Balanced Model of Learning for Success and Innovation
Dr. Russell J. Quaglia
Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations

The Balanced Model of Learning and Innovation posits that there are three primary factors in every learning environment or situation which give rise to student engagement and academic success: the ***student,*** the ***teacher***, and the ***content & technology***.

In any given learning environment, the ***student*** is there to gather, discover, process, understand, integrate—ultimately, to learn—the information conveyed by the teacher. The ***teacher*** shares, presents, guides, instructs, and/or facilitates this knowledge to that end; he or she needs to not only know content, but to have the skills to provide that content in a format that is understandable and relevant to the students he or she is teaching. The ***content & technology*** represents the information and how that information is to be learned (and, at times, discovered) by both the student and the teacher; whether the content is physics or fly fishing, in every controlled learning environment some form of "content & technology" can and should exist in unison with each other.

At the heart of the Balanced Model of Learning and Innovation is how the connections among these three factors promote success. There are *four intersections* (Diagram 1):

I. Student – Teacher (*Relationship*)
This is the bond that exists between teacher and student. In the best-case scenario, relationships are based on trust and mutual respect. Each party cares about the other, enjoys interacting with the other, and is sensitive to the specific needs of the other. A teacher can positively influence his or her relationship with students by inspiring and expecting students to do their best, treating students' ideas with respect, learning about the students' aspirations, and being open to learning from the students.

II. Student – Content & Technology (*Interest*)
For students to be engaged in their learning they need to have some level of interest in the subject matter and how it is delivered. However, not all of students' interests in particular content are within a teacher's influence or control. What a teacher does have some control over is the degree to which students' understand why they are learning what they are learning - that is, the relevance of the content; and how they are learning the content – that is, how content is being delivered. Interest is influenced by how the content & technology connects to other subjects as well as current events, how the content & technology applies to students' everyday lives, and how it might affect their future and aspirations. A greater interest of the class content & technology should manifest itself in a greater appreciation of learning.

III. Teacher – Content & Technology (*Expertise*)
For teachers to be successful, they need to have a level of expertise not only in knowledge of their subject area(s), but also in pedagogical strategies and the use of technology. While teachers may not be expected to know everything in a particular field, they must be confident enough in their grasp of the subject matter to be able to guide learning and instruction through various modes of instruction and tools to deliver the content.

IV. Student – Teacher – Content & Technology (*Learning for ALL*).
According to the Balanced Learning Model, learning for all (students and teachers) where they will reach their fullest potential, are most likely to occur when there is an environment with strong, positive student-teacher relationships; when students are interested in and committed to learning the subject matter because it is in some way relevant to them; and when teachers are well-versed in the content & technology so as to maintain the rigor of the material and provide relevant challenges to the students. When all this comes together, the lines between teaching and learning become blurred because everyone is teaching and learning together.

Diagram 1: Balanced Model of Learning and Innovation