History of New Horizons for Learning

Dee Dickinson, Founder of New Horizons for Learning

In the late 70's there was a huge explosion of new research from the neurosciences, cognitive sciences, studies in human development, accelerated learning strategies, and ways of identifying individual differences in learning and applying this information to helping all students to learn more successfully. At that time, I was chairing an advisory committee to the superintendent of a large urban school district, and became increasingly concerned that much of this important information was not reaching most classrooms. Of course there have always been excellent teachers who intuitively knew how to help their students to learn, but often they did not have the research to support what they were doing. There was also little attempt to synthesize the information and make it into a meaningful whole thus turning information into knowledge and knowledge into practice.

In 1980 Sue Leskinen, Joan Oates, and I decided to create a network to reach teachers with new information we would have loved to have when we were in the classroom. New Horizons for Learning was born and we began to publish a newsletter with succinct articles about effective teaching and learning strategies, where they were being used, what the results were, and where to get further information with names and contact information. It seemed to us that we had put a lightening rod into the air and began attracting messages from those who received our publications and shared our concerns. By the second year we had become an international education network, gathering and disseminating information, and giving seminars and workshops. (Joan needed to leave after the first year because of family commitments, and Sue died in 1983). (Navigate here to see an early version of New Horizons' newsletter On the Beam.)

In 1984, we were asked to design a conference for the Tarrytown Conference Center in New York. We called this event "The Coming Education Explosion," and indeed it did set off explosions of transformational work. Presenters included educational pioneers such as Howard Gardner, who had just published Frames of Mind and introduced his Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Reuven Feuerstein, Israeli pioneer in the teaching of intelligence, Luis Alberto Machado, first in the world Minister of Human Intelligence in Venezuela, and twenty-three other researchers and practitioners who we believed were on the leading-edge of educational change. Those presenters became our International Advisory Board. Following that conference we produced eight more international conferences using The Theory of Multiple Intelligences as a framework. Springing from these conferences, new alternative schools came into being and innumerable schools and classrooms were transformed.

In 1990, we became interested in how the Internet was developing, and decided to post much of the material we had been gathering in order to make it available to even more people who were interested in making it possible for all students to learn more effectively. The next year we found that the World Wide Web was becoming accessible to schools and created a virtual Building with floors focused on various aspects of learning. Our newsletter then became an online Journal and greatly expanded its circulation. By 2002, the Building had become top heavy with twenty
"floors," and the website had become too complicated to use effectively. We then synthesized the content into seven categories and simplified the navigation.

Today, New Horizons for Learning at [www.education.jhu.edu/newhorizons](http://www.education.jhu.edu/newhorizons) is a premier educational resource on the Internet and leadership as transferred to the editorial team at Johns Hopkins University School of Education. It remains a non-profit, international network of educators focused on identifying, communicating, and implementing the most effective teaching and learning strategies at all ages and abilities. The information on this website is freely available to anyone who can access the Internet.

The New Horizons for Learning website is being used by individual teachers, school administrators, schools of education, study groups of teachers, researchers, those working on advanced degrees in education, and grant-seekers who use the information to support their proposals to funders. The website has also been quoted in numerous books and journals.

**Historical Operation of New Horizons for Learning**