

## Open conversations: The art & practice of Partnership Learning

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*From the outset, the humanist educator's efforts must coincide with those of the student to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. The educator's efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, the humanist educator must be a partner of the students in...relations with them.*

—Paulo Friere

### Calendar

January 6-10, 1998  
SIM Learning  
Strategies Workshop  
for Preservice  
Educators

February 20-21, 1998  
Far West and  
Midwest Regional  
Update Conference  
Las Vegas, NV

March 5-7, 1998  
Southeast Regional  
Update Conference  
Charleston, SC

May 26-30, 1998  
Pedagogies for  
Academic Diversity in  
Secondary Schools  
Workshop  
for Preservice  
Educators

July 9-11  
National SIM  
Trainers' Conference  
Kansas City, MO

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Our lives are enriched immeasurably by open and free conversation. In authentic dialogue, we open ourselves to new ideas, new friends, new worlds. Through conversation, we grow and learn, we express compassion, we touch others and let others touch us. In conversation, we live the experiences of our lives, in spirited, moving talks around kitchen tables, beside fireplaces, at summer cottages, in winter lodges, in automobiles, in classrooms, and, we hope, in training sessions.

Recently, the Center for Research on Learning has conducted research on how to increase the amount and quality of dialogue occurring during training sessions. The result is Partnership Learning, a method for planning and delivering staff development sessions in which memorable conversations take a central role. Partnership Learning is a simple, yet powerful, training methodology involving several core principles that are embodied in six easy-to-learn training strategies. This article provides a brief overview of the partnership principles and strategies so you can consider whether they might be useful methods to try out in your training sessions.

### Principles

The partnership principles are foundational, guiding benchmarks you can use to make training decisions. Combined, the nine principles listed below represent a new mindset for training, a mindset focused on developing an authentic partnership between teachers and staff developers.

- 1. Equality.** Partnership Learning is built upon conversation between equals. Therefore, all participants in training sessions are recognized as equal partners, and consequently no view is more important or valuable than any other.
- 2. Reflection.** Partnership Learning assumes that learning involves reflection, and therefore trainers should offer numerous opportunities for participants to reflect on the practical implications of the new content being learned.
- 3. Choice.** Partnership Learning recognizes that partnership means choice, and ➤

## Calendar

July 21-25, 1998  
Strategic Instruction Model  
(SIM) Workshop Level I

July 21-25, 1998  
Strategic Instruction Model  
(SIM) Workshop Level II

July 21-25, 1998  
Strategic Instruction Model  
(SIM) Workshop  
Content Enhancement

July 21-25, 1998  
Workshop for Potential SIM  
Content Enhancement Trainers

Aug. 3-7, 1998  
Workshop for Potential SIM  
Learning Strategy Trainers

## Northeast Trainers' Update Meeting

A *HUGE* vote of thanks is given to Jean Mooney, Boston College, for all she did to welcome SIM Trainers to the Fourth Annual Northeast Trainers' Update Meeting, November 7 and 8 at Boston College. Anthony Bashir, Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts, served as the assistant coordinator for the conference, which attracted about 40 people.

Sessions were presented by CRL staff members Keith Lenz and Jim Knight on SMARTER, (More on page 3)

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therefore participant choice is implicit in every communication of content.

**4. Dialogue.** Partnership Learning is built on dialogue, not lecture. Presenters do not dominate, impose, or control. They engage participants in conversation about content and think and learn with participants as everyone moves through content being discussed.

**5. Expertise.** Trainers using Partnership Learning believe that participant knowledge and expertise are as important as their own. They have faith in participants' abilities to invent useful new applications of the content they are exploring.

**6. Learning with Participants.** In Partnership Learning, the trainer's goal is to learn along with participants. Thus, the trainer learns about participants' work contexts, the strengths and weaknesses of the content when seen as an application for that environment, multiple perspectives on the content being presented when seen through the eyes of the learners, and so on.

**7. Voice.** In Partnership Learning, all participants are encouraged to comment on how they see the content being covered. Thus, trainers should recognize and value different ways of perceiving content and encourage conversation about multiple points of view.

**8. Engagement.** Partnership Learning is predicated on the belief that effective instructional practices must be used to ensure that all participants learn the content that they will be reflecting on throughout the session. To encourage efficient and effective learning for all

participants, presenters use strategies that ensure participant engagement in content delivered.

**9. Interactive.** Partnership Learning involves a minimal amount of lecturing and strives for learning that includes many points of view. When using a partnership approach, trainers lead interactive sessions by providing numerous opportunities for participants to voice their ideas and concerns.

## Strategies

The principles of Partnership Learning are embodied in six partnership strategies. These strategies, described below, are each instructional methods that can be woven into any training session.

**Thinking Devices.** When using a thinking device, a trainer presents a provocative object to a group of learners (the object might be a film clip, story, vignette, audio clip, work of art, song, photograph, or other provocative object) and then elicits participant responses to and dialogue about the object through the use of question recipes (described below). Thinking devices can be used for a variety of teaching purposes, including introducing major sections of content or surfacing and/or validating prior knowledge of participants.

**Question Recipes.** Question recipes are

- Open-ended, that is questions that prompt responses that are detailed
- Nonjudgmental, that is questions that elicit responses that are neither right nor wrong

When using question recipes, a trainer draws from a list of 10 questions that he or she uses routinely during the session to promote dialogue. Example question recipes are "How do you see this working?" "Tell me more about that..." "What would prevent you from doing \_\_\_\_\_?" "How do you feel about \_\_\_\_\_?" ►

**Cooperative Learning.** Cooperative learning involves group learning activities that are mediated by learners and in which learners are given specific roles to perform. An example of cooperative learning is jigsaw, a two-part activity. During jigsaw, participants are divided into small groups in which they learn a portion of content being covered during the session (for example, a few pages of a training manual), with each group learning a different portion of content. Following this, new groups are created with each new group containing at least one member from each original group. In these new groups, participants, in sequence, teach the specific information they mastered to the members of the new group so that all of the information covered by the original groups is covered in the new groups.

**Experiential Learning.** Experiential learning involves structured learning activities that simulate the practice about which participants are learning. For example, teachers who are learning about the Sentence Writing Strategy could be asked to write a short paragraph and then discuss the strategies they used to create correct sentences. Similarly, teachers learning about the Test-Taking Strategy might be given a test to complete at some point during a workshop and then be prompted to discuss how they felt about and strategically approached the test.

**Reflective Learning.** Reflective learning involves activities that prompt participants to consider and explore how learning can be applied to their personal or professional lives. Examples of reflective learning include providing teachers with time to create Unit

Organizers for content units they are planning to teach.

**Effective Stories.** Effective stories are short anecdotes or narratives that staff developers include in their sessions to enhance delivery of content. Stories can provide background information, examples and nonexamples, advance information, analogical anchors, personal or group contexts for learning, and so on.

## Research

Study of Partnership Learning shows that it is significantly more powerful than traditional training. During research on Partnership Learning, two groups of teachers were trained in two strategies (Visual Imagery and Self-Questioning). The first group received Visual Imagery training that used Partnership Learning methods and Self-Questioning training that used traditional methods. The second group received the opposite: Visual Imagery training that used traditional methods and Self-Questioning training involving Partnership Learning methods.

The results consistently show that Partnership Learning training, when compared with more traditional one-directional training, is a more effective method for engaging participants, communicating content, building an expectation of implementation, and creating an enjoyable experience (Figure 1).

One result especially illustrates the power of partnership. At the end of the Visual Imagery and Self-Questioning training sessions, participants were asked which strategy they were more likely to use. Regardless of whether they received Visual Imagery or Self-

## Northeast meeting

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Content Enhancement Connections and Implementation Issues, the Clarifying and Survey Routines, and Partnership Learning.

The group was further enlightened by the following presentations:

- Joan Hofmann and Mary Abrams (West Hartford, Connecticut, trainers), "Giggles, Gabbing, and Fast Moving Pens: Training Session on the Writing Strategies"
- Kim Morrison and Julie Gorman (Newton, Massachusetts, middle school teachers), "Content Enhancement as the Basis for Inclusive Collaboration in Math"
- A panel of Lisa Erdekian (Newton, Massachusetts, middle school teacher) and Richard Goldhammer and Anthony Bashir (Boston, Massachusetts, trainers), "Adaptations for the Survey Routine from the Real World"
- Rosemary Tralli (Wethersfield, Connecticut, trainer), "Modeling is the Heart, but Motivation is the Pulse."

Of all the northeast states, Connecticut had the largest representation of trainers with 15. Tim Hanrahan, Belleville, Ontario, Canada, and Cyndi Gibson, Grand Rapids, Michigan, came from the farthest distance.

The opportunity to renew acquaintances with a wonderful exchange of ideas among trainers was a highlight for many.

Research Question	Partnership Learning (scores out of 7.0)	Traditional Training (scores out of 7.0)
Enjoyment	5.22	3.13
Comprehension	4.58	3.75
Engagement	5.22	3.19
Implementation	5.07	4.0

Figure 1

## The next Stratechat

Don Deshler will host the next Stratechat discussion, at 3 p.m. (Central) December 17. The topic will be Strategies and General Education. For more information or to sign up to participate, e-mail Julie Tollefson through StrateNet or at [jtollefson@ukans.edu](mailto:jtollefson@ukans.edu) or call Julie at (785) 864-4780.

## Transcripts

The nature of Stratechats allows us to save transcripts of the conversation. These transcripts will be archived on StrateNet to allow trainers who were unable to participate to get a sense of the conversation.

See page 6 for highlights of the first Stratechat. A full transcript is available in the Stratechat Archives folder on StrateNet.

Questioning training using Partnership Learning methods, the teachers chose the strategy presented using Partnership Learning methods by a greater than 3 to 1 ratio (Figure 2).

## Conclusion


Research suggests that the partnership strategies and principles can make a difference in the way we manage training sessions. What's more, the six strategies mentioned above are easy-to-use and simple to build into any training session. Indeed, you may be using some or all of the strategies already.

Partnership Learning is a simple way to create a setting in which teachers can freely, openly, and honestly explore, criticize, enthuse, and grow as they learn about new and old ways to teach. However, at its core, Partnership

Learning is meant to be something more basic than a training methodology. Essentially, Partnership Learning is a philosophy or simple belief about training. In truth, if you go

Partnership Learning	Traditional Learning
59	15

Figure 2

into each session open and expecting to be delighted by what teachers will teach you and honestly believing that every teacher has good ideas to share, then you are most likely already using Partnership Learning. What is more, chances are that as you conduct your training sessions, as you learn with the teachers you are training, your life is enriched immeasurably by open and free conversations. 

## First Stratechat brings strategic instruction, elementary classrooms issues into focus

The Strategic Instruction Model community's first Stratechat gathered five people around an electronic fire to discuss strategies and elementary classrooms. Participants agreed the experience was good and this form of communication holds promise for future discussions.

"I think this can be a powerful way for folks to get the support they need to provide powerful instruction using the SIM model," participant Pat Gildroy said at the conclusion of the Stratechat, which was held November 13.

Barbara Glaeser, who hosted the Stratechat, liked being able to read participants' thoughts.

"I also felt that people tend to get out more complete thoughts by typing them because there is no social stigma to 'talking too much' like there is around a table," she said. "I felt we focused more on an issue. More information exchange seemed to take place in a short amount of time than would have in person."

The Stratechat format allowed participants time to reflect, organize,

and compose their thoughts before responding to others.

### Stratechat highlights, page 6

"One benefit I noticed about the chat is the FOCUS on a particular issue," participant Gwen Barry said. "Although humor was interjected and we did sometimes get sidetracked, when you have to type a response, you are forced to a) think carefully about what you will say (there'll be a written record!) b) condense key information, c) stay focused! It struck me that although we have known each other for years, we haven't taken time to have a focused discussion like this before."

Although focus was one benefit, the Stratechat also allowed participants to pursue several thoughts concurrently.

"This forum offers different types of interchanges in that several threads of conversation can be going on at the same time because of the time delay between seeing a comment and being able to type a response. In actuality, I think this may encourage more divergent thinking," Pat said. 