather what he/she needs and retreat to a separate corner

and complete the task with little or no interaction with the group. It is also quite common to see a highly sequential learner plan and organize while the confluent processors just let their imaginations take over and they “just do it,” frequently without any reference to the written or oral instructions. The use first precise processors will need assurance that what they are doing is “right,” and they will often seek clarification of directions.

Following construction of their hats, they reflect in writing about the process of completion of the task. Once again they share and are confronted with the differences in approach and performance of a task. They begin to see and hear the key pattern language as it emerges. Throughout this discussion, it is typical to hear such things as “I’m not creative, so I just...” or “First, I...; then I...; finally I...” and “I had too many ideas and couldn’t settle on one so I didn’t really finish” or “I didn’t have enough time.” These are all obvious correlations with their use first patterns. Seated in a circle and wearing their hats, the candidates begin to recognize the very real diversity present in the class and begin to recognize the implications of their patterns for them as future teachers.

The next step is to make the first connections to teaching and learning, so the next question is posed: If these are *my* learning choices, how will that translate into what I value as a teacher and in the way I teach? The candidates begin to recognize the importance of being able to have a conversation with students about how they learn. They begin to recognize that they are most likely to craft lessons that value manifestations of learning that come out of their own patterns. It is here that I have the first clue about how I will need to approach a class. If my class is predominantly use first sequential students, they are going to want a well-ordered syllabus and they are going to expect me to stick to it. I quickly learn which of my students will find keeping logs and reflective journals

onerous because they simply do not like to write. Others will write pages more than required or necessary.

### **With Students in the Classroom**

Think about the students in your classes who can regularly drive you crazy. Is it possible that this is not something they have set out to do simply to make your life miserable, but rather that it is a manifestation of clashing patterns? Might knowing the learning pattern combinations of your class(es) make you more aware as an instructional planner of ways that you could differentiate instruction to ensure maximum opportunity for success for each and every student in your class(es)?

Nickels (2002) a high school teacher from the Midwestern United States wondered whether there might be a correlation between student learning patterns, his learning patterns and the students' grades. In his small study he discovered that his own LCI scores were high in sequential processing and precise processing. His students with low sequential and precise preferences had lower grades in his classes. As students' patterns more closely matched his, their grades rose. This is indeed food for thought for the beginning teacher to take into the field with them. We can look at certain cue words that teachers use in the creation of assignments. These cue words often reveal the teacher's use first patterns, but more importantly they help students to identify which patterns must be accessed for successful completion of a given task, including those tasks that are a part of standardized assessments. Figure 3 shows typical cue words for each pattern.

**INSERT FIGURE 3**

Once students have experienced the LCI and discussed its implications for both teaching and learning, they take with them the knowledge about differences in learning pattern combinations. They can make educated guesses about the use first patterns of many of the students they see each week, not to mention the use first patterns of their mentor teachers in the field. This is where they begin to learn about lesson planning and how the learning patterns of both teacher and students will have an impact on instructional decisions. Teacher candidates and teachers begin intentional usage of pattern language and assist students to decode assignments. They begin to recognize whether the language they have used in the creation of the assignment actually matches what they expect of students in their responses. There are times that the language of a use first pattern of a teacher shows a value the teacher did not intend in an assignment.

Knowing the characteristics of their learners enables teachers to design instruction around their dominant patterns—giving every student the opportunity to work in their use-first patterns often, but not exclusively, challenging learners to identify the pattern needed for success and to use it. It is really about holding the student accountable for his own learning, but he cannot be held accountable if we do not work with him to define his patterns and create plans for forging those patterns he is less comfortable with. The Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup> does not ask teachers to create a multitude of different lesson plans for every day's instruction; rather it requires us to offer opportunities to students to use their patterns judiciously and to assist students to create personal learning plans for identifying when a particular pattern is needed and to access that pattern successfully. This is the point at which teachers and learners work on FIT. If they are going to be able

to attack a learning task, they will need to learn to *forge* those patterns that are avoid patterns but are necessary for given tasks, *intensify* the as needed patterns so that they become more immediately accessible and natural, and *tether* those use first patterns that might get in the way of accurate and successful completion of the task.

Traditional classroom assignments have a great deal of reading and writing, including many skill and drill worksheets. These are necessary, but can be roadblocks for certain kinds of learners. For those learners who are not precise processors, the sheer magnitude of reading and writing required, especially in secondary classrooms, can be daunting if not completely overwhelming. Let me assure you that I wholeheartedly endorse writing and reading across the curriculum, but I also know that certain students will tune out, shut down, and eventually drop out (mentally if not physically) because they have little opportunity to show what they know in the ways most productive for them. Often we will find that there is little choice in the manner in which assignments are completed and we will see that what is valued by any given teacher tends to correspond with that teacher's use first patterns.

If we are going to help students to take advantage of their use first patterns and to aid them in developing their as needed and avoid patterns, we must engage in intentional teaching. This means that we must know our own patterns and be self-critical and self-analytical about the assignments we create. Sitting still in a library, researching, reading and ultimately writing a research paper may be so antithetical to a student's patterns that he will accept a failing grade rather than subject himself to this torture. Students can learn to forge the precision necessary to complete the assignment. That is not to say that because students prefer other ways of working and showing what they know, they should

always be permitted alternative assignments. We do, however, need to recognize that the vast majority of assignments teachers give favor the sequential and precise processors and this is especially true when those are the use first patterns of the teacher. We must intentionally look at options when we are crafting assignments. We must ask ourselves whether there is a way students can show us what they know other than our first instinctive choice. Then we must permit these alternate possibilities. This can be very hard to do because it does mean creating multiple rubrics and ensuring that all the possibilities are of equal difficulty and value.

Students could make a movie, write and perform a piece of music, create an advertising campaign, design a game. They will still need to do research to ensure accuracy, but the end products of different students will look very different. They may certainly find doing the research less tedious if they know that the end product is going to be something other than that dreaded written research paper. I have students who have created movie style posters for plays, novels, and events in history or science. Other students have written picture or alphabet books to teach a concept to others, particularly younger students or their parents! Students can perform skits or construct models to demonstrate understanding of a concept or theory. Candidates are encouraged to keep open minds about the many options available to them to aid in assessment of student learning.

One of the key methods being used in today's classroom is cooperative or collaborative learning. In this type of group work, all members of the group have roles and tasks to perform. Let Me Learn patterns can make grouping much more fair and productive. Having a precise processor who loves to do research and write working with

a technical processor who loves to build, along with a confluent processor who sees the imaginative possibilities and a sequential processor to keep everyone else on task and on target for deadlines can make collaborative work far more productive. It can minimize the complaints about students who do not carry their share of the burden or the complaint about the one person in the group who takes charge and wants to do everything. Creative teaming of students, using their use-first patterns, can enable a teacher to ensure that all students will contribute to a project, each accessing pattern strengths.

Standardized measures of assessment are those that are used to define the accountability of teachers and schools. If students can be taught to decode the tasks and to intentionally apply the needed patterns, success is virtually assured for those students who have the necessary knowledge. Teaching our students to forge, intensify, and tether their patterns to match assessment requirements will enable their success. When a student with an avoid pattern in sequence or precision is confronted by typical standardized tests, he will need immediately to forge these patterns. He will need to make conscious choices in decoding the task and in applying strategies for successful completion. Helping students to decode and forge patterns throughout a school year will give them the skill and confidence to do the same thing during standardized testing situations. When patterns are at as needed levels, there will be the necessity to intensify them. It is not that students do not have these patterns available, but rather that they need to consciously identify the need for them and intensify their use. Sometimes students are at a disadvantage because their use first patterns are not the patterns of need on standardized assessments. When this happens, students must be able to tether the tendency to use the inappropriate patterns because they are patterns of first choice and to forge or intensify the correct

patterns. When students can do this, they are intentionally taking charge of their own learning. They are in charge of displaying what they know through intentional choice.

### **Conclusion**

I firmly believe that every teacher wants students be successful both in and out of the classroom. Teachers do not go to school each morning with the intention of leaving children behind. If they do not recognize their own learning patterns and those of their students, teachers can unintentionally do exactly that. The Let Me Learn Process<sup>®</sup> offers teachers and students a way to understand each other and learning. It enables teachers to differentiate instruction and it provides students with ways to access the appropriate patterns to ensure that they will be more successful in every learning situation. Once students become comfortable with their own patterns and how to forge (bring out the weaker but needed) patterns, intensify (turn up the heat), or tether (hold back a strong but not necessarily correct) patterns, both teachers and students will find that the learning environment is more positive and more productive.

Note:

All materials including the Learning Connections Inventory may be obtained from Learning Connections Resources, LLC, Turnersville, NJ 08012-8861  
[www.LCRinfo.com](http://www.LCRinfo.com) and [www.letmelearn.org](http://www.letmelearn.org)

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**Figure 3: Let Me Learn Pattern Cue Words**

<b>SEQUENTIAL CUE WORDS</b>	
Alphabetize	Order
Arrange	Organize
Classify	Outline
Develop	Plan
Distribute	Put in order
Group	Sequence
In a series	Show a sample
List	Show an array

<b>PRECISE CUE WORDS</b>	
Accurately	Explain
Calibrate	Facts
Certainty	Identify
Describe	Label
Detail	Measure
Document	Observe
Exact	Specific
Examine	Write

<b>TECHNICAL CUE WORDS</b>	
Assemble	Erect
Autonomy	Experience
Build	Figure out
Concrete	Illustrate
Construct	Just do it
Demonstrate	Make
Draw	Problem-solve
Engineer	Tools

<b>CONFLUENT CUE WORDS</b>	
Brainstorm	Improvise
Carefree	Incredible
Create	Independence
Different	Invent
Dream-up	Risk
Far fetched	Take a chance
Ideas	Unique
Imagine	Unusual

**Figure 1: When I Have a Use First Pattern**

	How I think	How I do things	How I feel	What I might say
<b>Sequential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I organize information</li> <li>• I mentally categorize data</li> <li>• I break tasks down into steps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I make lists</li> <li>• I organize</li> <li>• I plan first, then act</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I thrive on consistency and dependability</li> <li>• I need things to be tidy and organized</li> <li>• I feel frustrated when the game plan keeps changing</li> <li>• I feel frustrated when I'm rushed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could I see an example?</li> <li>• I need more time to double-check my work</li> <li>• Could we review those directions?</li> <li>• A place for everything and everything in its place</li> <li>• What are my priorities?</li> </ul>
<b>Precise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I research information</li> <li>• I ask lots of questions</li> <li>• I always want to know more</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I challenge statements and ideas that I doubt</li> <li>• I prove I am right</li> <li>• I document my research and findings</li> <li>• I write things down</li> <li>• I write long e-mail messages and leave long voice mail messages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I thrive on knowledge</li> <li>• I feel good when I am correct</li> <li>• I feel frustrated when incorrect information is accepted as valid</li> <li>• I feel frustrated when people do not share information with me</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I need more information</li> <li>• Let me write up the answer to that</li> <li>• Wanna play trivia?</li> <li>• I'm currently reading three different books</li> <li>• Did you get my e-mail on that?</li> <li>• Did you know that...</li> <li>• Actually...</li> </ul>
<b>Technical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I seek concrete relevance—what does this mean in the real world?</li> <li>• I only want as much information as I need—nothing extraneous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I get my hands on</li> <li>• I tinker</li> <li>• I solve the problem</li> <li>• I do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I enjoy knowing how things work</li> <li>• I feel good that I am self sufficient</li> <li>• I feel frustrated when the task has no real world relevance</li> <li>• I enjoy knowing things, but I do not feel the need to share that knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can do it myself</li> <li>• Let me show you how...</li> <li>• I don't want to read a book about it, I want to do it</li> <li>• How will I ever use this in the real world?</li> <li>• How can I fix this?</li> <li>• I could use a little space...</li> </ul>
<b>Confluent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I read between the lines</li> <li>• I think outside the box</li> <li>• I brainstorm</li> <li>• I make obscure connections between things that are seemingly unrelated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I take risks</li> <li>• I am not afraid to fail</li> <li>• I talk about things—a lot</li> <li>• I might start things and not finish them</li> <li>• I will start a task first—then ask for directions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I enjoy improvisation</li> <li>• I feel comfortable with failure</li> <li>• I do not enjoy having my ideas criticized</li> <li>• I feel frustrated by people who are not open to new ideas</li> <li>• I enjoy a challenge</li> <li>• I feel frustrated by repeating a task over and over</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you mean, "that's the way we've always done it"?!?</li> <li>• The rules don't apply to me</li> <li>• Let me tell you about...</li> <li>• I have an idea...</li> <li>• I have another idea...</li> </ul>

**Figure 2: When I Avoid a Pattern**

	How I think	How I do things	How I feel	What I might say
<b>Sequential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These directions make no sense!</li> <li>• I did this before. Why repeat it?</li> <li>• Why can't I just jump in?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid direction; avoid practice</li> <li>• Can't get the pieces in order</li> <li>• Ignore table of contents, indexes, and syllabi</li> <li>• Leave the task incomplete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jumbled</li> <li>• Scattered</li> <li>• Out of synch</li> <li>• Untethered/unfettered</li> <li>• Unanchored</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I have to do it again?</li> <li>• Why do I have to follow directions?</li> <li>• Does it matter what we do first?</li> <li>• Has anybody seen. . .?</li> </ul>
<b>Precise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I have to read all this?</li> <li>• How am I going to remember all of this?</li> <li>• Who cares about all this 'stuff'?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't have specific answers</li> <li>• Avoid debate</li> <li>• Skim instead of read</li> <li>• Take few notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overwhelmed when confronted with details</li> <li>• Fearful of looking stupid</li> <li>• Angry at not having the 'one right answer'!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't expect me to know names and dates!</li> <li>• Stop asking me so many questions!</li> <li>• Does it matter?</li> <li>• I'm not stupid!</li> </ul>
<b>Technical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why should I care how this works?</li> <li>• Somebody has to help me figure this out.</li> <li>• Why do I have to make something; why can't I just talk or write about it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid using tools or instruments</li> <li>• Talk about it instead of doing it</li> <li>• Rely on the directions to lead me to the solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inept</li> <li>• Fearful of breaking the object, tool, or instrument</li> <li>• Uncomfortable with tools; very comfortable with my words and thoughts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If it is broken, throw it away!</li> <li>• I'm an educated person; I should be able to do this!</li> <li>• I don't care <i>how</i> it runs; I just want it <i>to run</i>!</li> </ul>
<b>Confluent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where is this headed?</li> <li>• Where is the focus?</li> <li>• What do you mean, imagine?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't take social risks</li> <li>• Complete one task at a time</li> <li>• Avoid improvising</li> <li>• Seek parameters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsettled</li> <li>• Chaotic</li> <li>• No more changes or surprises, please!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let's stay focused!</li> <li>• Where did that idea come from?</li> <li>• Now what?</li> <li>• This is out of control!</li> </ul>

