The I and E School Simulation

Credit: *Smart Strengths* Yeager et. al.

Students are first told that they are now entering the “E School of Turning.” They are asked to turn in place as they spin to do a 360 degree turn. After they turn all the way around, one student is highlighted as a truly “gifted, fantastic, natural turner.” This student is asked to spin alone and the rest of the class is told to watch “how magnificent a turner this student is.” As this student turns alone before the class, the teacher obnoxiously challenges the class if they see how great a turner she or he is and “did they see that, isn’t this a fantastic turner?” There are several more turns and other students are labeled as fantastic turners, but always the teacher comes back to the first turner. In the next rounds of turning, poor turners are labeled as “L” or almost an “L”” No explanation is given.

The students then are told they are now in a new school of turning, the “I School of Turning.” This time when they turn no one is told they are exceptional, but instead the trainers and teacher coach everyone on how to turn. Each round of turning, they coach more and more, training individual students on how to turn in a better fashion.

At this point, the simulation is over. Students are asked how they felt in the “E School of Turning.” They are asked how they liked it when the teacher highlighted the one student as a “natural.” Students labeled “L” or almost an “L” are asked what they think “L” meant and they often immediately identify “L” as loser, even though it has never been said. The student highlighted as exceptional is asked about how he or she felt by all the attention. Students are then told that this school was the Entity School and this school treated the idea of turning as an entity that you have it or don’t have.

Students are then told that the “I” School of Turning” was a school that viewed turning as an incremental event that you could improve at incrementally with practice. They are then asked how this school was different. They should respond that there was more teaching in this school and everyone was valued no matter how well they turned. Finally, students are asked what school they think most reflects the school or classes that they currently attend.