



VIEWPOINTS: THE BACKGROUND

After fifteen years of experience in observing style in myself and others, in conducting intense interviews with adults and students, and in seeing success with the application of theory to practice, I have a high degree of confidence in the validity and significance of style as a complex and powerful dimension of thinking and learning. Stylistic differences are master keys to the curriculum development process, to effective teaching, and to meaningful learning.

Why must we begin with understanding the patterns and nuances of our own style? In working with educators in particular, I have been amazed at the tenuous nature of the sense of self that most of us hold. For many of us, sureness about our own qualities is quietly undone by an equally fragile sense that perhaps we are not quite acceptable. As a result, we cannot help attempting to prove that our way is the best way, often to the detriment of our own psychological comfort, our relationships with others, and our effectiveness as teachers.

Through self-assessment, we can come to see how our styles are valued and legitimate. This lends a vision and value to one's world, and invites a new sense of exploration and freedom outside one's self. Even further, many people have found that understanding style enhances their innate, spiritual generosity to others. In all cases, genuine understanding about authentic differences in style never diminishes others; by far, it tempers our egos—not only do we acknowledge others' successes, we delight in seeing others succeed.

ViewPoints asks you to understand self for three reasons: (1) to grow in your own development as a person and professional; (2) to gain in appreciation and relationship with others; (3) to gather a foundation for application of stylistic principles and applications in the learning process.

Stephen Covey suggests in **Seven Habits of Highly Effective People**, "Seek to understand [others], then be understood." With self-knowledge, we are more

likely to seek to understand others because we can truly listen to them without our own defenses in place. We are freed to become curious about others' differences and to accept

others without the hesitation that comes when we are unsure of ourselves. With self-knowledge, we are freed to deepen our strengths rather than dwell on our limitations, and thus invite others to complement us in the circle of life.

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Although self-knowledge is a crucial first step, as well as a maxim handed down through the wisdom of the ages, for teachers to consider personal style without considering its implications for their work with children tells only half the story. Therefore, **ViewPoints** has been designed as the essential first component in the bigger picture of our mission: reaching all children.



VIEWPOINTS: A PRELUDE TO LEARNING STYLES

"Nature never repeats itself. The possibilities of one human soul will never be found in another."

—*Elizabeth Cady Stanton*

As educators, you are entrusted with the care of children's minds, bodies, hearts, and spirits, and are asked to honor, genuinely, the many dimensions within each child in both your words and actions. How do you accomplish this?

One of the most powerful ways to honor the many dimensions within each child is to acknowledge and appreciate stylistic differences in thinking and learning. This means two things: to accept each teacher and child as a unique and worthy human being, and to guide each teacher and child in self-development and authentic learning as far as you are able.

To understand others, to teach with their needs in mind, and to design meaningful and worthy curriculum, you must of course, start by understanding yourself—your style, needs, biases. You must bring out the best in yourself and in your teaching, learn how you affect and influence others, and be aware how your actions may be part of a learner's problem but more importantly, part of the solution.

ViewPoints is designed to provide an entry-level process to help you consider personal stylistic strengths and to introduce you to the stylistic viewpoints of others. In other words, **ViewPoints** provides the prelude to understanding the foundations of learning styles.

With this framework, you can learn to bridge to others' needs, to stylize lessons for maximum impact, and to use an integrated, performance-based curriculum design. Our goal is to provide you with the critical foundation for guiding your students to success as individuals and as learners—to help them do more than wish upon a star, but to *be* a shining star.

