Traditionally pedagogy in the higher education sector is shaped by the imperative for 'independent learning' where the responsibility for the accretion and performance of knowledge and skill is situated in the individual student. Contemporary distributed models of learning provide a framework for challenging this approach and instead understand learning as identity shifts in response to participation in meaning rich environments where students are engaged in efforts to deconstruct the practices of the HE community in order that they can participate successfully in them. Wenger (1998) argues that this is possible only through the successful interaction of person with activity in the given context. The nature of the participation in that activity is shaped by the identity of the student and crucially by the ability of the community to demonstrate practice and allow increasingly complex participatory acts which enable identity shift. The mechanism of the learning or identity shift can be understood in more detail through reference to Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD can only emerge through interaction between students and more able others and requires both parties to come together in activity. Traditional transmission models of teaching, which are prevalent in the HE sector are unlikely to enable the formation of a ZPD for all students and so cannot be positioned as an enabling pedagogy. In this paper we consider data from a project, funded by the Higher Education Academy, which trained psychology students to act as reflective partners for law students who were participating in training for a law clinic which aims to provide legal support for the community around the university. The research took an ethnographic approach and in this paper we will explore data from observations, interviews and documents. The data suggest that the opportunity for both psychology and law students to engage in professional activity, acting as mentors and researchers for psychologists and providing legal advice for law students, engendered greater self-efficacy in their studies, enabled the formation of positive working relationships with staff and provided a space for low stakes, non-formal assessment. The interaction of these opportunities resulted in a repositioning of themselves as learners and improved performance in formal assessments. Implications for HE pedagogy are considered, specifically the provision of opportunity for the formation and maintenance of effective learning relationships.