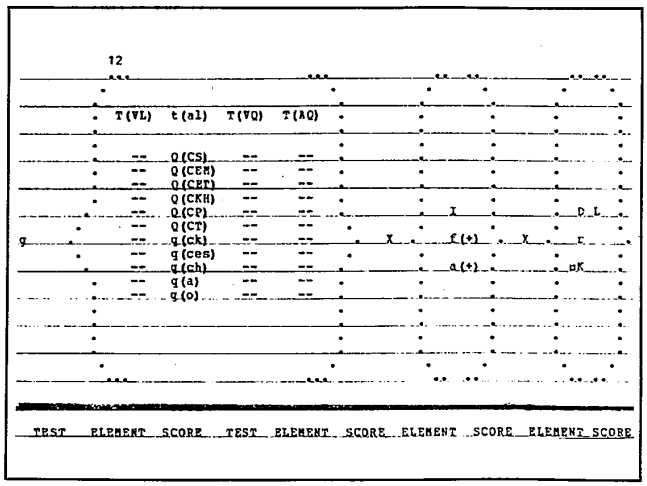
'Ridge' Diagnoses Learning Habits



THIS COULD BE YOU -- After all the "no-fail" tests are taken, the results are analyzed and the student's strengths and weaknesses are spelled out for him on this cognitive style map.

By KATHY MORAN

Ever think that your first act as a promising college freshman might be to taste cheese?

That's right--cheese.

Or it might be to walk along a line taped to the carpet--and not to prove you're sober.

But line-walking and cheese-tasting are among the first activities of a freshman entering the Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington of Oakland Community College.

Other duties include smelling a strip on an index card to determine the odor or duplicating a pattern on a pegboard without looking.

There are also some more conventional tests, like solving math problems. Some variations include having the problem read aloud to the student and then solving it -- or seeing pictures flashed on a screen and matching the geometric shapes.

The best thing about these "tests" are that no matter how hard he tries, the student can't pass or fail them.

THE THREE-HOUR battery of tests is administered just before the student enters college by the diagnostic testing division of the college.

The logic behind all the smelling, walking, tasting, listening and visualizing is an attempt to determine how each person uses his senses in the learning process.

Dr. Joseph Hill, president of OCC, has made estensive studies into individual learning patterns and believes that these tests, as unconventional as they may be, can be analyzed to determine how the person learns.

They are analyzed to determine how a person approaches and solves problems; how he follows directions; how much he is influenced by others; how he uses his senses; what are his greatest capabilities.

All these bits of information are compiled into a map of the individual called a "cognitive style" map.

THE MAP LOOKS like a complex algebraic equation. Briefly, it tells the student how he learns best and is explained to him by his counselor.

For instance, an "R" in his map means that the student learns through similarities. It means the student looks for likenesses in things and would learn best from an instructor who uses examples and similes to enhance explanations.

If a "T(VL)" shows up on the map, it means he has the ability to find meaning in words. "T(VQ)" means he finds meanings in numerical symbols. These factors are important for professions such as an accountant or writer.

The map is diagnosed by instructors, the student is given his prescription and the process of treating the student to a personal education begins.

INFORMATION gleaned from the tests is used most effectively in courses where the "Burst" concept has been implemented.

"Burst" simply means that the student can use various methods to learn the subject material.

Currently courses in English, physical science, history, math, foundational studies, political science, social science, and biology use the Burst method or some variation of it.

If a student learns best on his own, he may have very limited contact with his instructor. Taking the independent study path, the student just shows up for the periodic tests to make sure he is learning the material.

But the student may be the type who learns best in a small group setting. The seminars conducted by instructors are tailored for this student.

Still another student may learn best by studying with a peer. For this reason the "Youth Tutor Youth" program is designed so that students who are familiar with the material teach it individually to a peer and at the same time earn money.

And then there is the student who learns best through the traditional classroom lecture method. The traditional setup remains for him.

THE STUDENT WHO works well with his hands might put together a model of a nucleus to learn its composition rather than just reading about it.

Since the instructors also have been "mapped," students and instructors are matched to increase positive response between them.

The college uses para-professionals to assist students who are working alone or reviewing material they didn't learn the first time around.

These para-professionals are men and women trained and qualified for the work but may not be full instructors. Their part in the program makes it possible for students to have more individual attention while keeping the costs down.

"The program has more merit than anything I've run across in my teaching experience," said John Wangler, chairman of the social science department. "It's probably the solution in education. We are no longer applying the same type of teaching to every student.

"Why should a student be locked into a regular schedule? This program allows him to learn at his own speed."

THE PROGRAM IS especially good for students who have been "turned off" by experiences in elementary and high school.

Hopefully, these students will find that education in enjoyable and not drudgery, he said, adding that it is a way of building on positive experiences rather than negative.

Interestingly, the failure rate has dropped, though the program is still too new to know the exact rate, and students are raking in higher grades as a result.

"We believe the success pattern in such a program should be 90 per cent," Orchard Ridge Provost S. James Manilla said.

"We give students every opportunity to succeed."

Regional Affairs

A STUDENT IN THE audio-tutorial biology program works together with instructor Judith Franklin to see exactly how a nucleus is put together. By using models and various media, Orchard Ridge students receive supplementary aid for understanding subject material.

STAFF MEMBER of the diagnostic testing center demonstrates one of the "tests" a student takes which is used in analyzing learning patterns. Beverly Adams duplicates a pattern on the pegboard. She feels the pattern with her left hand and duplicates it with the right without being able to see what she is doing. "It's much more difficult than it looks," she said. (Observer photos)

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Area Deaths And Funerals

JOHN M. BLOXSOM--Services for Mr. Bloxsom, 73, of 15031 Lakewood, Plymouth Twp., were held in the Schrader Funeral Home. Burial was in Rural Hill Cemetery, Northville.

Mr. Bloxsom lived in Plymouth his entire lifetime. He was a retired production control manager of Hardware and Accessories at Ford Motor Co.

Surviving are his wife, Mabel, two sons, Willis of Livonia, and Thomas of Plymouth, one daughter, Mrs. Charles Wagner of Westland; one brother, Raymond of Florida; one sister, Mrs. Raymond Tubbord of Florida, and nine grandchildren.

OLIVER L. DAVIS -- Services for Mr. Davis, 59, of 1653 Marlowe, Canton Township, were held in the Higginbotham Funeral Home in Arkansas. Burial was in Townsend Cemetery in Smithville, Arkansas.

Mr. Davis had been an attendant in tool crib at Ford Motor Co.

He is survived by his wife, Minnie.

WALTER DURHAM -- Services for Mr. Durham, 81, of 22915 Maple, Farmington, were held in Thayer Funeral Home with the Revs. S. Hugh White and Howard Snell officiating. Burial was in the Bell Branch Cemetery.

Mr. Durham a retired gas station owner, lived in Farmington 38 years. He was a member of First United Methodist Church, a life member of Farmington Lodge 151, F & AM and OES Chapter 239. He died March 3 in St. Mary Hospital.

Survivors are: his wife, Gladys; daughter-in-law, Ernstine Durham of Farmington; and one granddaughter, Mrs. Earl Hams of Westland.

GRACE BERYL COON -- Services for Mrs. Coon, 78, of 29950 Southbrook Drive, Farmington, were held in Heney-Sundquist Funeral Home with the Rev. Hugh White officiating. Burial was in Oakland Hills Memorial Gardens.

Mrs. Coon came to Farmington in 1956. She died Feb. 28.

Survivors are: daughter, Mrs. Norman Batby, brother, Wilbert Donaldson of Romeo, sister, Mrs. Ann Farmington of Ferndale, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

JOHN LAWRENCE MATHYS -- Services for Mr. Mathys, 63, of 21539 Rockwell, Farmington, were held in Heeney-Sundquist Funeral Home and St. Joseph Catholic Church, Baraid, Ill., with the Rev. Ralph Guido officiating. Burial was in Baraid City Cemetery.

Mr. Mathys lived and worked many years in the Farmington and Livonia area. He was a cost accountant for Hygrade Food Products, Livonia, before he retired Jan. 28 because of poor health. He was a member of St. Alexander Catholic Church. He died Feb. 27 in St. Mary Hospital.

Survivors are: his wife, Eleanor; sons, Gerald of Evanston, Ill. and Paul of Los Angeles; daughter, Louise; brothers, Joseph of Chicago and Raymond of Chicago; sisters, Mrs. Barbara Houlihan, Mrs. Edward Fisk and Mrs. Ben Bermas, all of Chicago, and one grandchild, Jeffrey.

ELVA RUTH HANCOCK -- Services for Mrs. Hancock, 75, of Mullett Lake, were held in Schrader Funeral Home with the Rev. James Crawford officiating. Burial was in Grandlawn Cemetery.

Mrs. Hancock came to Mullett Lake in 1956 when Mr. Hancock retired. She lived in the Plymouth and Livonia area previously. She was a member of St. Paul United Methodist Church and of the Mayflower Society. She died Feb. 29.

Survivors are her husband, Edwin, two daughters, Mrs. Arthur Gergh of Plymouth, and Mrs. Don Clark of Rockford; one son, Edwin Hancock Jr. of Plymouth, one sister, Mrs. Sherman Gates of Bay City, and 13 grandchildren.