

Chapter 12

Reflections and Validation

As I've assembled this guide to fostering a fire service Learning Culture, I'm more committed than ever to seeing these concepts published, in this context. As I describe the concepts (captured in [Chart 4.1](#)) to other's in the fire service, I get the same comment: "that is exactly what we need; you need to get that out to the troops".

*What [Chart 4.1](#) shows, is the relationship between how much direction and dependency a learner will need and exhibit at different times in their learning life. I relate this to the fire service, but it can be adapted for other uses. The concepts are a culmination of all my readings during this JIU experience. The key for me was while reading Knowles (2005), *The Adult Learner*, and seeing how Pratt (1988) described high direction and dependency. I took this as insight how to explain how and why the Andragogical model works so well for fire service training and development. More importantly is the reactions I've observed from other instructors when I've described the teacher/student relationship to them. Once they see it, they understand what has been missing. What is usually missing for many fire service instructors is the understanding that high instructor direction should be as temporary as possible, yielding to a facilitation role, and depending upon the learners and subjects – collaborative learner roles. These fire service instructors's must be taught to prep their learners to better understand the Collaborative Learner Progression ([Chart 4.1](#)). This progression allows for initial high direction from the instructor and high dependency by the student, but this is a temporary condition. As the student gains enough new knowledge to perform independently of the instructor, the student needs to have time to manipulate and validate*

this new knowledge. As facilitator's the instructor plays a much different role that validates the Andragogical methods. As the learner gains knowledge they should be encouraged to develop their understanding by physically applying their new knowledge and updating their understanding. This progression begins with new (adult) fire recruits and develops over many months in an initial fire academy experience. Then the same progression will take place as they develop within their career. They may return to a need for high direction and dependency, as pedagogical learners, but the amount of time where they remain in this state will depend upon the learner and their previous knowledge and understanding. As the learner progresses into "mid fire service career" they expect to have their learning facilitated, not directed (see [Chart 4.1](#)).

As of the beginning of 2006, these concepts seemed valid, but needed to be tested. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to develop the Learning Culture, Andragogical principles, with Poudre Fire Authority (PFA). By using a third party survey tool, SurveyMonkey.com, I've been able to collect data from 150 firefighters, during 13 surveys, covering 258 CLEs (see [Appendix C](#)). This data has given us solid data about how effective we've been at facilitating their Constructive Learning Environments (CLEs).

One tangible way the Learning Culture was observed in 2006, was when crews were able to accomplish the learning outcomes by using the web support for domain information, facilitator's guides for lesson plans and consistency, and by constructing their own learning environments. This occurred when a small number of D/O's were not able to attend the scheduled CLE's that we provided as a Training Division. I received no communication past an initial phone call indicating the model was not working. The

litmus test was when I received 82 completed D/O Skills packets on November 15, 2006 (See [Appendix K](#))

In 2007, I've developed a series of web pages that supports nine months of driver operator (D/O) skills. These web pages include the basic components of the fire service Learning Culture – solid domain information, facilitator's guides, and constructive learning environments. Each web page will have surveys developed to collect data from the learning environment offerings. This data will give us direct information about the effectiveness of our learning environment designs.

PFA is fortunate to have one acquired house for use during 2007 and possibly six others during the next two years. These training resources, combined with the driver skills training, will give us (PFA's training division) an opportunity to improve on our 2006 Learning Culture.

Interviews

I've interviewed five officers who were directly affected by the 2006 Learning Culture. I received valid feedback, and overwhelmingly the feedback was positive. I was encouraged to continue with how we are currently offering training. In February, 2007, I surveyed the entire PFA population to ask their assessment of the effectiveness of the PFA Learning Culture (see [Appendix I](#)). The data received represented 10% of recipients, and validated the moves toward a Learning Culture in 2006.

During 2006, I received numerous questions that required clarification, but no dissention or real problems with any firefighter's not being able to learn from the domain information, facilitator's guides, or CLEs. This seemed unusual, if there were problems

with our instructional design, since we had so much contact with them during the 258 CLEs. Our conclusion was that the Learning Culture resources that I designed, and PFA's Training Division put in place were being effective, and well received.

If the Learning Culture wasn't effective, we would have observed inconsistencies of performance, as well as much more feedback.

Surveys

The use of a third party, anonymous, survey tool has proven to be an asset for our data collection. Consistently, I've received about a 10 – 20% response to our 13 surveys. As the PFA firefighters have been exposed to the survey tool, I'm seeing a higher response than one year ago.

Conclusions

With a solid beginning to developing a learning culture at PFA, our challenge is to provide learning for the Captain's who will be the primary instructor/facilitator/collaborative learner for their crews. If we are successful in conveying the components of the Learning Culture, as I've described in this guide, and supporting the Captain's with well developed learning design and CLE's, the PFA Learning Culture will continue to grow.

My next challenge is to expose as many fire service instructor's as possible to the concepts of the Learning Culture. I hope to present this material at the December 2007, Fire Leadership Conference, in Breckenridge, Colorado.