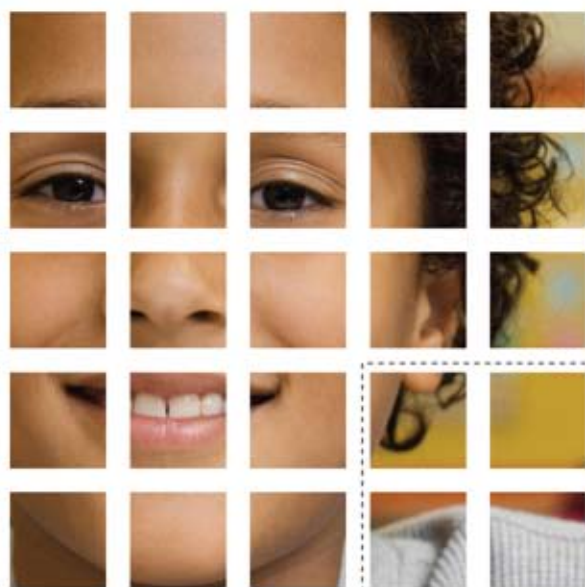# ENGAGING THE

Whole Child

Reflections on
Best Practices in Learning,
Teaching, and Leadership

Edited by
Marge Scherer

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ENGAGING THE

Whole Child

Part 3. Deepening Students' Thinking

Part 4. Instilling the Desire to Achieve

Part 5. Building on Student Interests

Part 6. Empowering Students

Part 7. Connecting with Students' Communities and Cultures

Study Guide

Foreword

The 21st century demands a highly skilled, educated work force and citizenry unlike any we have seen before. The global marketplace and economy are a reality. Change and innovation have become the new status quo while too many of our schools, communities, and systems use models designed to prepare young people for life in the middle of the last century. We live in a time that requires our students to be prepared to think both critically and creatively, to evaluate massive amounts of information, solve complex problems, and communicate well, yet our education systems remain committed to time structures, coursework, instructional methods, and assessments designed more than a century ago. A strong foundation in reading, writing, math, and other core subjects is as important as ever, yet insufficient for lifelong success.

These 21st century demands require a new and better way of approaching education policy and practice—a whole child approach to learning, teaching, and community engagement. What if decisions about education policy were made by first asking, "What works best for children?" What if the education, health, housing, public safety, recreation, and business systems within our communities aligned human and capital resources to provide coordinated service to kids and families? What if policymakers at all levels worked with educators, families, and community members to ensure that we as a society meet our social compact to prepare children for their future rather than our past?

The answers push us to redefine what a successful learner is and how we measure success. It is time to put students first, align resources to students' multiple needs, and advocate for a more balanced approach. A child who enters school in good health, feels safe, and is connected to her school is ready to learn. A student who has at least one adult in

school who understands his social and emotional development is more likely to stay in school. All students who have access to challenging academic programs are better prepared for further education, work, and civic life.

ASCD proposes a definition of achievement and accountability that promotes the development of children who are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

ASCD's Whole Child Tenets

- Each student enters school **healthy** and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.
- Each student learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally **safe** for students and adults.
- Each student is actively **engaged** in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
- Each student has access to personalized learning and is **supported** by qualified, caring adults.
- Each graduate is **challenged** academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment.

ASCD is helping schools, districts, and communities move from rhetoric about educating the whole child to reality. No single person, institution, or system can work in isolation to achieve such results so we have launched a Web site for educators, families, community members, and policymakers to share their stories, access resources, assess their progress, and advocate for children. Join us at www. wholechildeducation.org. Our children deserve it. Our future demands it.

—Molly McCloskey
Host of the Whole Child Podcast

Introduction

Inviting Students to Learn

Several years ago I had the privilege of interviewing Mihaly Csikszent-mihalyi for an issue of *Educational Leadership* titled "Do Students Care About Learning?" (September 2002). The psychologist and author of the best-selling book *Finding Flow* talked about his study of how teens spend most of their time. He asked teenagers to wear for one week a pager that would go off eight times a day at random moments. When they heard the buzzer, the teens recorded in a journal what they were doing, what they were thinking about, how happy they felt, and their levels of concentration and creativity.

The students reported that 30 percent of the time what they were doing felt like work; 30 percent felt like play; and 30 percent, neither work nor play. Only 10 percent of the time did they record that what they were doing felt like both work *and* play. Sadly, many students never had the experience that Csikszentmihalyi calls "a state of flow," that is, a state in which they were so involved in an activity that nothing else seemed to matter; the work was as enjoyable as play, and the play was as worthwhile as work. Csikszentmihalyi describes this "optimum state of engagement" as occurring when both the individual's level of skill and the challenge level of the activity are high. This kind of engagement of the mind and heart, if experienced often enough, results in young people seeking a life of achievement and realizing a high level of self-efficacy.

As a psychologist, Csikszentmihalyi is interested in exploring what situations in families, schools, and society help young people become competent adults who frequently experience well-being, productivity,

and enjoyment in life. Frequent themes in his work are the need for a balance of work and play and the need for challenge and support from family and school.

As I began compiling the articles for this book on engaging the whole child, I saw that many of our authors have explored the same themes that Csikszentmihalyi does. Indeed, ASCD's emphasis on the whole child stems from an urgent need for an emphasis on work and play, health and safety, challenge and support, achievement and engagement. The whole child initiative is, in some ways, a counter to an overemphasis on rigor and competition for their own sake, but it is also a counter to low expectations for young people and to an acceptance of mediocrity and boredom as part of every child's school experience.

Since Csikszentmihalyi conducted his study, our children's lives have only gotten busier and more fragmented even as they have enlarged immeasurably with the advent of new technology and more globalization. Indeed, disengagement among young people is an international phenomenon, and it sometimes confounds assumptions, as Reva Klein writes in "Engaging Students Around the World." Apathy is not only rampant in highly developed countries whose students feel great pressures to outperform their peers, but also, for reasons of scarcity and poverty, in countries whose literacy rates are low. Everywhere students say they want--and are not getting--from their schools what Klein calls the 3 *Rs*: relevance, respect, and reward.

The articles in this book describe how to impart relevance, respect, and reward while also teaching traditional and not so traditional curriculum subjects. They span all grade levels and subjects and offer both inspiration and practical advice. We hope you find this compilation useful as you instill purpose for learning and create the connections that are so necessary to opening your students to learning—heart, mind, body, and soul.

—Marge Scherer
Editor in Chief, *Educational Leadership*

Part 1

Engaging the
Whole Child:
Heart, Mind, and Soul

Joy in School

Steven Wolk

Joyful learning can flourish in school—if you give joy a chance.

Two quotes about schooling particularly resonate with me. The first is from John Dewey's *Experience and Education* (1938): "What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information about geography and history, to win the ability to read and write, if in the process the individual loses his own soul?" (p. 49). If the experience of "doing school" destroys children's spirit to learn, their sense of wonder, their curiosity about the world, and their willingness to care for the human condition, have we succeeded as educators, no matter how well our students do on standardized tests?

The second quote comes from John Goodlad's *A Place Called School* (1984). After finding an "extraordinary sameness" in our schools, Goodlad wrote, "Boredom is a disease of epidemic proportions. . . . Why are our schools not places of joy?" (p. 242). Now, a generation later, if you were to ask students for a list of adjectives that describe school, I doubt that *joyful* would make the list. The hearts and minds of children and young adults are wide open to the wonders of learning and the fascinating complexities of life. But school still manages to turn that into a joyless experience.

So what can schools and teachers do to bring some joy into children's formal education? Children typically spend from six to seven hours each day in school for nearly 10 months each year. During the school year, children generally spend more time interacting with their

teachers than with their parents. What happens inside schools has a deep and lasting effect on the mind-sets that children develop toward lifelong learning.

Dewey's point about the destructive power of our schools should make us ask ourselves some fundamental questions: What is the purpose of school? What dispositions about learning, reading, school, the world, and the self do we want to cultivate? Ask young adults why they go to school. You will hear nothing about joy.

I am not using the word *joy* as a synonym for *fun*. For many children, having fun is hanging out at the mall, watching TV, text-messaging their friends, or zipping down a roller-coaster. Having fun certainly brings us joy, but students don't need to be having fun in school to experience joy. According to my Random House dictionary, *joy* means, "The emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something good or satisfying." Surely our schools can do some of that. Joy and learning—including school content—are not mutually exclusive. Many of our greatest joys in life are related to our learning. Unfortunately, most of that joyful learning takes place outside school.

As educators, we have the responsibility to educate and inspire the whole child—mind, heart, and soul. By focusing on the following essentials, we can put more joy into students' experience of going to school and get more joy out of working inside one.

JOY 1: Find the Pleasure in Learning

Why do people learn? I don't mean inside school—I mean learning as a part of life. Surely a large part of our learning is necessary for survival and a basic quality of life.

But there is another, entirely different, reason to learn. Learning gives us pleasure. This kind of learning is often (but not always) motivated from within, and no outside forces or coercions are needed. We also don't mind the possible difficulties in this learning. We often expect the challenges we encounter; we tend to see them as a natural

part of the learning process, so we are far more open to taking risks. Some love to learn about cars, others love to learn about history, and some find great joy in learning how to dance. According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), such learning is an example of *flow*, which he defines as

> the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it at even great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it. (p. 4)

If we want students to experience more flow in school—if we want them to see school and learning as joyful—we need to rethink how and what we teach. No longer can schooling be primarily about creating workers and test takers, but rather about nurturing human beings (Wolk, 2007). By helping students find the pleasure in learning, we can make that learning infinitely more successful.

JOY 2: Give Students Choice

Outside of school, children are free to pursue their interests, and they do so with gusto. They learn how to play baseball or the drums; they learn how to ice skate or play video games; they read comic books, graphic novels, skateboard magazines, and Harry Potter.

But during a typical six-hour school day, how much ownership do students have of their learning? Practically none. It's not surprising that their interest in learning dissipates and that teachers complain of unmotivated students.

Joy in learning usually requires some ownership on the part of the learner. Students can own some of their school learning in several ways. They can choose the books they want to read through independent reading. In writing workshop, we can inspire them to be real writers and choose for themselves what genres to write in. During units in math, science, art, and social studies, they can choose specific subtopics

to study; then, as "experts," they can share their learning with the class. Students can also choose which products they want to create to demonstrate their learning. What brings more joy—studying the civil rights movement in the United States through a textbook and lectures or creating comic books, writing and performing plays, interviewing people to create podcasts, and proposing your own ideas? Which would *you* rather do?

I advocate giving students one hour each day to study topics of their choice in what I call "Exploratory" (Wolk, 2001). In Exploratory, teachers collaborate with students to help shape student-initiated ideas into purposeful, inquiry-based investigations. During this time, students are scattered around the room, absorbed in an endless variety of topics that matter to them. While one student is studying the life of ants, a second is researching the workings of the FBI, and a third is exploring the life of Frida Kahlo. While two students work together to investigate the history of soccer, another is engrossed in surveying adults on their opinions of video games. Exploratory can teach students that school can be a place that nurtures curiosity, inspires them to ask questions, and helps them find the joy in learning.

JOY 3: Let Students Create Things

People like to make stuff. Having control of our work and using our minds and hands to create something original give us a tremendous sense of agency. There is a special pride in bringing an original idea to fruition. It empowers us and encourages us; it helps us appreciate the demanding process of creating something from nothing.

The list of what students can create across the curriculum is virtually limitless: newspapers and magazines, brochures, stories, picture books, posters, murals, Web sites, podcasts, PowerPoint presentations, interviews, oral histories, models, diagrams, blueprints and floor plans, plays and role-plays, mock trials, photographs, paintings, songs, surveys, graphs, documentary videos—the list goes on and on. At its best,

school should help and inspire students to bring their own ideas and creations to life.

JOY 4: Show Off Student Work

Our schools and classrooms should be brimming with wonderful, original student work. School spaces that are devoid of student work perpetuate a sterile and joyless environment. I tell my teacher education students that the walls of their classrooms should speak to people; they should say exactly what goes on in that space throughout the school day. I can tell what teachers value by simply walking into their classrooms and looking at the walls.

The same is true for a school building. My son, Max, is in 4th grade, and his school, Augustus H. Burley School in Chicago, is a joyous place to visit. The hallways and classrooms are filled with remarkable student work, and there is rarely a worksheet in sight. The teachers also show off the students themselves. There are photographs of students next to their favorite books, above their posted work from writing workshop, and next to the doors of some classrooms.

JOY 5: Take Time to Tinker

Gever Tulley has started a unique summer school in California called the Tinkering School. His blog describes it this way:

> The Tinkering School offers an exploratory curriculum designed to help kids—ages 7 to 17—learn how to build things. By providing a collaborative environment in which to explore basic and advanced building techniques and principles, we strive to create a school where we all learn by fooling around. All activities are hands-on, supervised, and at least partly improvisational. Grand schemes, wild ideas, crazy notions, and intuitive leaps of imagination are, of course, encouraged and fertilized. (Tulley, 2005)

At Tinkering School, students are allowed to dream. They come up with their own ideas for an object, and the faculty and staff help them sketch, design, and build it. When have you seen a public school that encouraged students to come up with "grand schemes, wild ideas, crazy notions, and intuitive leaps of imagination"? In fact, schools actually work to prevent this from happening.

Our school days are too planned, leaving no room for spontaneity and happenstance. Kindergarten is the last refuge in school for letting kids tinker. Once they enter 1st grade, students must banish the joy of "fooling around" with objects and ideas and, instead, sit at their desks most of the day listening to lectures, reading textbooks, and filling out worksheets.

Sometimes the best ideas come from tinkering—and teachers, not just students, should be doing more of it. We must push beyond the teacher-proof curriculum the textbook industry has created, which tries to plan every subject for every hour of the day. Far from being think tanks or workshops, our schools continue to be assembly lines. We need to free teachers to take risks, experiment, play with the art of pedagogy, and feel the joy that comes from tinkering with their teaching.

JOY 6: Make School Spaces Inviting

Why do classrooms need to look so much like, well, *classrooms*, with desks in rows or arranged in groups, with a chalkboard or whiteboard at the front? When I walk into a classroom in my son's school, I usually see a space that looks a lot like a family room. There's a large rug, a class library with the best in children's and young adult literature, bean bags, couches, comfortable chairs, pillows, colorful curtains, fabric hung over the ceiling lights, and lamps scattered about the classroom. In fact, sometimes the ceiling lights are off, and the lamps warmly light the room.

And what about the public spaces inside and outside the school—the hallways, foyers, meeting areas, and school grounds? Anyone who has spent time at a university knows how integral these spaces are to the learning and social dynamics of the campus. The same can be true for a school. Why not transform these often unused and sterile spots into places for small groups of students to work or cozy nooks for kids to read or write? How about filling a foyer with plants and flowers? Why not give a large wall to the students to create and paint a mural? One colorful mural can transform a barren hallway or entrance into a vibrant and joyful sight. And schools can turn outdoor spaces into gardens, sculpture parks, walking paths, and quiet reading areas.

JOY 7: Get Outside

I am bewildered by how much time students spend inside schools. I don't mean that the school day should be shorter; I mean that more of the school day should be outside. We adults know all too well how much we like to get outside for a respite during the workday, and the same applies to students and teachers in school. They need a break from being confined inside a classroom all day. Fresh air, trees, and a sunny day can do miracles for the human spirit.

Interacting with nature brings a unique joy. Gavin Pretor-Pinney (2006) writes, "I have always loved looking at clouds. Nothing in nature rivals their variety and drama; nothing matches their sublime, ephemeral beauty" (p. 9). Naturalist and artist David Carroll (2004) describes his childhood enthrallment of seeking out turtles as he walked the ponds and marshes:

> The sheer joy of being there, of simply bearing witness, continued to be paramount. I went out neither to heal my heartbreaks nor to celebrate my happiness, but to be in nature and outside myself. Turtles, spotted turtles most significantly, were a living text moving upon an endless turning of the pages of the natural world. (p. 27)

The easiest way to get students outside is simply to have recess. There is a special joy in standing amidst the students as they burst from the school and spread out like a swarm of hungry ants. Kids say that recess is their favorite time in school. Recess was also one of my favorite times of the day as a teacher because I was outside and surrounded by children having fun. Tragically, recess has become a rare sight, which may say more about our schools today than anything else. Why do so many schools find it so difficult to allow children 20 minutes each day to play?

As a teacher, I would often take my students outside to read, write, or have a class meeting. It is delightful for a student to sit under a tree and read or for a class to sit in a circle on the grass and talk. Much of our science curriculums could directly include the outdoors. A school does not have to be near a forest or the ocean for students and teachers to explore nature. Ecosystems are all around us. Have students dig a hole in a patch of dirt, and they will witness the flourishing life in the soil beneath their feet. Don't underestimate the power of sheer joy that children—and adults—can experience from tipping over a large rock and seeing the ground teeming with life.

JOY 8: Read Good Books

Everyone loves a good story. We all know that if you have a 5-year-old sitting on your lap and a good book in your hands, you will soon experience the magic of stories. And what amazing stories there are! We are living in an astonishing time of children's and young adult literature. Immerse students in a culture of good books, and you surround them with joy.

For the past few years, I've been working on a grant with a Chicago public school, in part to help teachers make literature an important feature of their classrooms. I have brought loads of good books into the school. As I did book talks in 4th and 8th grade classrooms about dozens of new titles we ordered, the room was abuzz with students

who could not wait to get their hands on the books. When I walk into a classroom now, I am met with the excited voices of the students telling me what books they're reading.

Of course, if we want joy in schools, then sometimes students should read books that aren't so "serious." I believe that books with important themes can make a better world, but we must also sometimes allow—even encourage—students to experience books for sheer pleasure. Have 3rd graders read Dav Pilkey's *Captain Underpants and the Perilous Plot of Professor Poopypants* (Scholastic, 2000). Have 5th graders read Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Amulet, 2007). Have young adults read Sherman Alexie's very funny (and serious) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Little Brown, 2007). Encourage students to read thrillers; romance novels; action-adventure books; stories about sports, animals, and pop culture; graphic novels and manga; and nonfiction on topics they love. You will see plenty of joy.

JOY 9: Offer More Gym and Arts Classes

In recent years, with our zeal for increasing test scores, "specials" in school have become nearly as rare as recess. It is not uncommon, especially in more impoverished schools, for students to have no art, music, and drama at all, and gym only once or twice a week. In my son's previous school in Chicago, he did not have gym until January.

With his work on multiple intelligences, Howard Gardner has helped us better appreciate the uniqueness of children and has spoken to the need to give students opportunities to use their varied strengths and interests in school. For the legions of children who have a special affinity for the visual arts, theater, music, or sports, classes in these subjects are golden times for them to experience joy in school. But how much joy can they experience when it's limited to 45 minutes each week?

JOY 10: Transform Assessment

When I was a kid, I dreaded report card time. When I was a teacher, many of my students were anxious about their grades. For far too many students, assessment in its dominant forms—tests, quizzes, letter grades, number grades, and standardized tests—is a dark cloud that never seems to leave. Must it be this way?

The idea of assessment in school is not inherently bad; children assess themselves all the time. When they're busy doing something they love outside school, such as tae kwon do, baking, or playing the saxophone—when they're experiencing *flow*—they don't mind assessment at all. In fact, they see it as an important part of the process. But for most students, assessment in school is the enemy.

We can, however, make it a more positive experience. We need to help students understand the value of assessment. We also need to rethink "failure." Our schools see failure as a bad thing. But adults know that failure is a vital part of learning. Portraying failure as a bad thing teaches a child to avoid risk taking and bold ideas. Imagine if we graded toddlers on their walking skills. We would be living in a nation of crawlers.

We should limit how we use quantitative assessments and make more use of narrative assessments and report cards, portfolios of authentic work, and student presentations and performances. In addition, parent conferences should not only include students, but also encourage the students to do much of the talking, using the conference as an opportunity to present their work and discuss their strengths and areas to focus on for growth.

As a teacher, I had my students regularly do self-assessments. This gave them some real power over the process. They assessed most of their schoolwork before I did my own assessment. And during report card time, I passed out photocopies of a blank report card and had my students complete it, for both grades and behavior, before I filled it out. I don't recall a student ever abusing this opportunity. At another school

in which I taught, I redesigned our report card to include space for a photograph of the student inside; the cover was left blank so students could either draw a picture or write something meaningful there.

JOY 11: Have Some Fun Together

Recently, when I was visiting a school, I was standing in the hallway talking to a teacher when a tall 8th grade boy from another classroom exuberantly walked up to that teacher. They began some good-natured ribbing. Back and forth it went for a few minutes with smiles and laughter. What was this about? The teacher-student basketball game held earlier that week. Here were two people—an 8th grader and his teacher—having a joyous good time.

Schools need to find ways for students, teachers, and administrators to take a break from the sometimes emotional, tense, and serious school day and have some fun together. Sporting events, outdoor field days, movie nights, school sleep-ins, potluck meals, visits to restaurants, schoolwide T-shirt days, and talent shows can help everyone get to know one another better, tear down the personal walls that often get built inside schools, form more caring relationships, and simply have a wonderful time together.

Teaching As a Joyful Experience

Recently, I visited a former graduate student in her classroom. It is her third year as a teacher, and I was excited to see her creative and thoughtful teaching. But she said to me, "I never imagined this job would be so hard. I'm tired all the time."

Yes, teaching is hard. John Dewey's quote—about school sapping our souls—can be as true for teachers as it is for students. Considering the staggering turnover of new teachers in urban schools, it is in everyone's interest to help teachers find joy in their work. So teachers must strive in whatever ways they can to *own their teaching* so that each

morning they can enter their classrooms knowing there will be golden opportunities for them—as well as for their students—to experience the joy in school.

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Part 2

Inspiring Trust and Confidence

Cultivating Optimism in the Classroom

Richard Sagor

Students are motivated to put forth their best effort when they have faith in the future and themselves.

There's a proverb, "The best predictor of the future is the past." This notion isn't lost on Hollywood and helps explain the attractiveness of such movies as *Stand and Deliver* and *Freedom Writers*, which turn it on its head. *Stand and Deliver* tells the story of math teacher Jaime Escalante, whose previously underachieving students went on in great numbers to pass the advanced placement (AP) test in calculus; and *Freedom Writers* tells the story of Erin Gruwell, who inspired her inner-city students to transform their lives through journal writing. Audiences are captivated by seeing poor, alienated teenagers who are well behind their peers in basic skills and have a near total disdain for the education process unexpectedly emerge a few years later with top AP scores, published books, and a desire for a college education.

Unfortunately, what makes this storyline so compelling is that it's so rare. A more familiar scene is this: angry, low-income teenagers with a history of school failure wandering the school hallways with little apparent interest in academics, the curriculum, or their teachers. For too many of them, gangs are more attractive than school activities, drugs are more valuable than learning, and the streets are more appealing than school.

We know the facts. Nearly 50 percent of Latino, black, and American Indian youth leave school before graduating (Orfield, Losen, Wald,

& Swanson, 2004). The academic performance of students in low-income communities lags well behind that of students living in more privileged enclaves. The message most often taken from movies like *Stand and Deliver* is that these students' success was the result of the magical powers of a few special, charismatic teachers.

Hollywood wants us to think that Escalante and Gruwell are superheroes, but I'd rather think of them as colleagues who have demonstrated an important lesson regarding what it takes to motivate all our diverse students to strive for the best.

Building Optimism

Whenever we face a choice, we intuitively make a calculation. Typically, we assess the potential costs and benefits—both short- and long-term—of doing one thing instead of another. On the basis of that assessment, we act.

As parents, we are delighted when we see our children defer immediate gratification to achieve a more important long-range goal. At school, we often deliberately teach the merit of investing now for returns in the future. For example, teenage athletes learn the relationship between hard work at practices and success at the game on Friday night. Other students elect to do well in school out of a firm belief that getting good grades will lead to admission to a selective college, which will lead to a happy adult life.

We might wonder why this calculation isn't convincing for all students. Why aren't they buying in? The reason is simple: Investing today for a payoff tomorrow requires believing in your future. Put succinctly, motivation requires optimism.

Sometimes it appears that optimism—a positive belief in the future—is a genetic trait. This is one explanation for why children of successful people tend to be successful themselves. And, conversely, it helps explain why children from families that must continually struggle

to just get by often find themselves engaged in similar struggles on reaching adulthood.

But the good news, dramatically demonstrated by teachers like Jaime Escalante and Erin Gruwell, is that optimism can be taught and learned. Two key variables are the building blocks of optimism: faith and efficacy.

Building Block 1: Faith in the Future

For me to invest time and energy today for a benefit I won't realize until tomorrow, I need to have a good reason to believe that my investment will pay off. Clearly, it's much easier to acquire that faith when one's immediate environment regularly shows concrete evidence of return on investment. John Ogbu (1991) has written extensively about how children tend to look to the experience of adults in their communities and extended families to predict what lies ahead for them.

If children see despair around them, it's likely that they will fear that this represents their destiny. Many children simply have no good reason to expect tomorrow to be any better than today. There are many legitimate reasons for despair: the impact of poverty, chemical dependency, bigotry, family break-ups, and so on.

If the picture is rosier, however, children have a better chance of being optimistic about their futures. One powerful demonstration of the positive influence of faith in the future was the experience of philanthropist Eugene Lang (White, 1987), the founder of the "I Have a Dream" Foundation. In an impromptu speech, Lang promised a free college education to 61 6th graders at a New York public school if they stayed in school and graduated. Although statistics showed that 75 percent of the students wouldn't go on to graduate from high school, more than 90 percent of Lang's dreamers graduated, with more than two-thirds attending college. What these students had lacked was sufficient reason to believe in their futures. Once they had a justification for faith, they did what it took to realize success.

Building Block 2: Personal Efficacy

In general, it takes more than faith to commit to a difficult pursuit. Optimistic people have the fortitude to persevere with complex tasks because they are confident that if they work long and hard enough and apply enough creativity, they will, in fact, succeed.

Efficacy is a deep-seated belief in our own capabilities. It explains the phenomenon of success breeding success. Every time people attack a problem and succeed, they have authentic evidence of their capability. The more data I have about my capabilities, the more confident I will be of my potential to achieve future success.

Early in my teaching career, I decided to expect every student to produce work deserving of an *A* or *B*; otherwise, his or her grade would be *NYE*—not yet excellent. Occasionally it took extra time, but every student was ultimately able to leave my class with evidence of his or her capability.

There's a reason why so many parents love the story of The Little Engine That Could. We all know that if someone keeps hearing a credible inner voice repeating, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can," that person will start believing it.

Building Faith and Efficacy in School

Empowered Preschoolers

My daughters went to the Montessori preschool in the local Catholic church. They loved it, as did all their classmates, and they happily got up each morning to go to school. Donna Hargraeves was their teacher, and in her classroom, the children had continual opportunities to explore and learn. She directed the students to activities at a level at which, with effort, they could achieve success.

I can still vividly recall the first open house we attended. I was expecting to hear a teacher presentation, receive handouts, or engage in a conference with the teacher. It was nothing like that. As I entered

the room, it looked no different from when I dropped Ellisa off each morning. An aide greeted my daughter and handed her a 3×5 index card that listed all the lessons she had mastered. She was then invited to show us what she could do.

For the next 40 minutes, Ellisa led us around the room and treated us to demonstrations of things she had learned. Her pride in her accomplishments was palpable, and as I looked around, I saw the same scene repeated child after child. It was clear to me that the teacher was developing optimism in that room every day with every child.

This was my first experience with student-led parent-teacher conferences, this one brilliantly directed by a 4-year-old. In 40 minutes, I learned more about what my daughter could do, what she had accomplished, and what she was still working on than I ever could have gotten from a traditional conference. But, most important, I witnessed the development of a powerful sense of efficacy on Ellisa's part. She was sharing *her* accomplishments, which were the result of *her* efforts, and she was deservedly beaming with pride and confidence.

Now a junior in college, Ellisa takes on any challenge placed in front of her. There is no doubt in my mind that those crucial early experiences in Donna Hargraeves's classroom empowered her with the conviction that when she sets her mind to something, she can do it.

Sixth Grade Astronauts

Every May at Liberty Middle School in Camas, Washington, approximately 125 6th graders spend a long 10-hour day in space. This extraordinary simulation is a collaborative project that has evolved over several years.

Each space station crew includes five specialists—a mission commander, a life sciences specialist, a health and nutrition specialist, a robotics specialist, and a communications officer. Immediately after spring break, students must prepare written applications for at least two different positions. The teachers then select students for the five

crews, and over the next 10 weeks, the students prepare for the mission. At times, all the students who have the same position work with one another in a group—all the mission commanders meet, all the life sciences specialists meet, and so on. At other times, students work with their crewmates, training for the work required during their day in space.

When parents bring their kids to school on the morning of the mission, the gymnasium is a sight to behold. In one corner is mission control, a bank of computers, monitors, and microphones from which the teachers and mission control officers (older students who have been through the program) monitor the astronauts' work. Most of the gym is filled with the space station, which is made up of six connected modules. Soon the students don their spacesuits and gather for the preflight briefing from their teacher. Then, like clockwork, every five minutes another crew enters the space shuttle for the short flight to the International Space Station. For the next 10 hours, the only people each crew will interact with are fellow crew members and mission control.

The five crews rotate through the different modules and carry out their work without ever seeing or interacting with one another. They prepare and eat food in the galley, manipulate objects outside the spacecraft with robotic equipment, conduct experiments on plants and animals, observe rest periods, and even follow exercise routines to keep fit.

The day in space ends with a press conference conducted from the space station. Parents and guests get to see their children on the monitors and listen as the "astronauts" describe what transpired and what they learned on their long and grueling mission. After the press conference, the astronauts board the shuttle and return to earth.

The teachers have structured this 10-week experience in a manner that enhances the academic program rather than detracts from it. Each crew member must do a great deal of reading, writing, math, science, and social studies to prepare for the mission; and this intensive training pays off. Invariably, the mission succeeds, and the crews do their work

well. Most important, each crew member possesses concrete evidence of his or her success as a leader, learner, and teacher, engendering a powerful sense of optimism. This optimism lasts quite a while; several former 6th grade astronauts are now in college studying aerospace.

Middle School Reformers

At a large middle school in Southern California that serves a racially, economically, and ethnically diverse community, an English teacher and a doctoral student invited interested students to join them as coresearchers in an investigation of the obstacles to learning at their school (SooHoo, 1993). Twelve students agreed to meet for regular lunchtime discussions. The student researchers were mostly a diverse group of immigrant and minority students, with several English language learners among them. These students weren't particularly comfortable with their place in society or school. Armed with cameras and sketch pads, the students set out to record areas of concern and discuss them at their lunch meetings.

After a few months of deliberation, the student researchers began to see a pattern in their data. Some aspects of the school program weren't working as well as they should. Students had ideas about changing the school's discipline and reward policy as well as the physical education program. They began developing ideas for program improvement.

They soon realized that they lacked power to bring about the desired changes. Together with their adult mentors, the students requested the opportunity to present their research to the faculty. In a faculty meeting at which they served cookies, cupcakes, and soft drinks, the students presented their research. Later that spring on a scheduled professional development day, the 12 students were invited to work side by side with their teachers in making plans for the new school year. On the basis of the students' input, the school revised the discipline and reward process and redesigned the physical education program.

I met these students a few years later when they presented their research to an audience of university professors at the annual American Educational Research Association conference. The students—now high school sophomores—were articulate, confident, and absolutely certain they were headed to college and professional careers. After they learned as middle school students that they had powerful voices and were capable of persuading adult professionals with their arguments, nothing could stop them from achieving their goals.

An Environmental Advocate

A high school student named Sam recently became interested in the movement to design and build environmentally sound "green" buildings. He was not a good student academically, had few friends and little status, and didn't fit in with or have much respect for the social activities that defined the traditional high school experience.

But he didn't lack confidence. He went to the high school administrators with an elaborate written proposal describing an independent study he wanted to do on the potential conversion of a recently built public building to meet green building standards. He worked hard on his proposal and was excited about pursuing this work. Unfortunately, the school didn't see it the same way. As a result, Sam decided to leave to attend a nearby alternative school in the hope that its community-based learning model might be a better fit.

The teachers' reaction to his proposal at the alternative school was markedly different. The school made arrangements for Sam to intern at one of the largest and most prestigious architectural firms in the region. One day in a meeting with several of the firm's top architects, a lead architect commented that the constraints of school construction limited possible energy efficiencies.

Sam spoke up. His research had revealed that six buildings recently built in Los Angeles now operated completely off the grid. Impressed, the architects asked Sam to do more research. The next

day Sam presented this "new information" to some of the leaders in the field.

Sam has now graduated and is making plans to attend college. Although he readily admits that he is the proverbial square peg that people try to push through a round hole, he has no doubt about his ability to accomplish whatever he sets his mind to.

Great Expectations

It is naïve to think there could be an easy answer to all our student motivation problems. But one thing is clear: Young people are more likely to invest their energy in pursuit of what they view to be an achievable dream than in what they sense is futility.

That's why students need continuous encouragement and hope from schools—so they can believe in their futures and themselves. Every day as students leave our classrooms we need to ask ourselves two questions: As a result of today's experience, will these students be more or less confident that their futures are bright? Will students walk out of the classroom feeling more more capable than when they walked in?

Every morning an alarm clock goes off, a student awakes, and thoughts begin to form. What should the student expect from the upcoming day? If he or she were lucky enough to have had a teacher like Jaime Escalante or Erin Gruwell, or had been promised a college education by Eugene Lang, that student may well be looking forward to a bright future. But optimism shouldn't depend on having a superhero as a teacher or on receiving help from a philanthropist. We teachers can nurture optimism in all our students by creating routine education experiences in which hard work leads to success and a world of possibilities.

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Part 3

Deepening
Students' Thinking

All Our Students Thinking

Nel Noddings

Any subject—be it physics, art, or auto repair—can promote critical thinking as long as teachers teach in intellectually challenging ways.

One stated aim of almost all schools today is to promote critical thinking. But how do we teach critical thinking? What do we mean by *thinking*?

In an earlier issue on the whole child (September 2005), *Educational Leadership* made it clear that education is rightly considered a multipurpose enterprise. Schools should encourage the development of all aspects of whole persons: their intellectual, moral, social, aesthetic, emotional, physical, and spiritual capacities. In this issue, I am primarily concerned with intellectual development, in particular, with teaching students to think. However, as we address this important aim, we need to ask how it fits with other important aims, how our choice of specific goals and objectives may affect the aim of thinking, and whether current practices enhance or impede this aim.

Thinking and Intellect

Writers often distinguish among such thinking categories as critical thinking, reflective thinking, creative thinking, and higher-order thinking. Here, I consider thinking as the sort of mental activity that uses facts to plan, order, and work toward an end; seeks meaning or an explanation; is self-reflective; and uses reason to question claims and

make judgments. This seems to be what most teachers have in mind when they talk about thinking.

For centuries, many people have assumed that the study of certain subjects—such as algebra, Latin, and physics—has a desirable effect on the development of intellect. These subjects, it was thought, develop the mind, much as physical activity develops the muscles. John Dewey (1933/1971) rejected this view, writing, "It is desirable to expel . . . the notion that some subjects are inherently 'intellectual,' and hence possessed of an almost magical power to train the faculty of thought" (p. 46). Dewey argued, on the contrary, that

> any subject, from Greek to cooking, and from drawing to mathematics, is intellectual, if intellectual at all, not in its fixed inner structure, but in its function—in its power to start and direct significant inquiry and reflection. What geometry does for one, the manipulation of laboratory apparatus, the mastery of a musical composition, or the conduct of a business affair, may do for another. (pp. 46–47)

More recently, Mike Rose has shown convincingly not only that thinking is required in physical work (2005), but also that nonacademic subjects can be taught in intellectually challenging ways (1995). We do our students and society a disservice when we suppose that there is no intellectual worth in such subjects as homemaking, parenting, getting along with others, living with plants and animals, and understanding advertising and propaganda (Noddings, 2005, 2006). The point is to appreciate the topics that matter in real life and encourage thinking in each area. This is not accomplished by first teaching everyone algebra—thus developing mental muscle—and *then* applying that muscle to everyday matters.

Nor is it accomplished by simply adding thinking to the set of objectives for each disciplinary course. More than 20 years ago, educators and policymakers advocated greater emphasis on thinking as an aim of education. Commenting on this popular demand, Matthew

Lipman (1991), one of the founders of the modern Philosophy for Children movement, remarked,

> School administrators are calling for ways of "infusing thinking into the curriculum," apparently on the understanding that thinking can be added to the existing courses of studies as easily as we add vitamins to our diet. (p. 2)

But thinking cannot be formulated as a lesson objective—as something to teach, learn, and evaluate on Thursday morning. How, then, do we go about it?

Learning as Exploration

A few years ago, I watched a teenager whom I'll call Margie struggle with courses that discouraged thinking. In her U.S. history course, students were required to learn a list of facts for each unit of study. Margie had to memorize a set of 40 responses (names, places, and dates) for the unit on the American Revolutionary War and the postwar period. Conscientiously, she memorized the material and got a good grade on the test. When I talked with her, however, it was clear that she had not been asked to think and would soon forget the memorized facts. None of it meant anything to her; passing the test was her only objective.

Suppose, instead, that the teacher had asked students to consider such questions as these:

- What happened to the Tories during and after the war?
- Why was Thomas Paine honored as a hero for his tract Common Sense but reviled for his book The Age of Reason?
- Why might we be surprised (and dismayed) that John Adams signed the Alien and Sedition Acts?

Such questions would encourage students to read, write, argue, and consider the implications for current political life—all important aims of education. How many Tories left the United States? Where

did they go? Where do refugees go today? Discussing the question on Thomas Paine could lead to a critical discussion of both nationalism and religion centered on Paine's statement, "My country is the world; my religion is to do good." Who reviled Paine and why? After reading biographical material on John Adams, students might indeed be amazed that he signed the Alien and Sedition Acts. What lesson might we take from this story about the effects of fear and distrust on even highly intelligent people?

Algebra for Some

When I first met with Margie, she was taking algebra. Looking through her textbook, I thought the course would be wonderful. The textbook was loaded with real-world applications and exercises that invited genuine thinking. But the teacher did not assign even one of these exercises. Not one! The following year, in geometry, Margie was never asked to do a proof. These algebra and geometry classes were composed of kids who, had they had a choice in the matter, would not have chosen courses in academic mathematics. Today, in the name of equality of opportunity, we force nearly all students into courses called Algebra and Geometry, but the courses often do not deserve their names because they lack genuine intellectual content. This practice is little short of pedagogical fraud. Many of Margie's classmates (and Margie, too) would have been better served by good career and technical education courses that would challenge them to think about the world of work for which they were preparing.

I am not suggesting that we go back to a system in which students are tested, sorted, and assigned either to academic courses or dead-end tracks in which they are treated with neglect, sometimes even with contempt. But the present practice of forcing everyone into academic courses is not working well. We would do better to design excellent career and technical education courses—very like the job-oriented programs provided in two-year colleges—and allow students

to choose their own course of study. Students should not be forced into or excluded from academic courses, but they should be able to choose a nonacademic program with pride and confidence. Such programs are available in many Western countries, such as Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Programs like these might offer courses to prepare machinists, film technicians, office managers, retail salespersons, food preparation and service workers, mechanics, and other skilled workers. Recent studies have shown that the United States actually has an oversupply of engineers and scientists but badly needs workers with high technical skills (Monastersky, 2007).

We can give students opportunities to think well in any course we offer, provided the students are interested in the subjects discussed. Algebra can be taught thoughtfully or stupidly. So can drafting, cooking, or parenting. The key is to give students opportunities to think and to make an effort to connect one subject area to other subject areas in the curriculum and to everyday life.

Consider the ongoing debate over popular science versus "real science." Many critics scorn popular science courses (for a powerful criticism of the critics, see Windschitl, 2006). They would prefer to enroll all students in science courses that would prepare them—through emphasis on vocabulary and abstract concepts—for the next science course. According to this view, practical or popular science has little value and should certainly not carry credits toward college preparation. But intelligent, well-educated nonscientists depend on popular (or popularized) science for a lifetime of essential information. Nonscientists like myself cannot run our own experiments and verify everything that comes through the science pipeline. Instead, we read widely and consider the credentials of those making various claims. High school courses should prepare not only future specialists but also all students for membership in this circle of thoughtful readers.

Deference to the formal disciplines sometimes actually impedes student thinking. A few years ago, it was recommended that math courses should teach students how to think like a mathematician. In

science courses, they were to think like a scientist; in history, like a historian, and so on. But aside from the possibility that there may be more than one way to think like a mathematician, education efforts might better be aimed at showing students how to use mathematics to think about their own purposes. For example, carpenters don't need to think like mathematicians, but they do need to think about and use mathematics in their work.

Modeling Open-Ended Thinking

It may be useful, however, for students to see and hear their teachers thinking as mathematicians, historians, or artists. When I was studying for my master's degree in mathematics, I had one professor who frequently came to class unprepared. His fumbling about was often annoying; he wasted time. But sometimes his lack of preparedness led to eye-opening episodes. He would share aloud his thinking, working his way through a problem. Sometimes he would stop short and say, "This isn't going to work," and he'd explain why it wouldn't work. At other times, he'd say, "Ah, look, we're going great! What should we do next?" He modeled mathematical thinking for us, and I found it quite wonderful. The process was messy, uneven, time-consuming, and thrilling. That's the way real thinking is.

I am not recommending that teachers come to class unprepared, but we should at least occasionally tackle problems or ideas that we have not worked out beforehand. In doing so, we model thinking and demonstrate both the obstacles that we encounter and our successes.

Too often, we state beforehand exactly what we will teach and exactly what our students should know or do as a result. This is the right approach for some objectives. There is a place for automatic response in student learning; we do want students to carry out some operations automatically, without thinking. That sort of skill frees us to think about the real problems on which we should concentrate.

In today's schools, however, too much of what we teach is cast in terms of specific objectives or standards. Margie was told the 40 things she was expected to know about the American Revolutionary War. Some educators even argue that it is only fair to tell students exactly what they must know or do. But such full disclosure may foreclose learning to think. Thinking involves planning, ordering, creating structural outlines, deciding what is important, and reflecting on one's own activity. If all this is done for students—Cliffs Notes for everything— they may pass tests on material they have memorized, but they will not learn to think, and they will quickly forget most of the memorized material.

Encouraging Teachers to Think

Our focus thus far has been on students. But what about teachers? Are they encouraged to think? Unfortunately, many teachers are told what topics to teach and how to teach them. In too many cases, they are even compelled to use scripted lessons. Ready-made lessons should be available for teachers who want to use them or for special purposes, but professional teachers should be allowed—even encouraged—to use their professional judgment in planning lessons and sequences of lessons.

If teachers want to teach students to think, they must think about what they themselves are doing. Critics both inside and outside the United States have characterized the U.S. curriculum as "a mile wide and an inch deep." The pressure to cover mandated material can lead to hasty and superficial instruction that favors correct responses to multiple-choice questions over thinking. Countless teachers have told me that they can't spend time on real-life applications of mathematics or the kinds of questions I suggested for Margie's history class. If they were to do so, they tell me, they wouldn't get through the required curriculum. But what is the point of getting through a huge body of material if students will soon forget it? How can we claim to educate

our students if they do not acquire the intellectual habits of mind associated with thinking?

Teachers should also be willing to think critically about education theory and about what we might call education propaganda. Slogans are mouthed freely in education circles, and too few teachers challenge them (Noddings, 2007). For example, it is easy and politically correct to say, "All children can learn," but what does that mean? Can all children learn, say, algebra? If we answer a qualified *no* to this, are we demeaning the ability of some children (perhaps many), or might our answer be a respectful recognition that children differ and exhibit a wide range of talents and needs?

What Competing Really Means

Even if we believe that all children can learn algebra, we too seldom ask the question, Why should they? When we do ask it, the answer is usually that we live in an information age and that if students (and the United States) are to compete in a worldwide economy, they must know far more mathematics than previous generations did. We need, they say, more college-educated citizens.

Is this true? The information world is certainly growing, but in addition to its own growth, it has generated an enormous service world, and people in this world should also learn to think. The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides charts showing that, of the 10 occupations with the most openings in the next decade, only one or two require a college education. Occupations such as food preparation and service worker, retail salesperson, customer service representative, cashier, office clerk, and laborer and material mover will employ about five times more people than the computer/high-tech fields requiring a college education (see www.bls.gov/emp/home.htm for employment projections). No matter what we do in schools, most of our high school graduates will work at such jobs.

We live in an interdependent society, and one of our education aims is to prepare students for democratic citizenship. As part of that task, we should help students develop an appreciation for the wide range of essential work that must be done in our complex society. In the future, not everyone will need to have a traditional college education to experience occupational success, although postsecondary education or training will frequently enhance that success. Rather, occupational success will require flexibility, a willingness to continue learning, an ability to work in teams, patience and skill in problem solving, intellectual and personal honesty, and a well-developed capacity to think. Success in personal life requires many of the same qualities.

Even for those who go on to college and postgraduate education, the intellectual demands of the future are moving away from a narrow disciplinary emphasis. The biologist E. O. Wilson (2006) has commented on the new demands:

> The trajectory of world events suggests that educated people should be far better able than before to address the great issues courageously and analytically by undertaking a traverse of disciplines. We are into the age of synthesis, with a real empirical bite to it. Therefore, *sapere aude*. Dare to think on your own. (p. 137)

That's good advice for both teachers and students.

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Part 4

Instilling the Desire
to Achieve

Students at Bat

Thomas R. Guskey and Eric M. Anderman

Students can learn to act responsibly by practicing meaningful decision making in school.

Neighborhood baseball games were the highlight of summer days while we were growing up. Each game began with a bicycle trip around the neighborhood to round up equipment and every available player, boys and girls alike. Sharing was essential because not everyone had a ball, bat, or glove.

Games started with the selection of team captains who then picked their teammates. The traditional bat toss between captains and a hand-over-hand climb to the bat's end determined who chose first. Teams were different for every game. We chose our positions, decided the batting order, and established rules. Although we all knew the general rules of the game, we had to decide on a multitude of local rules: Where were the bases? What was a home run? How much of a lead from the base was permitted? Would the younger kids be allowed four strikes instead of three? Issues of fairness governed all these decisions.

When disagreements arose, we resolved them through compromise and consensus. An unresolved dispute might end the game, and nobody wanted that. We all cheered good plays; we laughed at mistakes and then quickly forgot them. An injury brought everyone on both teams together to help. Older kids taught younger ones about batting, fielding, and base running. Most of what we learned about baseball, we learned in those neighborhood games.

Today, few boys or girls take part in neighborhood baseball games. Their experiences with baseball come primarily through leagues that adults have organized. The adults pick the teams and determine the schedules. Adults assign players to positions and arrange the batting order. Adults establish the rules and do all the teaching. When disagreements arise, adults do the arguing. Players watch, wait, and abide by whatever decision the adults make. The players' only responsibility is to show up and play the game. Even kids' attendance is determined largely by the adults who drop them off and then pick them up afterward.

Sadly, for increasing numbers of children, their baseball experience is more restrictive still. They play baseball on a computer that sets all the rules and determines their skill level on the basis of how carefully they time their key press on a remote control.

Doing What They're Told

In school, children's experiences with responsibility are similarly restricted. Pressured to improve scores on high-stakes assessments in language arts and math, many teachers drastically limit the choices that students are allowed to make. Using the guidelines provided by the state or district, teachers determine what students will learn, when they will learn it, and how they will demonstrate their learning. In most classrooms, teachers choose where students will sit, with whom they will work, and how they will spend their time. Teachers even decide when students can and cannot talk, when they can eat, and when they can go to the restroom. As students advance in grades, these decisions become more formalized and restrictive through course requirements and structured school schedules.

Both in school and in the neighborhood, children today have few opportunities to learn about sharing, establishing rules, fairness, and responsibility. They seldom experience the challenge of resolving disputes through compromise and consensus. They rarely actively participate in decisions about learning goals, classroom procedures,

or rules of conduct. Yet despite this lack of experience or guidance in responsible action, adults often become incensed when students show little personal responsibility for their actions and the possible consequences.

Research and common sense suggest that students should experience increased opportunities to demonstrate responsibility as they progress into higher grades in school. Educational psychologists have long acknowledged that as children develop into adolescents and young adults, their abilities to critically evaluate choices and make responsible decisions greatly improve (Grisso et al., 2003). Researchers also have demonstrated that adolescents clearly *want* to be responsible and *want* to make meaningful decisions (Midgley & Feldlaufer, 1987).

Ironically, studies of classroom procedures reveal not only that students have few opportunities to be responsible and make meaningful choices in school but also that those opportunities actually *decline* as students progress into higher grades. For example, one study showed that middle school students thought they should have more opportunities to make decisions in math class than they had in elementary school (Midgley & Feldlaufer, 1987). However, their middle school teachers believed that students should have *fewer* opportunities for decision making in class than their elementary school teachers thought they should have the previous year.

A Combined Effort

Many educators believe that it's the parents' job, and not theirs, to instill a sense of responsibility in children. Parents clearly provide an important starting point; their support for developing autonomy in children is crucial (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & LaGuardia, 2006), particularly for boys (National Institute of Child Health and Development, 2008). Teachers can purposefully build on this early and ongoing work by offering parents specific suggestions for building students' autonomy and sense of responsibility. They might recommend that students help plan family

meals and food purchases, make decisions about family outings, or engage in community service.

Optimal results occur, however, when responsibility is encouraged in both settings. In school, developing a sense of responsibility in students depends in large part on the opportunities that educators provide for meaningful decision making throughout the day. If teachers make nearly all the decisions for students and give them little say, then students are unlikely to develop much of a sense of responsibility. Believing their thoughts, opinions, or preferences do not matter, the students also are unlikely to take much ownership of their learning. Without ownership and personal responsibility, students have little motivation to succeed. When students feel empowered to be responsible in school, however, they tend to prefer more challenging academic tasks, set higher academic goals, and persist when confronted with difficult tasks (Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, & Connell, 1998).

Teaching Responsibility

Educators can implement a variety of instruction and management practices at the school and classroom levels that encourage students to develop a sense of responsibility (see Anderman & Anderman, in press; Guskey & Bailey, 2001). A key element in all of these practices, however, is a positive orientation. Rather than punishing students for irresponsible actions, these practices teach students to make responsible decisions and follow through with responsible actions. They also involve having students take ownership of the consequences that stem from their actions, both good and bad.

Let Students Decide How to Use Their Time

Teachers can set aside a block of time once a week and outline three tasks that students should accomplish during that time, clearly describing the criteria for success. In the younger grades, after teaching students how to effectively manage their time, teachers might set aside one hour. In the upper grades, they might set aside as much as two hours. After the teacher advises the students to use their time constructively and responsibly, students decide how to allocate their time to accomplish the tasks.

For example, in an elementary classroom, the teacher might suggest the following three tasks for students to complete related to a story they just read: (1) write a paragraph summarizing the story, (2) draw a picture of your favorite scene, and (3) write an alternate ending. The teacher could give the students a 90-minute block to complete the three tasks. At the end of that time, the teacher and the students would examine how much the students accomplished. The teacher would ask those students who did not complete all three tasks to suggest ways they might have used their time more efficiently.

Let Students Choose Classroom Rules

Instead of simply providing students with a list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors at the beginning of the year, teachers can engage students in developing their own rules for the classroom. Students can divide into four or five teams, with each team assigned a particular rule category. For example, one team may decide the rules for using the classroom computers, whereas another team may work on rules for cleaning up the classroom after science experiments or art projects. Teams then present their rules to the entire class, along with their rationale for choosing them, as well as a description of consequences for not following the rules.

Initially, teachers will need to provide examples of rules—some good and some bad—along with the rationale behind them and possible consequences for not complying. Students can then discuss their interpretations regarding the fairness of each rule and offer alternatives if needed. When disagreements arise, teachers will need to guide the students through a consensus-building process, showing how people share divergent perspectives and develop meaningful compromise. Once students decide on the rules, they are all held accountable for following them, for taking responsibility for their own behavior, and for knowing the consequences of misbehavior.

Let Students Choose Work Locations

After assigning a particular task, teachers can let students choose where they will complete their class work. Students develop a sense of responsibility when they decide whether to work at their desks, at the reading center, or at some other work location in the classroom. Elementary teachers may need to ask students to choose from a list of possible options. Teachers may need to remind students in upper grades that some areas in the classroom—such as right next to the door or close to their friends—might be distracting and less advisable choices. In some schools, teachers can give students the option of working in the library, computer laboratory, or study center. Teachers typically set explicit time limits for completion of the work and outline specific criteria for success.

Let Students Choose Tasks

Teachers also can encourage responsible decision making by allowing students to choose from a variety of academic tasks. Not all students in the class have to be working on exactly the same assignment at the same time. Anderman and Anderman (in press) distinguish between *within-task choices* and *between-task choices*. In one classroom, for example, all students might be working on a unit on the

planet Mars. Even though they are assigned a given task—studying Mars—students can choose how they want to explore it—a *within-task* choice. Some students might go to the library to find books or other reference sources about Mars. Others might use the Internet to gather information about the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Mars Exploration Program. Still others might use a telescope to find Mars in the night sky and then draw or photograph the planet.

In contrast, in a language arts classroom, the teacher might let each student select the novel of his or her choice to read as well as the method to report on it—a *between-task* choice. Some students might choose to write a traditional book report, whereas others might develop a Web page, prepare an oral presentation with slides, or compose a song about the book.

Let Students Develop Rubrics

When included as part of the instructional process, carefully structured rubrics dramatically improve the quality of students' work, especially in writing (Andrade, Du, & Wang, 2008). After students become accustomed to using rubrics, teachers can increase student responsibility for learning by engaging students in developing their own rubrics.

For example, the teacher could ask students to read two paragraphs describing a similar situation and determine which paragraph they liked better. After some group discussion, students would individually construct a list of five things each one thought made one paragraph better than the other. Next, they could compare their individual lists and develop a shared list of characteristics of high-quality writing. Finally, they would write a paragraph on a different topic using their shared list of characteristics as a guide. This kind of involvement not only improves the initial quality of students' work but also encourages students to take greater ownership of—and become more thoughtful judges of—that work (Andrade, 2000; Arter & McTighe, 2001).

Implement Student-Led Conferences

In student-led conferences, the teachers' role becomes that of facilitator. During the conference, students lead family members through a discussion of their work, which is usually organized in a portfolio. The portfolio might consist of several examples of the student's writing from the current school year, mathematics exercises, results from science experiments, and recently completed art projects.

Typically, several conferences take place simultaneously in a classroom, with family groups seated far enough apart to guarantee privacy. The teacher circulates among family groups, stopping long enough to offer pertinent comments and answer any questions. Instead of offering specific comments about the student's work, however, the teacher simply clarifies project goals and explains activities. Students take charge of explaining the nature of their successes and describing areas in which they are working to improve. Organizing these conferences requires significant planning to assemble the portfolios and help students develop skill in presenting their work to parents. However, increasing numbers of teachers find that student-led conferences enhance students' ownership of their learning and improve parents' involvement in school activities (Bailey & Guskey, 2001).

Report Achievement and Behaviors Separately

Most teachers today combine a wide variety of achievement and behavior indices when assigning grades. They mix scores from major assessments, projects, reports, and quizzes with records of homework completion, class participation, punctuality of assignments, effort, and other work habits. The result is a hodgepodge grade that is difficult for parents or students to interpret (Brookhart, in press; Guskey & Bailey, 2001).

However, schools using standards-based grading typically distinguish grades for learning or achievement from those for different aspects of student behavior (Guskey, 2001, 2006). Teachers using

standards-based grading report that students take homework, effort, work habits, and other aspects related to responsibility more seriously when those grades are reported separately (Guskey, in press).

Once the system is in place, this kind of grading requires no additional work because teachers don't need to gather any additional information. It also helps avoid irresolvable debates about how best to combine diverse types of evidence on achievement, attitudes, and behaviors into a single grade (Bailey & McTighe, 1996).

It Takes Practice

Although the decisions young people make become more important and the consequences of their decisions grow more serious as they get older, the opportunities they have to make responsible decisions and learn from those experiences in school decline (Eccles et al., 1993). As a result, many students have not developed this vital life skill.

Students inevitably experience difficulties making responsible decisions at first. For example, if a teacher allows students to choose their own work locations, some students may initially make irresponsible choices. A student might choose to work in the library, but end up spending most of the time there talking with friends and reading magazines rather than completing the assignment.

That student will suffer the consequences of having made an irresponsible decision. The teacher may call the student's parents, offer fewer options for doing the next assignment, or assign a low grade. Most students learn quickly that poor choices lead to undesirable consequences—and that they have control over these consequences. If students continuously receive support in this area, they become more comfortable making responsible decisions and actually choose responsible options far more frequently.

Some educators undoubtedly fear that if we give students greater autonomy and more opportunities to make responsible decisions, many will choose less responsible options, and problematic behaviors will

result. But no evidence that we know supports this claim. To the contrary, research suggests that students actually become more engaged and more task focused when they are allowed to make responsible decisions (Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, & Connell, 1998).

Teachers need to provide these opportunities for increased responsibility within the context of an effective classroom management system. Students can learn from small decisions first, recognizing consequences that might be relatively minor, before they consider major decisions with consequences of great significance.

The lessons we learned in neighborhood baseball games serve us well today. It is imperative that we help all students learn similar lessons. Few life skills are as important.

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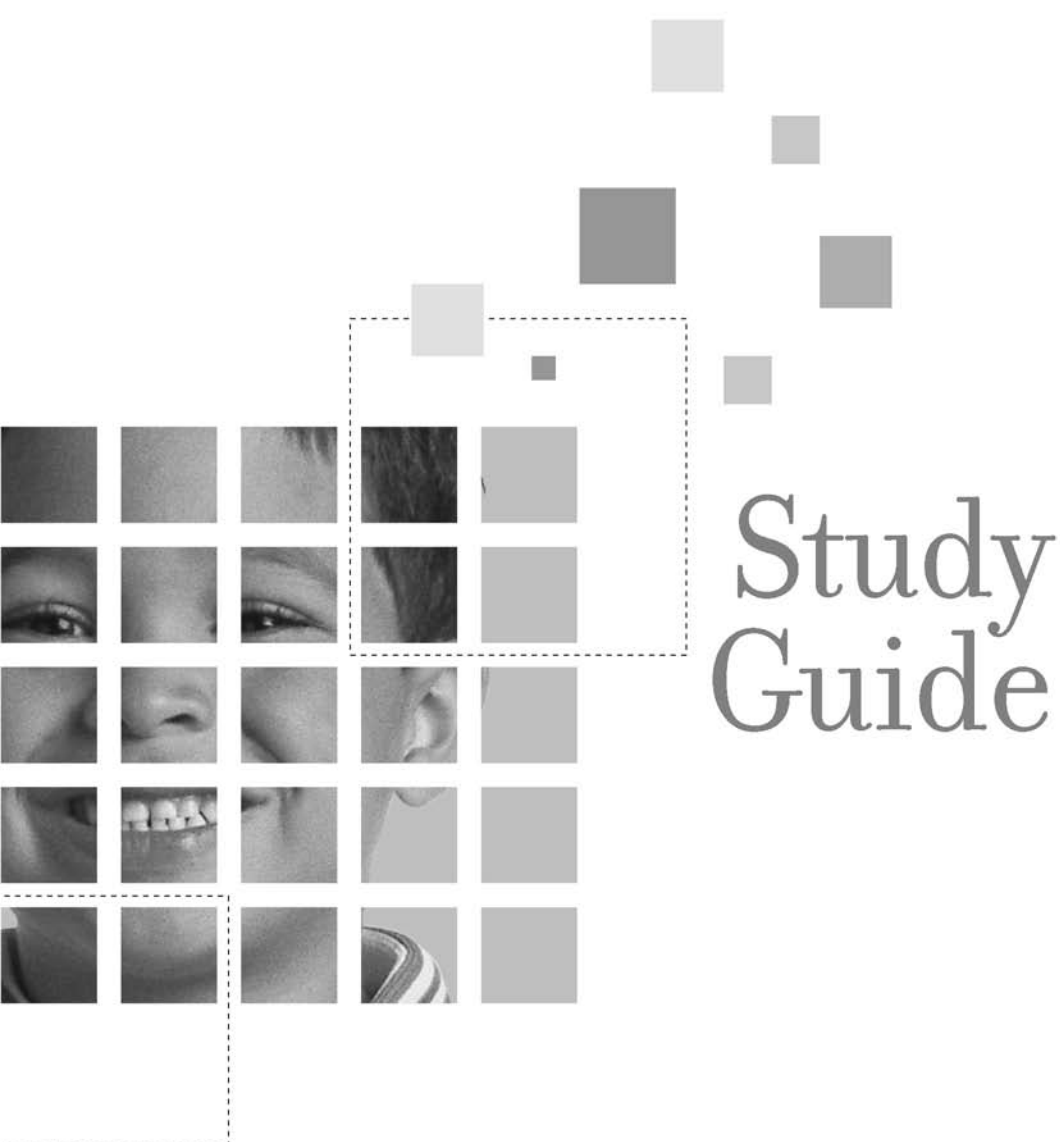
Study
Guide

Engaging the Whole Child

Study Guide for
Engaging the Whole Child

Naomi Thiers and Teresa Preston

PART 1: Engaging the Whole Child: Heart, Mind, and Soul

Joy in School, September 2008
The Moral North Star, October 2008
Teaching as Jazz, May 2007
Engaging Students Around the Globe, March 2008

Stephen Wolk ("Joy in School") charges that schools unwittingly take the joy out of learning for many kids. He quotes John Goodlad's 1984 assertion that "Boredom is a disease of epidemic proportions . . . . Why are our schools not places of joy?" and adds

> Now, a generation later, if you were to ask students for a list of adjectives that describe school, I doubt that joyful would make the list. The hearts and minds of children and young adults are wide open to the wonders of learning and the fascinating complexities of life. But school still manages to turn that into a joyless experience.

Discuss in your group:

- Not everyone would agree with Wolk's statement that "The hearts and minds of children and young adults are wide open to the wonders of learning." Do you agree?

- When young adults aren't—or don't appear to be—open to the wonders of learning, what might be going on?

Reflect on your own teaching:

- Webster's College Dictionary defines joy as "the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune." Think of specific times when you saw students exhibiting joy. What experiences seemed to lead to this "emotion of delight"? Was it lively group interactions? Challenging projects? Field trips?
- What made these experiences joyful rather than merely fun for learners? (see Wolk's distinction between joy and fun).
- Review Wolk's 11 suggestions for injecting more joy into school. List five things you could do in the first weeks of school to make sure that each learner experiences joy.

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In "The Moral North Star," William Damon says that students will pursue their learning more ardently if they understand why the knowledge schools require is important.

- How do you respond when students ask, "Why do we have to do this?" How might your responses to this question instill in students a sense of purpose?
- Think of a lesson or unit you're currently teaching or preparing to teach. Ask yourself why this unit is relevant to students' present and future lives. If it isn't relevant, how could you adjust your objectives to make it more relevant? (See the suggestions in Damon's article for ideas.)

- Damon emphasizes the need to encourage students to pursue moral excellence, as well as academic excellence. Do you agree that teachers have a role in fostering moral excellence in students? Which moral and ethical principles should teachers attempt to instill in students? How can teachers address ethical and moral issues in a pluralistic society?

PART 2: Inspiring Trust and Confidence

Cultivating Optimism in the Classroom, March 2008
The Teacher as Warm Demander, September 2008
Conversations That Matter, September 2008 online
Help Us Care Enough to Learn, February 2006
The Wounded Student, March 2008

Richard Sagor "Cultivating Optimism in the Classroom", points out that it is "easier to acquire faith [in oneself as a powerful learner] when one's immediate environment regularly shows concrete evidence of return on investment."

- Consider the practice of student-led conferences that Sagor describes in his daughter's preschool. How did showing her parents her learning help this child get immediate "return on investment" for her efforts at mastering skills?
- Discuss how you could arrange for your students to take the lead in parent conferences on student learning. Do you think this would help students see their learning as important and view themselves as efficacious? Might it increase their optimism?
- Try some form of student-led conferences or presentations to parents this semester. Report back to your group on the effects on students' motivation.

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Students in low-income, urban high schools whom Kathleen Cushman interviewed ("Help Us Care Enough to Learn") indicated that they were hungry for teachers to give them challenging work connected to their passions. A major resource these students felt their schools lacked was listening:

> Talk to us about the classes that we want to take, not just the ones you want to give. We know what we need to take, so respect us by asking us what is on our mind . . . . Listen to what we have to say.

Next time you introduce a unit in your one of your classes, set aside time a few weeks ahead to talk with your students about what they most want to know and what would make the content come alive for them. Challenge them to brainstorm projects that would make this subject fascinating. Trust their suggestions and work those that you can into your planning.

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According to Kirsten Olson ("The Wounded Student"), if trust begets enthusiasm, lack of trust can deflate it. Formerly enthusiastic students may become reluctant after being exposed to a negative school environment. Marie, for example, lost interest in math when her teacher told her she "couldn't keep up with her peers in advanced math."

- Look back at your own schooling. Which teachers inspired you to learn more, and which teachers caused you to shut down and lose interest? What might you learn from these teachers about your own instruction?
- What common education practices might lead students to believe that their teachers don't care about them? How might schools reverse these practices?

- Think about a student you've encountered who seems to have been wounded by a past experience in school. How did this past injury manifest itself in the student's behavior? What might help this student recover from these wounds and get back on the right track?

PART 3: Deepening Students' Thinking

All Our Students Thinking, February 2008
Balance in the Balance, May 2007
Energizing Learning, February 2008
Of Whales and Wonder, March 2008
Learning in Depth, November 2008
Clash! The World of Debate, February 2008

Consider these aspects of what it means to engage students in thinking more deeply.

In "All Our Students Thinking," Nel Noddings notes,

> For centuries, many people have assumed that the study of certain subjects—such as algebra, Latin, and physics—has a desirable effect on the development of intellect. These subjects, it was thought, develop the mind, much as physical activity develops the muscles.

John Dewey rejected this notion, arguing that any subject can lead to deep inquiry and reflection. Discuss as a group:

- Do you agree that some subjects—such as algebra and philosophy—spur deep thinking more than others—such as French or business administration? Or can any subject engender critical thinking if taught well and studied passionately?

- What makes a course challenging in terms of thinking: The amount of content included? The fact that the course is college-prep? Or some other factor?
- Observe a class in your school's vocational/career education program. Notice how teachers impart information and what kinds of activities students engage in, keeping in mind Noddings's criteria for what constitutes true thinking (using facts to plan, order, and work toward an end; seeking meaning or explanation; reflecting; and using reason to make judgments). Does thinking seem to be part of these students' training? Are they being challenged to think as they learn job skills?

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In "Balance in the Balance," Richard Rothstein, Tamara Wilder, and Rebecca Jacobsen ask,

> What if schools were held accountable, for example, not for whether students could recite historical facts, but for whether they actually registered and voted as young adults? This would establish incentives for creating a curriculum that balanced history instruction with service learning projects, mock elections, and classroom debates of contemporary and controversial policy—just as Benjamin Franklin urged.

- Do you agree that schools should be held accountable for their students' future civic participation, or lack of it? If Rothstein and his colleagues' idea is reasonable, how might it be practically carried out? Would it spur schools to help students think more deeply about the needs of society and their roles as citizens?
- These authors explored what a sample of adults think are the essential goals of education; what do *students* think are the goals of education? Give your classes a list of the eight goal

categories from the article. As Rothstein did, ask each student to assign each of these categories a number from 1 to 8 representing how important that goal category should be in schooling, relative to the other seven goals. Average the results and report back. How do these students' priorities compare to those of the adult sample?

Look at Thomas Jefferson's six goals of schooling:

- To give citizens the information they need.
- To enable citizens to calculate and express their ideas, contracts, and accounts in writing.
- To improve, by reading, their morals and their mental faculties.
- To understand their duties to their neighbors and country.
- To know their rights; to choose with discretion their elected representatives and monitor their conduct with diligence, candor, and judgment.
- To observe their social relations with intelligence and faithfulness.

Discuss whether these seem like appropriate goals for education today. How do Thomas Jefferson's six goals match up with the five tenets around which the whole child initiative is constructed?

- Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.
- Each student learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults.
- Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
- Each student has access to personalized learning and to qualified, caring adults.

- Each graduate is prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment.

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What do you think of Kieran Egan's proposal ("Learning in Depth") that students study one topic in depth and from all angles throughout their 12 years of schooling? Would this kind of scheme deepen students' knowledge and their sense of ownership over learning? How could you try something like this even on a small scale in your classes?

PART 4: Instilling the Desire to Achieve

Students at Bat, November 2008
Feedback that Fits, December 2007/January 2008
Springing into Active Learning, November 2008
They Can Because They Think They Can, February 2006
The View From Somewhere, December 2007/January 2008

Schools may not be the only place students gather where following a program laid out by adults is the norm. Look over Thomas R. Guskey and Eric M. Anderman's article "Students at Bat." What do you think of this statement:

> Both in school and in the neighborhood, children today have few opportunities to learn about sharing, establishing rules, fairness, and responsibility. They seldom experience the challenge of resolving disputes through compromise and consensus.

- Think about how you make decisions and resolve problems in your classroom. Do you encourage—or require—students

to come up with ideas, or do you package things for them and just ask them to approve your proposals?

• Look over the options for student choice that Guskey and Anderman offer. Which of these options could you imagine giving your students? Try giving your students one or more of these options over the next week, and report back to the group.

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Susan M. Brookhart, in "Feedback That Fits," offers an example of flawed feedback on a writing assignment. How might a rubric help this teacher provide more useful feedback? How might a rubric prevent a teacher from providing the helpful sort of feedback in the figure with Allison Zmuda's article?

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In "The View from Somewhere," Maja Wilson discusses the problems of using rubrics to assess student writing, although many educators find rubrics to be valuable tools for student self-assessment.

• How have you used rubrics in your classroom? Have you found them to be useful? What do you see as the benefits and drawback of using rubrics?

• What role do students have in developing and using rubrics? Have you ever had students use rubrics for self-assessment? If so, describe your efforts and how students responded. If not, discuss how well you believe this method would work with your students.

• Wilson tells the story of a group of teachers who give the highest score possible to a paper that one teacher believes is vacuous and deserves a lower score. Do you believe that this is a valid criticism of rubrics? Could a better-designed rubric solve

this problem, or is Wilson correct that the type of objectivity that rubrics impose on writing assessment is inappropriate?

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The first step in sparking the desire for achievement in students, according to Allison Zmuda ("Springing Into Active Learning") is to push students to be less passive. After many years of schooling, passive habits—and the "common misunderstanding about learning" that Zmuda refers to—may be so deeply ingrained that we have to intentionally disabuse students of these notions.

- Look over the "misunderstandings" Zmuda lists. Do you think your students believe things like "Classroom rules are based on what the teacher wants?" or "Once I get too far behind, I can never catch up"? What behaviors do you notice that show your students hold such ideas?
- Try this: Gather your class and write one of Zmuda's misunderstandings on the board. Ask students to discuss it, making clear you're not fishing for any one conclusion. Keep out of the discussion and notice what thoughts students come up with. Prod their thinking if necessary by asking, "Is this statement true of your learning *outside* of school?" "What might be another way to look at this"?
- Now ask yourself how the checklist for an active curriculum that Zmuda provides applies to your teaching. Identify characteristics of your learning environment that may be rewarding passivity more than curiosity and ownership. Identify one thing you might change. Discuss with the group.

PART 5: BUILDING ON STUDENT INTERESTS

The Music Connection, September 2008, online
Turning on the Lights, March 2008
A (Pod)cast of Thousands, April 2007
"You Should Read This Book!", March 2008

Fifth grade teacher Andrea Antepenko ("The Music Connection") found that with pressure to get students to meet state standards, "it's easy to forget that my most important goal is to create an environment in which every student is involved in meaningful learning. Music helps me accomplish that goal." She found that incorporating music into class increased students' inspiration and confidence as writers and enhanced their ability to appreciate writing in content areas.

- Try this: Gather several struggling writers into a small group and have them free write for 10 minutes with music playing in the background. Try several sessions alternating between choosing music yourself and giving each student a turn to choose an instrumental piece that inspires that student. Does writing become less stressful for them? If so, how could you build on this positive experiment to get students comfortable with composing for longer stretches?
- Antepenko found that playing music associated with historical periods in social studies units pricks her students' interest in historical content like nothing else. Using the resources listed in her article, find a song that connects to key content you are teaching. Listen to the song as a group, studying the lyrics as you do, and notice students' reactions.
- Reflect on whether the experience helped students under-stand elements of this content in a way that textbooks or other resources have not, and report back to the group.

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In "Turning On the Lights," Marc Prensky argues that many students today learn more from their technological devices than from teachers who rely on traditional methods. He encourages schools to use technology to engage students in learning and to help them connect with the world.

- Do you agree with Prensky's notion that requiring students to "power down" in school actually impedes their learning? How might allowing students to use technological devices in class help or hinder their learning? What place do you see in the classroom for laptops, cell phones, mp3 players, social networking sites, Wikipedia, and other technologies?
- What is your school's policy regarding technology in school? How was this policy developed? What role did teachers, students, and parents have in the creation of your policy? Do you believe your policy meets the needs of your students? If so, why? If not, what changes would you make?
- Patrick Welsh, an English teacher at an Alexandria, Virginia, high school, notes in a February 10, 2008, *Washington Post* article (www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/08/AR2008020803271.html) that some teachers, and even students, question the value of their school's many high-tech "gizmos." He writes,

   Science and math teachers, for instance, have been told that they can't use traditional overhead projectors to present material to classes, even though the teachers say that in many cases, they're far superior to computers for getting certain concepts across.

When might the traditional method be the best approach to teaching? How can teachers and administrators balance the desire to stay up-to-date with the need to always make sure that teachers can use the techniques and technologies that best suit their students?

PART 6: EMPOWERING STUDENTS

Footprints in the Digital Age, November 2008
Amplifying Student Voice, November 2008
Working with Tech-Savvy Kids, November 2008
The Power of Audience, November 2008

According to Will Richardson ("Footprints in the Digital Age"), to help students take charge in life as well as in school, we need to familiarize ourselves with the learning tools students will reach for—social networking tools like Facebook, blogs, and photo sharing sites. Teachers, Richardson says, need to "help students create, navigate, and grow the powerful, individualized networks of learning that bloom on the Web . . . . Our teachers have to be colearners in this process, modeling their own use of connections and networks."

- Do you agree that teachers owe it to their students to try social networking tools so that we can guide students in using them?
- In a noncritical way, discuss in your group how much you use the social networking resources Richardson describes. If you have never used these tools, or feel reluctant to try them, what stops you? What would help you take the plunge?
- Consider using a group session to explore activities like blogging, with teachers who are experienced with digital applications guiding those who are less experienced.

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In "The Power of Audience," Steven Levy describes several student projects that were created for an authentic audience.

- Levy says that the audience for 99 percent of student work is the teacher. What is the problem with this? Why might having an authentic audience motivate students to do their best?

- Look at your course objectives and ask yourself how students can demonstrate their mastery of these objectives for an authentic audience. What sort of projects could students create? Who would the audience be?
- What are some of the logistical challenges involved in connecting students with their audience, and how can you help overcome these obstacles?

PART 7: CONNECTING WITH STUDENTS' COMMUNITIES & CULTURES

The Violence You Don't See, Summer 2006 online
Family Partnerships That Count, September 2008
Engaging African American Males in Reading, February 2006
Connecting With Latino Learners, February 2006
Cultures in Harmony, September 2008
Life Ain't No Crystal Stair, March 2008

In "Family Partnerships That Count," JoBeth Allen shares how teachers and schools have made parents part of the learning process.

- As Allen suggests in the opening paragraphs of her article, brainstorm a list of everything your school does to involve families and put each item in one of Allen's three categories: Builds Deep Relationships, Supports Student Learning, or Does Neither. How can you ensure that more families benefit from activities in the first two categories? How can you adapt the activities in the third category so that they build relationships or support learning?
- Consider the families of your students. What "funds of knowledge" exist within these families? Choose an upcoming unit of study you're planning and generate a list of ways to incorporate this family knowledge into your plans.

- Discuss how and when you communicate with parents. What are the typical topics of conversation? How might you deepen these conversations so that parents truly become partners in supporting student learning? Which of Allen's ideas have the most potential for enhancing your relationship with parents? What other ideas do you have? Try out one of these ideas for a month or two and share the results with your colleagues.

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In "Life Ain't No Crystal Stair," Susan Danoff writes about her experiences using storytelling and creative writing to reach at-risk students.

- Danoff describes how she gives students models to emulate in creating their own writing. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of such an approach? How can teachers encourage students to find inspiration from model writings while also helping them find their own voices?
- Danoff uses the work of Langston Hughes to inspire her students. Who are some writers your students might enjoy emulating? Try sharing a sample or two from those writers with your students and asking them to write their own piece.
- Often, according to Danoff, students' voices become blocked because they sense the teacher is looking for something that may not match the students' authentic voices. Teachers, of course, do need to ensure that student writing meets certain standards. How can teachers balance the need to assess writing based on specific objectives while encouraging authenticity?
- Examine the student writing samples in the article. Given the assignments Danoff describes, how would you assess these

samples? What strengths do you see in these students' writing? How might you encourage these students to build on these strengths?

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