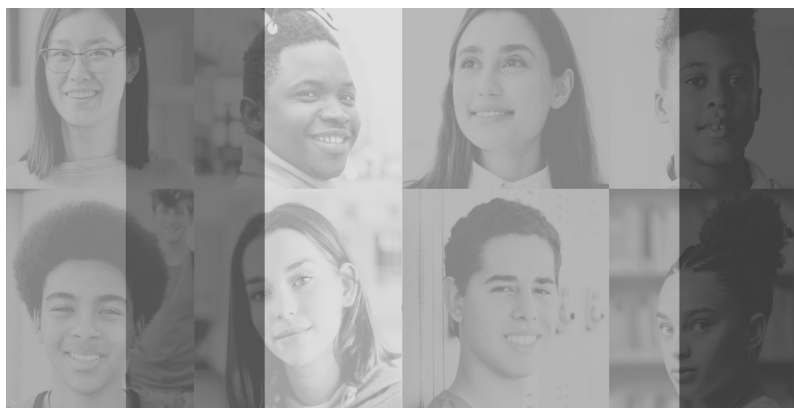

Who I Am

MYCHAL WYNN

WITH STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS

Volume I
My Learning Style Plan



Who I Am

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WITH STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS



Volume I
My Learning Style Plan

Who I Am: Volume I

My Learning Style Plan

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Student Contributors

I appreciate the willingness of so many students to become vested in their own learning, their participation in our national college planning program, and their willingness to serve as contributors. Student contributors, who attend school in California, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, exemplify our belief that the strategies set forth in this book can be embraced and applied by any student.

Middle School Writers

Chizara - 6th Grade

Morgan - 6th Grade

Teni - 6th Grade

Aliyah - 7th Grade

Piers - 7th Grade

Griffin - 8th Grade

Layla - 8th Grade

Naomi - 8th Grade

Vaughn - 8th Grade

Illustrator

Jocelyne - 10th Grade

College Essays

Ashley - Benedict College

Damian - Northeastern University

De’Nyjhia - Benedict College

Jada - North Carolina A&T State University Honors College

Jaylon - The University of Chicago

Jordan - University of Southern California

Juliana - Williams College

Kristen - Duke University

Kyrah - Xavier University of Louisiana

High School Writers

Jocelyne - 9th Grade

Jordan - 9th Grade

Anna - 10th Grade

Erin - 10th Grade

McKinley - 10th Grade

Nishan - 10th Grade

Angel - 11th Grade

Carolyn - 11th Grade

Jayla - 11th Grade

Omar - 11th Grade

Tuyen - 11th Grade

Foreword - Lewis Brinson, Ed.D.

I have been an educator all of my adult life and have taught in the classroom, served as a middle school principal, and now serve as the Minority Achievement Officer for Pinellas County Schools in Largo, Florida. I brought Mr. Wynn's College Planning Cohort Program to our district because I believed that underserved and marginalized students needed to be inspired to dream big and guided by the information to achieve their dreams and aspirations for the future. Not only does the content of this book, as part of the comprehensive on-line curriculum that has guided our students, but the student testimonials of how their embrace and application of the information provide evidence of how students have been inspired and informed.

Many of the students who have shared their comments, insight, and testimonials are served by Title I Federal Programs. While Title I students, particularly at the middle school level, are oftentimes considered to “only” be in need of social skills and study skills support, I share a belief with Mr. Wynn that all students need to have a context for learning. The context that he advocates—one in which I am 100 percent in agreement—is that students should see K — 12 schooling as preparation for life after high school.

All students, regardless of where they come from, their socioeconomic status, cultural background, or current achievement level can benefit from learning about how they learn and developing learning style plans to become better learners. When a 10th grade student, particularly a male student, writes:

I am in the program to gain insight into the college preparation process. To help me develop my college playbook and the necessary skills that will be needed when it's time to complete applications, essays, etc., for colleges and scholarships. This program will allow me to rise and stand out above others. Positioning me to attend Georgia Tech—my top college choice. [p. 6]

We must be on the right track. However, as an educator, I am well aware that our focus is always driven by data. So when I look at the data of the student. I see that the student first affirmed Florida State as his top college choice as a 9th grader. He then affirmed Georgia Tech as his top college choice as a 10th grader. By affirming such selective schools, he has aligned his course taking with his post-high school aspirations. He has taken 6 honors classes as a 9th grader; 4 honors classes and AP Computer Science Principles as a 10th grader; and has 8 planned AP classes during the 11th and 12th grades. Currently, he has earned A's in all classes. In my role as the Minority Achievement Officer, this is the data that I am tracking and these are the outcomes that Mr. Wynn has achieved with students in our district and in districts across the country. I have found him to be a visionary who not only thinks outside of the box, but who believes in the capacity of young people—all young people. As reflected in this book, Mr. Wynn has successfully and effectively brought students together from diverse backgrounds, geographical regions, school settings, and ability levels. He has fostered norms and cultivated an environment in which all students feel that they are not only in safe spaces, but surrounded by people who are pulling for their futures and who want them to pursue becoming the best versions of themselves.

I believe that this book and the additional volumes are already proven. They simply represent printed versions of an on-line curriculum that is already well established and supported by indisputable data of what is possible when students are invested in their own learning. I admittedly raised an eyebrow when Mr. Wynn told me that students did not receive grades for completing their work, that their assessment was received in the form of a monthly peer review as they presented their college-bound plans as they were evolving. However, when I read the comments of a 6th grader who is affirming a desire to attend such schools as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and MIT, and who internalizes being invested in her own learning as essential to pursuing her future aspirations, I am convinced that Mr. Wynn is on to something.

My dream job has always been to be some kind of engineer. A few months ago I started debate and I enjoyed it so much. Then I decided that I wanted to be a lawyer. When I am older I want to go to Harvard, Yale, or Princeton if I decide I want to become a lawyer. If I decide to become an engineer I want to go to MIT. These are hard schools to get into but by joining the Emerging Leaders Program, I think that I may be a few steps closer than I was before. [p. 23]

This book is more than developing a learning style plan. It is about inspiring students to dream of a future filled with possibilities and in their capacity to learn what is needed to turn their dreams into reality.

Lewis Brinson, Ed.D.
Minority Achievement Officer
Pinellas County Schools
Largo, Florida

How To Use This Book

This book is part of the *Who I Am* series. Each book in the series presents strategies and introduces topics that are research-based (what researchers have presented or theorized) and research-responsive (how students have used or responded to the research). While reviewing the research of the authors of “*Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*,” I found the following statement to be particularly relevant and reaffirming:

The popular notion that you learn better when you receive instruction in a form consistent with your preferred ‘learning style,’ for example as an auditory or visual learner, is not supported by the empirical research. People do have multiple forms of intelligence to bring to bear on learning, and you learn better when you ‘go wide,’ drawing on all of your aptitudes and resourcefulness, than when you limit instruction or experience to the style you find most amenable. [p. 4]

The information being presented through the *Who I Am* series is “going wide.” Your personality, temperament, intelligences, mindset, and grit provide insight into who you are. Your goals and aspirations for the future provide insight into the type of person you want to be, things that you want to accomplish, and impact that you want to have in your family, community, or in the world. Developing strategies to better learn, avoid or resolve conflicts, and create spaces that are mentally and emotionally healthy, is “going wide.”

Chapter 1: Why Are You Here? is repeated in each book in the series as a reflection point—what is your purpose for learning? Most chapters open with *Guiding Questions*

reflecting two high value learning strategies, referred to as *Assessing Prior Knowledge* and *Pre-thinking*. Your responses to the questions will reflect prior knowledge of the topics being presented and stimulate thinking as to what you think you will learn. Chapters typically end with the affirmative statement, “What has become clearer to me.” While *Summarization* is typically considered to be a low value learning strategy, we have evidence that when students “go wide” by using their multiple intelligences to engage in thoughtful self-reflective narrative writing, summarization can be a high value learning strategy.

The *End of Chapter Discussion* is designed to engage you, and others, in the metacognitive process, supported by high value learning strategies, which can be further supported by the Socratic method (see following page), as used in our small group discussions.

Metacognition is, put simply, thinking about one’s thinking. More precisely, it refers to the processes used to plan, monitor, and assess one’s understanding and performance. Metacognition includes a critical awareness of a) one’s thinking and learning and b) oneself as a thinker and learner (Chick 2023).

These evidence-based approaches are essential to guiding discussions; deepening learning; and developing critical thinking skills. They have proven effective for students participating in our college planning program as evidenced by their pensive, thoughtful, and self-reflective writing shared across this series of books. I am confident that collectively, these books will help you increase your K — 12 success and expand your opportunities after high school.

The Socratic Method

The Socratic method is named after the Greek philosopher Socrates who taught students through persistent questioning. The principle underlying the Socratic method is that students learn through the use of critical thinking, reasoning, and logic. It focuses on providing more questions than answers as a means of fostering further inquiry and inspiring further analysis and research.

This book supports the Socratic method used in our college planning program, where students participate in discussion groups facilitated by discussion group leaders and college interns. Students present what they have learned and how they are going to apply what they have learned in discussions where their thoughts and ideas are shared, challenged, and debated.

In this regard, as you are introduced to such topics as learning styles, personality types, temperament, grit, and mindset, you are not told what to do, but rather encouraged to engage in further inquiry, set goals, and develop strategies.

We believe that this approach will not only support your personal use of this book, but guide your conversations with parents, teachers, counselors, coaches, mentors, siblings, and classmates.

This chapter will...

- Open each book in the series and serve as a reminder of why being vested in your own learning is essential to understanding the ideas and utilizing the strategies being presented in the *Who I Am* series
- Provide examples of how other students are using their aspirations for the future as motivation for maximizing their success in school today
- Provide insight into the type of students that colleges and scholarship programs are looking for

Guiding Questions

- What is your purpose for reading this book?
- How do you think high school students who are planning to go to college after high school would answer the question, “Why am I here?”
- How do you think middle school students who are planning to go to college after high school would answer the question, “Why am I here?”

Chapter 1



Why I Am Here

The first question we ask students participating in our college planning and summer enrichment programs is, “*Why are you here?*” Within the context of this book, the question is, “*Why are you reading this book?*” Answering the question, why you are doing something, provides insight into whether your motivations are intrinsic or extrinsic. For example, if your response to the question is, “*I am being forced to read this book.*” Being *forced* to do something can result in apathy, low motivation, or even resistance. Apathy can result in your reading the book, but not paying attention to details or giving much thought to some of the larger concepts. Low motivation can result in reading and proceeding through the

End of Chapter Discussion

Why I Am Here

Student Responses? Which student's response to the question, "Why are you here?" most resonated with you and why?

Student Responses? Did any of the student responses reflect a shared aspiration? If so, which response and what aspirations do you share with the student?

Why are you here (or, why are you reading this book)? As you respond to the question, provide insight into your personal motivations for reading this book, such as participation in a program or as the result of the encouragement of someone else.

Are you vested in your own future? Share one of your future aspirations and explain what you are doing to pursue that dream or goal.

This chapter will...

- Raise the questions, “What is your story?” and “What are your aspirations?”
- Share excerpts from college essays in which students’ early experiences in school “inspired” their future aspirations
- Establish your future aspirations as the foundation for developing your learning style plan

Guiding Questions

- Who or what inspires you?
- From whom have you received your greatest encouragement and support?
- Do you believe that middle school is too soon to have aspirations for attending college or thinking about how to pursue a pathway toward being offered a full scholarship?

Chapter 2



My Story

A biography is a third person account of a person's life. As a parent, I could write a biography about each of my sons. I might write about when and where they were born; where they grew up; their gifts and talents; their challenges and successes in school; the activities in which they were most passionate; their education; their achievements; their aspirations; and the influential people in their lives.

If my sons wrote a biography about themselves, then it would be their *autobiography*. Your story encapsulates who you are and may provide insight into your hopes and aspirations for the future. *Aspiration* is a word that I have

regularly used since speaking to a class of 8th graders some years ago. None of the students could recall having ever heard the word, a fact to which I was alerted by one courageous student who raised his hand and asked, “What does aspiration mean?”

aspiration noun

As in ambition. Something that one hopes or intends to accomplish.

Synonyms: goal; ambition; dream; purpose; plan; objective; intent; or idea.

I found it unimaginable that a student, any student, could be in the 8th grade and that the word aspiration would not be a part of their vocabulary. I believe the fundamental purpose of school and learning is to provide students with information to inspire their aspirations to do something—to achieve something, change something, or to fulfill some purpose in their lives. So, whatever your journey, or your goals for the future, surround yourself with people with whom you can share your aspirations. Listen to their aspirations and you will oftentimes discover that you are more alike than you are different.

Depending on who you are, where you live, and your current grade in school, you may not believe you have lived long enough or experienced enough to have a story, but nothing could be further from the truth. Students in military-connected families have lived in many communities and multiple countries by the time they enter middle school. Other students have competed in athletics since entering elementary school, while other students have

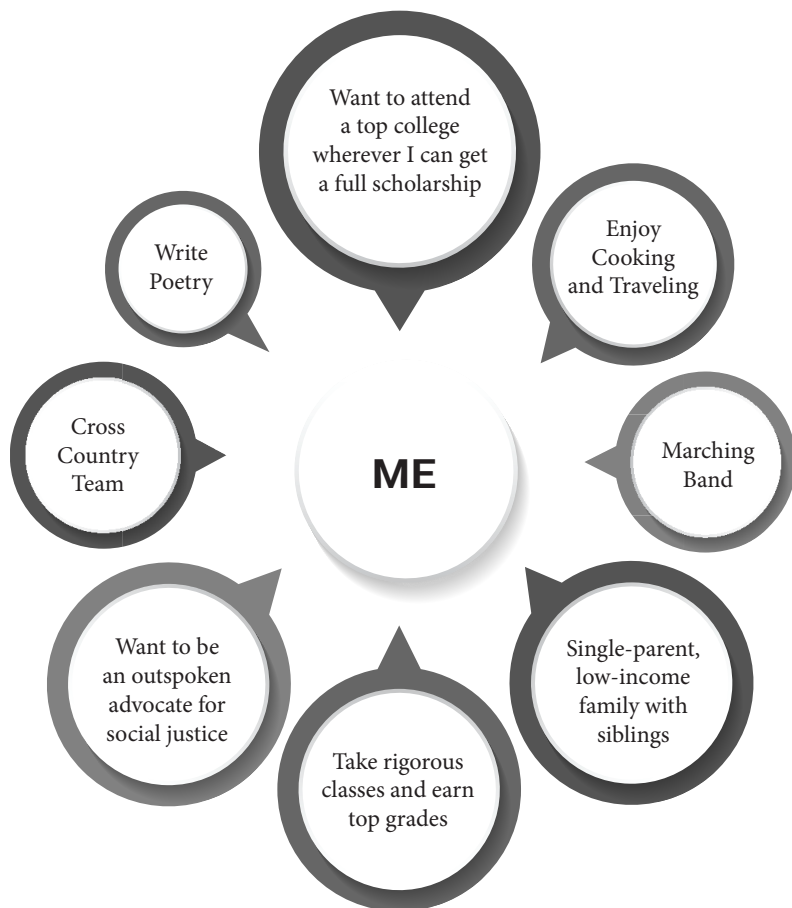
End of Chapter Discussion

My Story

Student Responses? Which student's story most resonated with you and why?

Student Responses? Despite their diverse backgrounds, what were some of the shared aspirations of students?

Points of Contact. After sharing your stories and discussing shared experiences, create a diagram in which you identify points of contact representing shared experiences, passions, or aspirations (see the example below).



This chapter will...

- Provide guidance in assessing your learning style as part of the process of developing a learning style plan
- Introduce the 21 learning-style elements, circadian cycle, time-of-day energy level, and other elements of the metacognitive process of thinking about how you learn and planning your approach to learning

Guiding Questions

- What do you know about learning style preferences?
- What have you identified about your learning style preferences?
- Which teachers have teaching styles that are most in sync with your learning style preferences?
- What do you know about time-of-day energy levels?

Chapter 3



My Learning Style

Each teacher has teaching style preferences and each student has learning style preferences. Sometimes there is a match of teacher preferences to student preferences, but what if the teaching preferences do not match your learning preferences? If you earn a low grade, you could blame your low grade on the teacher. But is a college really going to care? Are they really going to lower their expectations because you experienced a teaching-style learning-style mismatch?

The more you understand about how you learn, the more control you can exercise over how you listen, take notes, and process what each of your teachers is teaching. If you

Analytic Learning Styles Table

Analytic learners appear to learn most easily when information is introduced step-by-step or fact-by-fact.

Following are some of the situations in which analytic learners appear most comfortable:

- Prefer things to be quiet
- Prefer to work in groups where they talk after they work
- Prefer to talk after eating
- Prefer bright lights and formal environment for learning (e.g., desk, table, or chair)
- Prefer working on one thing at a time and completing tasks
- Prefer taking notes while the teacher is talking
- Learns best when instructions are written

Additional Learning Styles

- Auditory*: Learns best by hearing
- Visual*: Learns best by seeing
- Kinesthetic*: Learns best by doing
- Tactile*: Learns best by touching

There's More!

Whether you learn best by seeing, hearing, or doing, there are additional influences referred to as the *21 Learning-style Elements*. These elements reflect things that you react to while concentrating on new and difficult academic knowledge or skills. The elements influence how you learn in the classroom, which is controlled by your teacher, and how you learn at home where you can exert greater control over your learning environment. The more you understand how these elements impact your learning, the more you can *influence* your in-school learning environment and *control* your at-home learning environment.

The 21 Learning-style Elements

Review the listing of the 21 learning-style elements and circle your preference for each element. For example, for sound, do you prefer quiet or background music/noise?

Environmental Elements

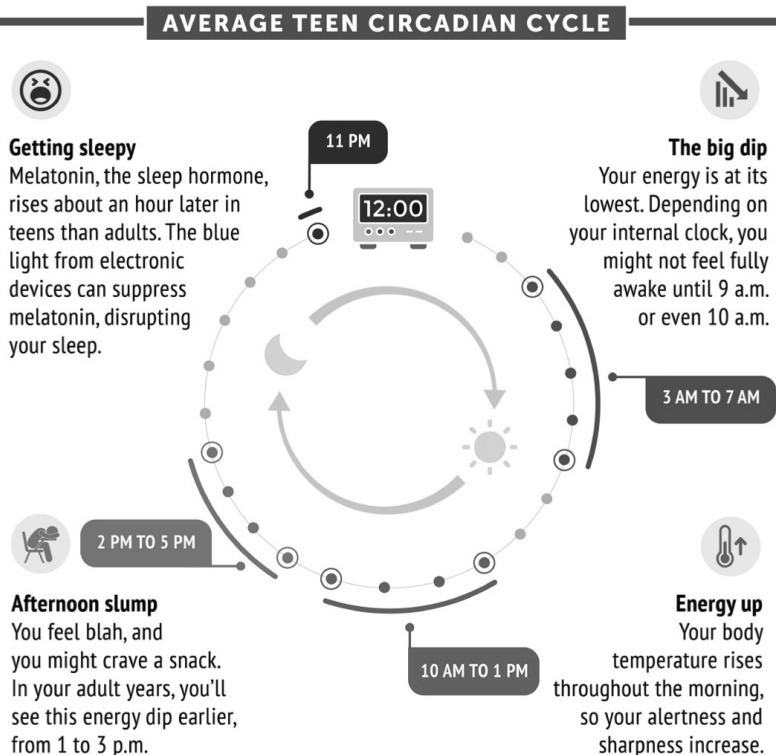
1. Sound: *quiet or background music/noise*
2. Light: *bright/sunlight or soft/dim*
3. Temperature: *warm or cold*
4. Design: *formal (i.e., desk, chair) or informal (i.e., bed, floor, or bean bag)*

Emotional Elements

5. Motivation: *self-motivated or need a push*
6. Persistence: *will work through problems or seek help*
7. Responsibility: *can follow instructions or need help/supervision*

Time-of-Day Energy Levels

Brain research indicates that people perform differently at different times of day. Your energy levels follow a 24-hour cycle known as the circadian cycle. Circadian rhythms are physical, mental, and behavioral changes during each 24-hour cycle. Pictured below is the average circadian cycle for a teenager.



Source: National Institute of General Medical Sciences