

Andrews University

Leadership Program

LEARNING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COACHING AND MENTORING;
THEORIES AND PRACTICES APPLIED AT FOREST LAKE ACADEMY SEEKING
BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

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Table of Contents

GENERAL INTRODUCTIONS TO LEARNING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COACHING AND MENTORING SEEKING BEHAVIORAL CHANGE2

 Defining Learning and Human Development 2

 Defining Coaching; is it just for the Physical Component of Learning and Human Development?..... 3

 Defining Mentoring 5

 The relevance of coaching and mentoring in learning and human development 6

THEORIES RELATED TO LEARNING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MENTORING AND COACHING 9

 Social Cognitive Theory 9

 Connectivism 9

 Meaningful Learning Theory..... 10

TEACHING, COACHING AND MENTORING SYSTEMS, METHODS AND STRATEGIES APPLIED AT FOREST LAKE ACADEMY TO ENHANCE THE LEARNING PROCESS.....12

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS.....17

REFERENCES.....20

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO LEARNING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COACHING AND MENTORING SEEKING BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

Defining Learning and Human Development

For decades if not centuries, learning as a way to impact human development while seeking behavioral change has been understood and considered as a cognitive transference of information and concepts or explained by Piaget as a cognitive adaptation, says Gagne (1968). However, newer definitions of learning and human development consider this process as a dynamic and systematic sequence of changes that occurs from conception to death, argues Sigelman & Rider (2014). Furthermore, this process of learning and human development contemplate several aspects and stages of systematic change which includes gains and losses as a part of growth. Sigelman & Rider, (2014) as well as other authors (Payne & Issacs, 2016), define three broad domains where learning influences human development. They are; Physical development, Cognitive development and Psychosocial development.

Most academic studies about learning and human development tend to focus on the cognitive aspect of development related to behavioral change. In this reflection paper, we will aim to understand and explain how through a Sports Ministry and a Physical Education program at Forest Lake Academy, this human development and behavioral change can be achieved through coaching and mentoring. We are including all three domains mentioned before; Physical, Cognitive and Psychosocial as a part of the learning process in human development and behavioral change.

Defining Coaching; is it just for the Physical Component of Learning and Human Development?

Lerner & Busch-Rossnagel (2013) argue that individuals can influence and produce their own development and behavioral change from an evolutionary and environmental point of view, as well as causing the needed results to survive and succeed in life. On the contrary, Chambers, (2014) in his book *Mentoring in physical education and sports coaching*, describes the need of external agents in the process of human development for youth and behavioral change not only for the physical and social aspects of the individual, but especially when pursuing the goal of preparing the next generation to lead, advise others as well as become mentors for their peers.

The origins of coaching as a concept are related to sports and the physical part of the learning and human development process, argues Whitmore (2002). Relationships between coaches and players firstly were based on pursuing performance improvement. Moreover, according to Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck (2014), coaching is a human growth process that involves attentive, structured exchanges and the use of suitable strategies, instruments and methods to promote looked-for and viable change for the profit of the coachee and possibly for other participants. Also, for Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler (2012), coaching involves seeking improvement in skills, performance and final results by affecting behaviors.

Moreover, this process develops due to open and honest dialogue as a free flow of meaning between two or more individuals. At Forest Lake Academy Athletic Department Ministry and through our Physical Education classes, this relationship occurs between the administration, coaches, parents, student-athletes and other members of the community who are a part of it. As a process, we had the chance to coach and mentor those leading our students, as

well as designing new strategies and practices related to physical, emotional, social and spiritual growth while expected behavioral change occurs.

Correspondingly, this goal of behavioral change as a part of human development to improve performance also relates to moving from a fixed mindset that relies on innate talent and resources to a growth mindset, that allows constant improvement even after successful results, says Dweck (2006). Furthermore, coaching and mentoring as a part of the learning and human development course may bring this desired behavioral change since improvement of a growth mindset as a process is more significant than talent when seeking results enhancement. Michael Jordan was not a natural. He was cut from his Junior Varsity and Varsity teams. He was also initially denied the chance to play for his favorite university (North Carolina), he was not even chosen first when joining the NBA, and he was the number three pick. All his success came as a result of hard work, coaching and mentoring and a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), even after facing rejection multiple times. The same story happened to Babe Ruth, Tiger Woods, Maury Wills, and many others. This reality of mental and physical improvement through proper practice, mentoring and coaching may have changed the belief that innate talent is not important.

However, there are other ways to test innate talent and skills as well as multiple methods to realize the potential of an individual or an organization seeking performance improvement when a growth mindset is present. Additionally, when competition is added to the coaching process, it is almost impossible to attain behavioral change with a fixed mindset instead of a growth mindset.

Moreover, this growth mindset implies behavioral changes after receiving the information, coaching and mentoring toward a desired goal. The concept of Coaching does not only apply to the physical aspect of learning and human development. It is widely accepted and

implemented in the Cognitive as well as the Psychosocial aspects of learning and human development. Some of the theories related to these behavioral changes are Social Cognitive Theory and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which we will explore later in this paper.

Defining Mentoring

Mentoring has roots in Greek mythology. According to Butler (1944) in the famous work by Homer *Odyssey*, the main character, Odysseus, left to fight in the Trojan War. Before leaving, Odysseus left his young son Telemachus in the care of a friend named Mentor. In ancient Greek, the word mentor means ‘advisor’. The term mentor has developed, becoming the type of relationship practiced outside of parental relationships in which a novice is guided through daily challenges by an individual with more experience. This type of relationship is common to many cultures and has become more common in the last few decades as a tool used within organizations. In 1931, the Jewel Tea Company used the first recorded organizational mentoring program (Russell, 1991). The 1980s saw the advent of significant growth of formal mentoring programs within organizations and a significant change in the scope of those programs (Douglas, 1997). Currently, many companies and educational institutions have formalized programs for mentoring, says Scandura & Pellegrini (2007).

Moreover, I had the chance to be mentored and also to be a mentor to others throughout my professional experience at Forest Lake Academy and many other organizations in 14 different countries. Both journeys of coaching and mentoring enriched my understanding of development and personal growth utilizing honest conversations and applying the strategies suggested by my mentors and coaches, as well as helping others to find their solutions when I had the chance to mentor them. Mentoring continues to be considered a long time relationship

instead of the coaching concept which refers to a short process related to just one specific goal, says Garvey, Stokes & Megginson, (2014).

The relevance of coaching and mentoring in learning and human development

Do we need coaching and mentoring as a part of the process of learning in human development to improve performance in sports, education and leadership? How coaching and mentoring impact the personal and team development today? Apparently, those who receive mentoring and coaching tend to improve their performance, as well as staying with the team or company providing mentoring and coaching, states Scandura, Tejada, Werther & Lankau (1996). Moreover, the things we fear most in organizations--fluctuations, disturbances, imbalances--are the primary sources of creativity, says Margaret Wheatley (Matuska, 2011). These fluctuations disturbances, imbalances and change as a source of creativity, generally happen as a result of crucial conversations, some confrontation and a decision-making outcome. We see that repeatedly in sports, where coaches work hard on designing strategies based on the individual and collective talents and skills of their players and teams preparing to face the strengths and weaknesses of the player or team they are competing with.

However, teams and individuals who excel in their field of competition, often utilize their instinct, improvisation, unexpected quick decisions that may be outside of the game plan, utilizing innovation, improvisation and strategic responses, says Williams, Ford, Eccles, & Ward (2011). Perceptual-cognitive expertise in sport and its acquisition: Implications for applied cognitive psychology. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 25(3), 432-442. For some conservative and traditional coaches, when players apply their critical thinking with actions outside of the coach's game plan is wrong and unacceptable. For them, players or members of the organization should always act based on the model the leader decides.

On the contrary, I have witnessed that for experienced coaches and mentors, an individual improvised decision is the final result of a successful process, where individuals can perform on their own within a system, since the final decision in crucial times is always in the individual. According to Whitmore (2002), coaches hardly provide or recommend solutions, since as a management behavior process, coaching lies at the contrasting end of the spectrum to command and control. This process requires meetings with individuals as well as with other members of the team.

Lencioni (2010) describes this process that is painful for some leaders when he said; “if I did not have to go to meetings, I would like my job a lot better”. How to turn these meetings into productive coaching and mentoring processes? By using empathy and respect with the ultimate goal of collaborative work beneficial for the organization, the individual and the leader, according to Purkey and Siegel (2002).

In other words, empathy begins with openness, argues Nichols (2009) and for Scott, (2004), the conversation is the heart of the relationship. In this conversation, Whitmore (2010) describes the positive effect of coaching and mentoring when it focuses in future possibilities not past mistakes.

As a golf coach, Gallwey (2009) defines coaching and mentoring as helping others to overcome fears, doubts and frustrations through the game of golf. It is a game that you cannot beat. The reason golf is the sport of choice for leaders around the world, is because golf is a game of control. In order to accomplish a good round, you need to be in control of your body, your emotions, the natural elements and above all, you own limitations. Over-instruction in the learning and human development journey, can be the number one enemy of reaching the full potential of an individual, physically, cognitively and psychosocially. The prime causes of error

are in the mind of individuals where fear, doubts and tension overtake the knowledge of the right mechanics needed to play the game and have fun. Golf has an uncanny way to endear itself to us while at the same time evoking every weakness physical, mental or emotional no matter how well hidden.

Similarly, in organizational development as well as individual growth, coaches and mentors should be able to help others to develop successful plans and forget mistakes and failures of the past. This help is better understood through a process where individuals and organizations can learn how to adapt to the changes and suggested interventions from coaches and mentors. That is why we will explore in the next chapter the different learning theories in human development related to coaching and mentoring that directly impact behavioral change and performance improvement.

THEORIES RELATED TO LEARNING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MENTORING AND COACHING

Social Cognitive Theory

In the Social Cognitive Theory, Bandura (2011) states that one of the criteria utilized to link Learning and Human Development to Mentoring and Coaching and growth is through the operative power to produce behavioral change. As a Psychological theory, Bandura (2011) claims that individuals and organizations can be active contributors in their own behavioral outcomes and situations and not necessarily succumb as a victim of them. This can be accomplished by simply improving their self-efficacy.

Moreover, this individual process of developing this self-efficacy, argues Seibert, Sargent, Kraimer & Kiazad (2016), when transferred into leadership and mentoring, determines higher levels of effectiveness through formal and informal supervision, since individuals have a chance to play a dynamic role in such process. Therefore, Coaches, Mentors and Leaders will enhance in the pursue of self-efficacy in order to accomplish the goals and purposes of their organization as well as the professional, social, physical and emotional growth of those they are trying to foster.

Connectivism

Another learning theory in human development related to Coaching and Mentoring is Connectivism, which due to technology, has slowly replaced Behaviorism, Cognitivism and Constructivism, as the main utilized and up-to-date learning theories, says Siemens (2014). This theory emphasizes the reality for Coaches, Mentors and Leaders to nurture a learning environment where every member of the process improves their knowledge and practice by

utilizing technological tools. Historically, workers were able to succeed and perform tasks with the basic formal college degree for decades without having to learn new ways of doing their jobs as well as communicating with others.

Furthermore, the current market demands from all levels of the Learning and Human Development elements linked to Coaching and Mentoring dynamic to constantly upgrade their ability to use technological advances in their journey to higher levels of competitiveness, self-efficacy and growth. Traditional learning and teaching methods continue to lose their efficacy for the younger generations, resulting in a greater need of Teachers, Coaches and Mentors proficient in technology resources for a digital age. Experience is no longer considered the best and only source of knowledge and value. With so many sources of information available online, Teachers, Coaches and Mentors today have not only the option but the imperative need to use technology in order to stay current and worthwhile.

Meaningful Learning Theory

The Meaningful Learning Theory, says Ausubel (2012), explores the challenge for Teachers, Coaches and Mentors of improving the levels of acquisition and retention of knowledge for themselves and for those they coach and mentor. In order to accomplish this goal, both the content of what is being taught and the expected outcome have to be meaningful for all. As a theory where learning occurs as a result of Coaching and Mentoring, there are multiple mental and behavioral factors that can affect even the most meaningful concepts for better or for worse. This is when the kinesthetic, auditory and visual elements of learning by experience becomes essential for the transmission of these meaningful concepts. Furthermore, in order to obtain the retention of the concepts, besides meaningful, they ought to be relevant.

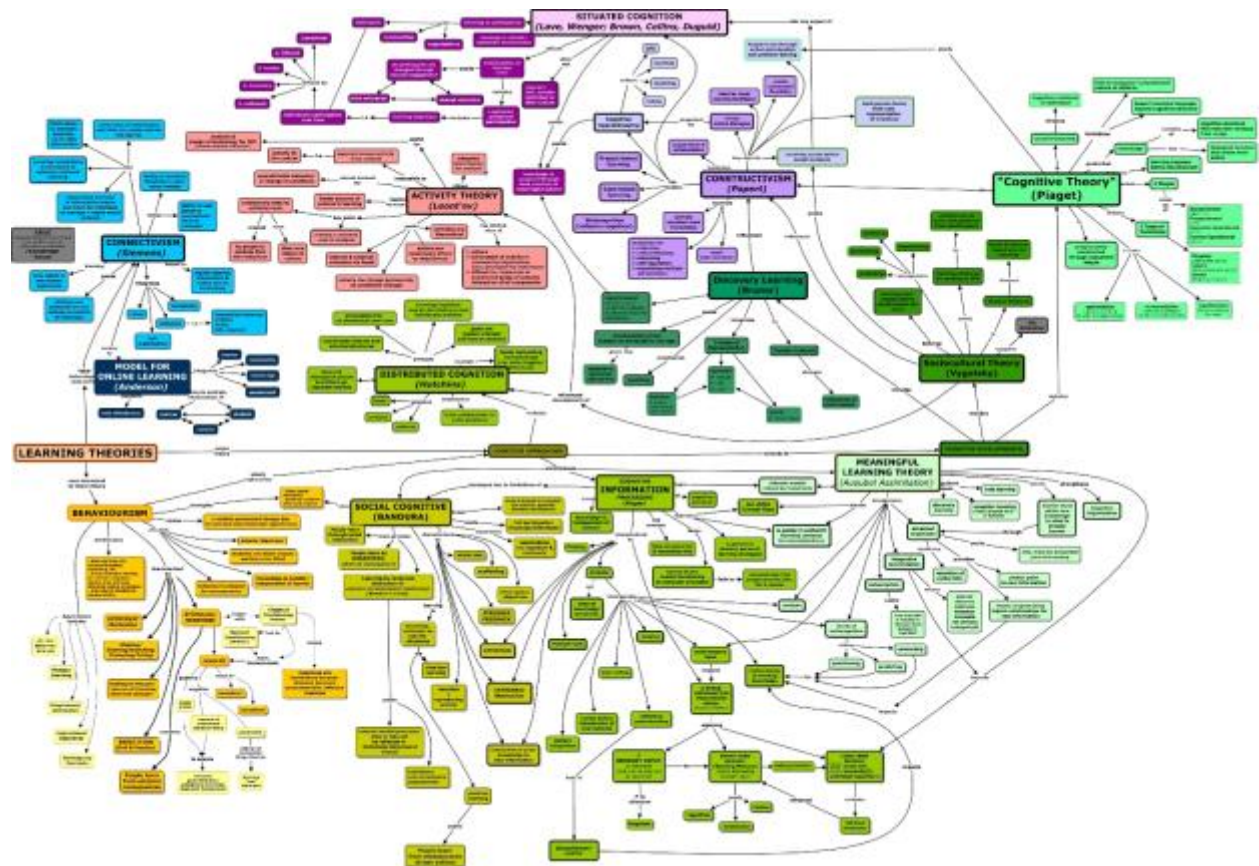


Figure 1, Learning Theories

TEACHING, COACHING AND MENTORING SYSTEMS, METHODS AND STRATEGIES APPLIED AT FOREST LAKE ACADEMY TO ENHANCE THE LEARNING PROCESS

Understanding learning and human development in the education setting requires both the instructor and the student to be aware of the type of learner and ideal methods and strategies needed to obtain the desired outcomes. Therefore, at Forest Lake Academy, we have been utilizing the 4Mat System or Method for our Physical Education and Sport programs as well in all other subject areas in order to enhance the teaching and learning process for our students. As a Physical Education teacher, coach and mentor, we also aligned the concepts suggested by Chambers, (2014) related to Mentoring in physical education and sports coaching. But what is 4Mat and how we connect the Mentoring and Coaching strategies in order to obtain Learning and Human Development?

Dr. Bernice McCarthy, is the Chief Innovative Officer and Creator of 4MAT and the Founder of About Learning System: A Framework for Improving Teaching. With her team, she designed a method based on several renown theories on human psychology, learning and brain science like Carl Jung's work in psychological types, Curt Lewin's learning cycle, David Kolb's work in learning style descriptions and research, John Dewey and Jean Piaget and Carl Roger's work in humanistic teaching and counseling (Shaughnessy & Michael, 2013). It has been utilized by thousands of teachers and students as a "learning and communication tool, developed from a holistic perspective and based on essential human differences regarding how we perceive, process, understand and pass on information" (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006). They argue that people learn in different ways, therefore the teaching needs to be approached based on those types of learning abilities and challenges each person may have. The first step which is how the person perceives the information and the second step where individuals process that information

must juxtaposition themselves giving birth to what she calls the “Cycle of learning”. This cycle must also include “personal connections, key ideas, experiments, problem solving and creative adaptations” in order to work (Shaughnessy & Michael, 2013). The advantages of 4Mat over other systems/methods and why is so important in a Physical Education and Sports program, is the core value of problem solving and respecting the pace of the learning process for the learner as well as for the teacher, coach and mentor. Moreover, Nowacki (2011) provides sufficient scientific data on how using the 4MAT framework helps designing problem-based learning courses and strategies.

But, what are the learning styles or learning preferences, as mentioned by Dr. McCarthy in her books and articles? How do we define them? Learning styles are defined by how we perceive information, and how we process it. The following graphics will help to understand these styles.

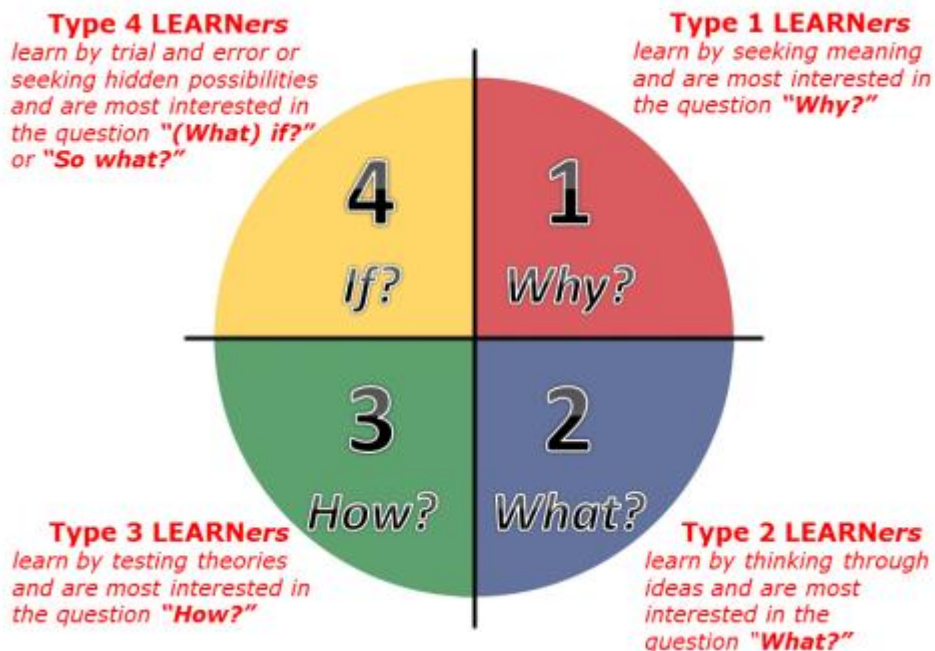


Figure 2, 4Mat type of learners. How students learn?

From <https://allthingslearning.wordpress.com/tag/4mat-model/>

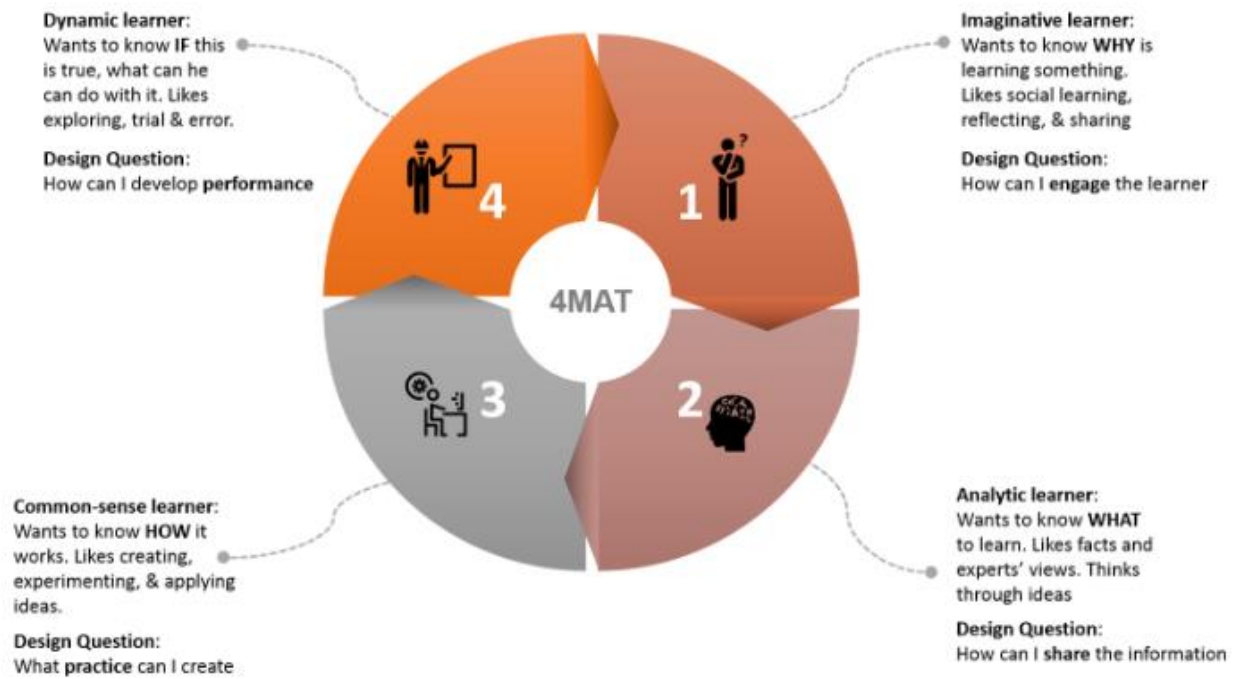


Figure 3, 4Mat type of learner's details.

from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/more-learner-types-4mat-model-elham-arabi>

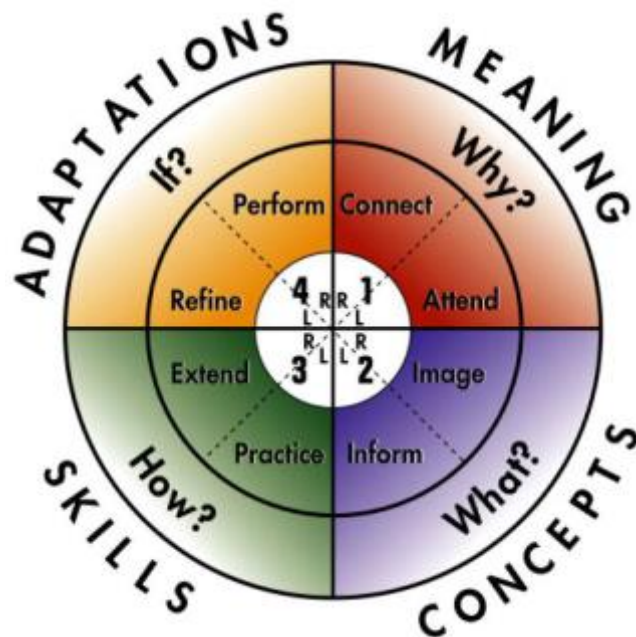


Figure 4, 4Mat type of learners graphic.

From <http://www.teo-education.com/teo/?p=3389>

After looking at these graphics, probably more important than understanding how our students learn, it was an eye-opener to us, teachers, coaches and mentors to discover how WE learn too, and as a result, we changed and adapted our teaching/coaching methods at Forest Lake Academy. Most teachers of core subjects like English, Math and Science are type 2 learners (as well as some coaches), they will always do what is asked from them and they are always eager to please the instructors. Therefore, when teaching or coaching, these teachers and coaches expect all students to always follow their instruction without questioning anything, to be quiet and attentive, and to finish their tasks to the smallest detail as requested by the teacher/coach. However, we also have teachers and coaches who are types 1, 3 and 4. What does that mean? Learner Types 1, 3 and 4 are always looking for the meaning of why we teach (“why is this important for me to learn”), how to fulfill the task as fast as possible (“how can I get this done soon, no matter the instructions”), or finding new ways to accomplish the requirements than the one suggested by the instructor (“what IF I can get it done my way?). When we found out what kind of learning style we were as teachers and coaches, we started to understand why some of our students reacted so differently to our instructions, and we could adapt our strategies, methods and evaluation times to the type of learning style students we have.

Moreover, we understood why we also sometimes get bored in some meetings and classes where we want to just get things done, where we wondered why is this important to us, or we were constantly looking for ways on how to change and arrived at the desired outcome suggested by our administrators in a different way just because we were not at type 2 learner. Those have no problem following every direction and doing everything the way it is asked from them. That is why when we also introduced the data we receive from the administration about

each student learning style (with their names, picture, etc.) we could always approach each student based on their learning style. By the way, we all have all four learning styles wired in our brain, but we are primarily one of them, combined with our auditory, visual or kinesthetic unique characteristic.

In other words, there are hundreds if not thousands of articles and books written about this teaching and learning system and method, which involves the learning style quiz for students and teachers at the beginning of the year, in order to determine the expected adaptations in the strategies utilized on daily basis as well as lesson plans, unit plans and syllabus design.

Furthermore, teachers and students understand the model and how they need to get involved in the learning process through visual, auditory and kinesthetic interactions. We linked 4Mat with other quizzes and methods in order to fully understand who each one of our students is, how they learn, and how we need to approach the teaching-learning process as teachers, coaches and mentors.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As a human development process that aims at performance improvement through learning, (Newman, 2013) the influence of Coaching and Mentoring for individuals as well as for teams and organizations continues to become more relevant today. At Forest Lake Academy's Athletic Ministry and Physical Education Department, we have been applying the 4MAT Style and Method along with Coaching and Mentoring learning theories. We also always explore as well strategies and practices meant to improve not only the performance level of our student athletes, but also to enhance their physical, emotional, social academic and spiritual growth while they develop and learn. This journey resulted in our students engaging in more Physical Education classes than ever before, some of them taking a physical activity class all four years. Also, our teams continue winning multiple National Championships in Volleyball, Soccer and Basketball for boys and girls teams in Tennessee, Texas and California in the last two years. Teachers, Athletic administrators, coaches, parents and other volunteers were coached, mentored and trained to implement the 4MAT practices aligned with the philosophy of the school and the organization we represent; the Florida Conference Association of Seven-Day Adventist Church.

Developing New Strategies to Nurture Growth

We continue to meet regularly with Conference leaders, as well as with the Forest Lake Academy Principal, teachers, coaches, volunteer, donors, parents and students to develop innovative strategies based on new research found each day in teaching, learning, coaching and mentoring for Physical Education and Athletic programs and ministries. We also follow and comply with the rules and regulations of the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA), the North American Division (NAD) standards as well as the State of Florida Standards for teaching and learning.

Some of these meetings with teachers, coaches, parents and students from Forest Lake Academy have brought ideas and suggestions our community was afraid to share before, since like Lencioni (2010) says, opening the communication avenues for individuals and teams may cause conflict. We found that some activities, trips and other traditions ingrained in our program needed change, updates and a new approach. Comparing our program and teaching/coaching strategies with other successful schools by collecting information and meeting with other athletic directors from Christian schools who share our philosophy was found to be a useful strategy. Furthermore, we started to apply with their knowledge, similar sessions of teaching, training, conditioning, schedule design, fundraising and signed commitments from all of those involved in the process.

Applying New Strategies

Conversely, this efficient and effective practice of applying what works in other programs, currently aims to result in positive measurable outcomes in the human development and learning journey for our students, coaches and teachers, either when it comes to winning-losing records, participants satisfaction, coaches retention or other forms of goal oriented decisions. Organizations place their success on the individual decision of its members, argues Dweck (2006), by an initial acknowledgment of the need of growth and improvement. A mindset determined to become coachable and sensitive to the molding of a mentor, will face challenges and occasional failures without fear, resulting in lasting accomplishments toward excellence.

Several organizations today practice sustainable Coaching and Mentoring at different levels, achieving goals even after small delays and adjustments while experiencing learning, says Parsloe (2009). Moreover, David (2016) describes how the appropriate design of effective

strategies to arrive to desired outcomes is one of the strongest allies of successful individuals and organizations.

We look forward to continue to serve our community, coaches and students by being a referent of not only a quality sports program, but of a Ministry where we can all find hope and growth in our journey to a place where we will be able to play and rejoice together for eternity.

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