These words of Buckminster Fuller have lived with me and grown in me for many years. In clarifying this statement he added ... “I would never try to reform man—that’s much too difficult. What I would do was to try to modify the environment in such a way as to get man moving in preferred directions. ... I must commit myself to reforming the environment and not man, being absolutely confident that if you give man the right environment, he will behave favorably.”

How true and powerful Bucky’s words are—we don’t change man, we change his environment and man changes himself. That’s exactly what Buckminster Fuller did in all his words and teachings throughout his life.

In the summer of 1981, I was part of a group that organized “A Week with Buckminster Fuller” at Kirkwood Meadows in the Lake Tahoe area. The space chosen was inspiring ... a lodge set in the mountains, a room with towering windows to take it all in. About a hundred people attended, each thrilled to spend time with Bucky and anxious to learn all he had to give us. Bucky had said he would share with us all he wanted the world to know from his work and life—a significant prospect indeed.

The group was positive, dedicated and committed to learn. There was a sense of anticipation, joy, and sharing with each other, leading to an atmosphere of high trust and safety. The “environment” was set, orchestrated for inspired, engaged discovery. And Bucky captivated us throughout the week, every statement prompting a “what did he just say?”... we listened intently, we learned, we marveled, we contemplated.

His closing at the end of the week was even more meaningful and inspiring. Bucky was sitting on the stage surrounded by his artifacts and models ... slowly he picked one up, took it apart, and put it in his suitcase. Then a pause ... and another thought he wanted us to remember. Another pause ... and he packed another model ... then another comment. One after another he packed a model, paused, and shared a thought ... and we all took in every word. Finally Bucky had packed up all his models. He stood, picked up his suitcase, and walked off the stage and out the door. We all sat in silence contemplating his words, reflecting on Buckminster Fuller. There had been no applause (Bucky didn’t want any). If we had applauded, it would have changed the environment, and we would have given our power over to Bucky. In the silence we had to be responsible for all the learning ... it was ours now. Bucky created the environment and gave it to us— it was now up to us to learn from it and make change in the world. This was one of the most profound moments in my life.

That experience at Lake Tahoe was one of many I had with Bucky during the late seventies and early eighties. I have often reflected on the powerful belief he created in me about environment. There is no doubt in my mind that “Environment is stronger than will.” And today I pass on that powerful belief to others in education. In our SuperCamp youth programs and Quantum Learning school programs we
have proved over and over again—with teachers and with students—that environment is the key to creating a positive and effective atmosphere of learning.

Imagine a classroom with little order of any kind, from the seating, to the material on the walls, to the presentation of lessons. Imagine the kids in that classroom ... the lack of attention and “order” there, too. Though the teacher tries to “reform” the students and make them learn, this environment is not conducive to learning.

Now imagine another classroom in which the environment has been considered. The classroom has been transformed into a “learning community” where every detail has been carefully orchestrated to support optimum learning ... from the way the desks are arranged, to the use of music to cue desired responses, to defined classroom “policies,” to the design of the lessons. The atmosphere is one where students feel safe and supported and have a strong sense of belonging. The development of character-building life skills promotes respect and rapport—between the teacher and the students and also among the students. The tone of the class is comfortable and motivating. Every effort is acknowledged, all learning and achievements are celebrated. The kids make discoveries, learn and grow. The environment is conducive to learning—and they want to learn!

We don’t change the students—we change the environment, and the environment changes the students.

###

**Bobbi DePorter** –

Bobbi DePorter, president of Quantum Learning Network, was an early pioneer in the field of accelerated learning and its applications for effective learning and teaching environments. In the late seventies, she co-founded the Burklyn Business School based on the generalized principles of Buckminster Fuller. Bucky spoke at every school session until his passing in 1983. Bobbi applied the same learning methods to school-age children when she co-founded SuperCamp, a learning and life skills program now with over 58,000 graduates in the U.S, Europe, Asia and South America. The success of SuperCamp led to Quantum Learning school and community programs for administrators, teachers, students and parents, which has impacted over eight million students. Bobbi is the author of more than a dozen books on teaching and learning.

Bobbi can be reached at: 800-285-3276 and www.QLN.com

###

Excerpt from *A Fuller View: Buckminster Fuller’s Vision of Hope and Abundance For All*, Copyright 2011 by L. Steven Sieden.