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“Learning is never cumulative, it is a movement of knowing which has no beginning and no end.”

-Bruce Lee

What We Can Learn From the Master Adaptive Learner Model

This year’s TEACH Education Day was filled with opportunities for networking with fellow educators, the sharing of exciting education research occurring across the organization, the presentation of several teaching awards, and a fascinating keynote lecture by visiting speaker Larry Gruppen, PhD. Dr. Gruppen and his colleagues were brought together by the American Medical Association to collaborate on the development of a model for learning. The model they developed, the Master Adaptive Learner, serves as a model to develop expert thinkers, scholars, and learners. One of the multiple papers they have developed based on the concept, the Master Adaptive Learner is defined as “a metacognitive approach to learning based on self-regulation that can foster the development and use of adaptive expertise in practice.”¹



As described during his presentation, the Master Adaptive Learner model provides an outline of individual cognitive skills that can be used to “facilitate successes and struggles through the learning process.”¹ As educators, our goal is to develop expert thinkers, scholars, and learners. In order to accomplish this, it is our role to develop environments and processes to enhance this development. There are several cognitive learning processes that must be initiated within the learner in order to operate as a Master Adaptive Learner. These include – self-monitoring, metacognition, reflection, and critical thinking. To enhance this process, it is important for learners to embody curiosity, motivation, resilience, and a growth mindset.

The Master Adaptive Learner model uses gears to illustrate the phases of self-directed learning. The planning phase is when learners identify gaps and how to best address each. Faculty role modeling is critical for fostering the effective completion of this stage. During the Learning phase, it is important to utilize effective adaptive learning strategies to instill meaningful understanding. By weaving a thread of concepts throughout learning and revisiting topics with ties to building new knowledge, learners can be successful self-directed learners that adapt to situations and environments. Utilizing strategies such as spaced repetition and interleaving can help promote connections and reduce the learning curve during this phase.^{2,3} The Assessing phase is when we, as educators, should provide and learners should seek feedback to perform an *informed* self-assessment. Adjusting represents the phase during which learners apply their new knowledge to practice. This phase is critical as learners continue to grow and learn in the face of new problems and apply their knowledge in different ways.

It is important not only to consider using the Master Adaptive Learner model as a framework as we train our learners to become expert physicians, communicators, teachers, and more, but also as an integral part of our own lifelong learning. -Mariah Rudd

1. Cutler, W. B., Miller, B., Pusic, M. V., Mejicano, G., Mangrulkar, R. S., Gruppen, L. D., & Moore Jr, D. E. (2017). Fostering the development of master adaptive learners: a conceptual model to guide skill acquisition in medical education. *Academic Medicine*, 92(1), 70-75.
2. Weidman, Joseph, and Keith Baker. "The cognitive science of learning: concepts and strategies for the educator and learner." *Anesthesia & Analgesia* 121.6 (2015): 1586-1599.
3. Rohrer, D. (2012). Interleaving helps students distinguish among similar concepts. *Educational Psychology Review*. 24(3). 355-367.



Dean's Corner

Cynda Johnson, MD, MBA

Not long ago, I had the honor and enjoyment of being the first interviewee for our newest community outreach project. Named [Healthstorian](#), it is a vintage-style camper retrofitted with an audio booth. Its purpose is to capture an oral history of health and health care in Southwest Virginia by travelling to hospitals, clinics, neighborhoods, community festivals – any place where people are in abundant supply and curious enough to step inside and be interviewed. I venture to say everyone in our region, no matter who they are, has a story to tell about their personal experiences with health.

Healthstorian was inspired by the highly acclaimed [StoryCorps](#), which has a regular spot on National Public Radio. Our collaborative partners in this venture are the VTC Research Institute, Carilion Clinic, Jefferson College of Health Sciences, Roanoke Public Libraries, and several departments at Virginia Tech, including University Libraries and [VTStories](#). The recordings will be archived with the university's library system.

Healthstorian's next stop will be at Holzman Alumni Center at Virginia Tech this Saturday as part of the university's Homecoming festivities. If you're headed that way, I encourage you to stop by. As you can see below, you can't miss it!



Healthstorian



The inside looks like a radio studio. Left to right are Dave Trinkle, associate dean for community and culture, Nathan Flinchum, community technology center librarian with Roanoke Public Libraries, and Ren Harman, director of VTStories.



N.L. Bishop, president of Jefferson College of Health Sciences, was the second person to be interviewed.