Personal Teaching & Learning Statement

My personal teaching and learning philosophy has developed over a 30-year career span that includes 14 years of teaching secondary French and Spanish, and 14 years as the Executive Director of Mountain Heights Academy, a public, online charter school. My philosophy is situated squarely in Sfard's (1998) participation metaphor, under the umbrella of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), with the narrower focus being on situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in my current position at Mountain Heights.

Historical Context and Defining Learning and Teaching

In order to situate constructivism in a historical context, Bruner posits that it began with Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason," where he argued for "a priori knowledge," what we know, and mapping that onto "a posteriori knowledge," what we perceive from interactions (Jonassen, 1991). Therefore, thinking grounded in a priori models are schema that explain perceptions, and meaning is simply a function of how individuals create meaning from experiences. Knowledge becomes an activity, not something to be acquired (Barab and Dodge, 2008) and is fundamentally situated in practice (Sfard, 1991).

As such, my perception of the broad definition of learning involves a community of practice, where learning is defined as becoming a full participant in that community, as learners construct an identity as participants (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Teaching centers around the concept of legitimate peripheral practice, which lends itself well to the online setting (Lave and Wenger, 1991). There isn't as much overt teaching in a traditional lecture-style sense, as there is modeling, collaborating, tutoring, and student-expert partnerships (Barab and Dodge, 2008) at Mountain Heights.

The Instructional Design and Learning Process

Clayton Christensen, author of Disrupting Class, shares the International Association for K-12 Online Learning's projection that by 2019, 50% of all 9-12 grade high school courses will be taken online (2008). Since that time, researchers at the Christensen Institute have released two updated reports modifying Christensen's claims. Most recently, they adjusted their prediction of courses being delivered online to include hybrid and blended learning taking place within a brick-and-mortar classroom setting and they suspected that models, such as Flex, Enriched Virtual, or A La Carte, would be the most sustainably disruptive (Christensen et al., 2013). Digital learning will play a key role in the future of education, whether it is in a uniquely online, blended, or a yet-to-be-discovered format. This creates a gap and an opportunity for teachers in the instructional design process:

1. **Open Educational Resource Content** - Mountain Heights Academy was originally named the Open High School of Utah, founded by Dr. David Wiley, and carries in its charter a commitment to open educational resource (OER) curricula.
2. **Time and Technology**- Teachers in an online setting leverage technology to use time more effectively. Rather than teaching the same thing multiple times as groups of students change places, short, interactive videos are created once and watched asynchronously. When the content is housed online, the teacher's time is spent tutoring small groups or individuals, leveraging Bloom's 2 sigma ideal (1984). Gaps in student understanding can quickly be targeted and filled in this customized setting, which consistently situates Mountain Heights Academy as the highest-ranking online charter school in the state for test scores and completion rates (2012).

3. **Teachers as Instructional Designers** - At Mountain Heights, teachers are well-vetted, and asked to build content as part of the interview process. The online delivery of open source content empowers teachers to adjust it in a rapid prototyping model (Tripp and Bichelmeyer, 1990). When this model is coupled with a data-driven, developmental evaluation model (Patton, 2010), it creates an innovative, fast-paced, continual curriculum improvement process that yields high quality content and higher-performing students, especially when students are participating in the design process as their community of practice.

Theoretical Ideas, Purpose of Learning, Goals of Instruction

"The engaging in practice, rather than being its object may well be a condition for the effectiveness of learning" (Lave and Wenger, 1991). At Mountain Heights, teachers and students collaborate to build open educational resource curriculum as students become more legitimate co-instructional designers over time, working within an authentic community of practice with their teachers.

Lave and Wenger also differentiate between a learning curriculum, "a field of learning resources in everyday practice viewed from the perspective of learners," and a teaching curriculum, created from the perspective of teachers (1991). Mountain Heights teachers work with students to engage them in the practice of designing instruction, and learning in the process. As such, learning is viewed as the "historical production, transformation, and change of persons" (Lave and Wenger, 1991) as learners become agents of their education and take ownership of the process, which dovetails nicely with Ryan & Deci's self-determination theory (Reeves, 2000).

Rationale for my Educational Work

When adults provide a rationale for OER in an online platform with teachers as instructional designers, there are multiple benefits, including, collaboration and partnerships, knowledge sharing, cost savings and efficiency, quality improvements and standards alignment, support for independent learning, and communication and community engagement (Bliss, Tonks, & Patrick, 2013). However, when learners provide the rationale for OER, as a learning curriculum, there is a shift in focus to the following benefits, including legacy building, engagement, motivation, confidence building, deeper learning, authentic experience, teacher connection, knowledge sharing, and student legitimacy (Wiechmann, 2013).

Adult Rationale for OER	Student Rationale for OER
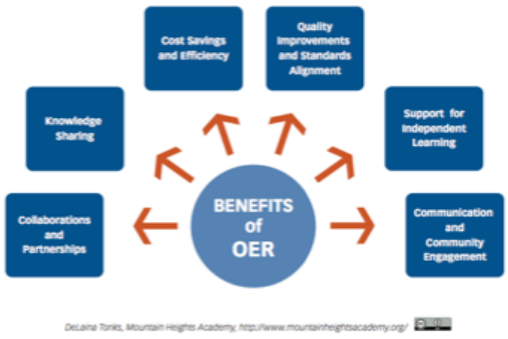	
Fig. 3	Fig. 4

An unintended, unanticipated consequence is students wanting to help others succeed in addition to becoming more invested in their own performance as agents of their own learning.

Conclusion

Leveraging OER, teacher time and technology, and communities of practice with students and teachers as co-instructional designers has the potential to engage learners in innovative ways

that can improve the overall learning experience and increase student performance and agency. Students at Mountain Heights benefit from participating in a socially constructed situated learning experience, which illustrates my philosophy of teaching and learning.

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