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Democratic Education Consortium

Once the extent to which childhood drives history has truly dawned on us, we cannot avoid making children's emotional well-being our top social priority.

Robin Grille, *Parenting for a peaceful world*

The final aim is not to know but to be. There never was a more risky motto than: Know thyself. You've got to know yourself as far as possible. But, not for the sake of knowing. You've got to know yourself so that you can at least be yourself. "Be yourself" is the last motto.

John Edwards "What we steal from children" quoted from D. H. Lawrence

The goal of Democratic Education is to self-actualization.

Yaacov Hecht

If we all agreed about everything, we wouldn't need democracy.

Deborah Meier, American educator

It is strange that the schooling system which was created to ensure democracy is the most undemocratic institution in America—except for the prisons which you can avoid by behaving or the military which is avoided by not enlisting.

Dr. Donald Glines, *Educational Alternatives for Everyone All the Time*

The children are maladjusting, and it is their teacher's role to make that maladjustment functional and creative rather than to suppress it.

Herbert Kohl, *I Won't Learn from You*

Can we call the preparation to produce the cultural hegemony of European-elites, education?

Mwalimu J. Shujaa, American educator

I want a curriculum of culture: One that is true to my culture and celebrates other cultures.

John Edwards

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I often hear teachers complaining about the problems they have with children coming to school from dysfunctional families. I have never heard a teacher talk about the problems families have to deal with from their children coming home from dysfunctional schools.

John Edwards

Adults, why do you fear children's participation?

Concern for Working Children Annual Report 2003

The fundamental evolutionary direction of *Homo sapiens sapiens* is toward better interpersonal relationships, not just the satisfaction of instincts. While adaptation to the natural environment is the key to genetic evolution, relationship to the *human* environment is the key to psychological evolution, to the evolution of human nature.

Robin Grille *Parenting for a peaceful world* (quote from De Mause, 1995 p. 649)

Anyone who thinks children are the leaders of tomorrow is only procrastinating.

Concern for Working Children Annual Report 2003

I look forward to the day when our schools offer every student the opportunity to become a leading expert on a chosen topic.

Mel Levine, American psychologist

As society gets more and more democratic the schools, which prepare our children for life, operate in a non-democratic way. This creates a growing estrangement between school and life.

Yaacov Hecht

An intellectually curious, cognitively autonomous, socially responsible, democratically engaged, productive and globally conscious member of the human family in the 21st century cannot be educated in the 20th century factory model of education. The regimented mastery, internalization, and regurgitation of compartmentalized facts that served the industrial age are anachronisms. The pandemic boredom among children and youth in European and U.S. schools stems from the redundancy in much of today's schooling.

Marcello M. Suarez-Orozco

Introduction

IDEC 2006 had these themes:

- A. growth vs. sustainability
- B. competition vs. cooperation
- C. curriculum centered vs. child-centered
- D. authoritarian vs. democratic
- E. colonize vs. liberate
- F. mind vs. mind/body connection
- G. schooling vs. education
- H. socialized vs. enabled to be social
- I. autocracy vs. co-operacy
- J. one-size-fits-all vs. one-size-fits-few
- K. passive students vs. students with strong self-concept
- L. 1960's alternative education vs. 1990's democratic education
- M. teacher directed learning vs. self-managed learning
- N. conformity vs. self-actualization
- O. colonizing education vs. transformative education
- P. child/freedom-centered education vs. human-centered education
- Q. what we steal from children vs. what we let them do for themselves
- R. fit into society vs. make society
- S. student voice vs. student action
- T. traditional vs. public urban free schools
- U. charity vs. systemic change
- V. employer ethics vs. worker ethics
- W. serve the community vs. shape the community
- X. democracy vs. distributive decision-making
- Y. traditional education vs. sustainable education
- Z. fear of freedom vs. freedom

I would like to thank the International Association for Learning Alternatives (IALA) for its support. See www.learningalternatives.net. This report comes from notes taken during the conference. The presentations were chosen based on their relationship to American families, educators, and students in urban settings and to the efforts of the members of the Democratic Education Consortium (DEC), Indianapolis, IN, United States. For information on the DEC see: www.democratic-edu.org/international/News/DemoEdu.aspx
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1.

IDEC 2006

IDEC 2006 is highly relevant to today's national and international debate on education. At this time, when many western governments, including Australia, are dealing with the issue of how to prevent more and more students from disengaging from schooling, this, the 14th IDEC, contributes positively by highlighting models that have successfully put students at the center of the learning process. (From www.idec2006.org)

IDEC 2006 is underpinned by well-developed educational theory and practice. It correlates strongly with the Adelaide Declaration National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century agreed by the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in 1999. See <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/nationalgoals>

In a broader sense IDEC 2006 champions the principles and values established by the Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of Rights of the Child. It is fitting that IDEC 2006 will take place during the 2nd year of UNESCO's Decade of Sustainability in Education (www.idec2006.org). For website see: United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development Home. For DESD toolkit see: www.esdtoolkit.org

IDEC 2006 was held at the Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview on a beautiful hilltop overlooking the Lane Cove River and Sydney. Around 250-300 people from 15 different countries including Burma/Myanmar, Canada, Germany, India, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, UK, USA, and of course Australia attended. Schools represented included Currumbena, Kinma and Blacktown Youth College in Sydney; Preshil, Hurstbridge, Village School, Fitzroy Community School and Alia College from Victoria; Boorobin Sudbury Centre of Learning and Pine Community School in Queensland; Tamariki, Mountain Valley and Unlimited in NZ; Tokyo Shure in Japan; San School, Sungmisan and Dream School from Korea; the Tutorial School and Albany Free School from USA; and, the Freie Schule "Kapriole" in Germany, and many others (Petit, 2006).

The Australian Association of Progressive and Alternative Education (AAPAE) is the host the 2006 IDEC. See www.aapae.edu.au. The AAPAE is committed to:

- A philosophy which values the participation of all in the learning process, particularly the learner/student.
- Supporting debate, research, and processes which encourage cooperation.

References

Petit. W. (2006). IDEC in Australia, 10th-16th July. *Newsletter, July 2006*. Devon, England: International Democratic Education Network. London, England: Libertarian Education. www.idenetwork.org

UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2015

Woven throughout IDEC 2006 was the global theme of sustainability. This was true because education for sustainability and democratic education go together. The future belongs to the children. Our schools and curriculum must be based on the principles and spirit of sustainable development. Since it is their future we are preparing for, students must be a part of all aspects of the processes involved in creating sustainable schools.

The theme of the UN conference was: Sustainable Development and Education for the 21st Century: What we can do now for the children of the future--An educational paradigm shift.

Keynote speech: Timely wisdom

In his keynote speech, Dr. Ervin Laszlo, philosopher, futurist, founder, and president of the Club of Budapest expressed these ideas.

The classical concept of the task of education is the handing down of historical knowledge in society from one generation to the next. This ensures continuity of culture—performing the function of memory in society. Education passed on useful “facts”: historical, scientific, and mathematical “truths,” and the defensible tenets of the social sciences, or philosophy. This concept remains valid, but the definition of what constitutes “useful knowledge” is subject to change. Until recently, this useful knowledge was that which enabled one to pass tests and find “good” jobs so one could maintain oneself or family in the active life of society. In a market-based economy it was assumed that good jobs fulfilled an important function, so that receiving useful knowledge in school automatically ensures usefulness for the student as well as for society.

The above conception is still true, but it no longer covers all the tasks of education. There is an additional element of useful knowledge that goes beyond the immediate concerns regarding socialization or finding useful employment. This additional element is termed, “timely wisdom.”

Useful knowledge and/or Anticipatory knowledge

This is an adaptive, yet more exactly, a pre-adaptive approach, rather than a memory function. Under conditions of rapid and fundamental change, knowledge that was deemed useful may prove to be obsolete; and knowledge that was deemed abstract or irrelevant may turn out to be useful.

This is “anticipatory knowledge” and is knowledge that comes from the empirical sciences, from the social sciences in regard to trend extrapolations and system-development simulations, and from the frontiers of the natural sciences in regard to new discoveries. Anticipatory knowledge extends historical/useful knowledge into the foreseen and perhaps already emerging future.

Ensuring the ongoing viability of society calls for conveying not only historical but also anticipatory knowledge through the educational system.

3.

It is the task of enabling the next generation to develop the judgment necessary to function creatively/responsibly under new and perhaps historically unprecedented circumstances.

Most societies confuse education with ideology, assimilation, indoctrination, or training by authoritarian means, or by compulsory schooling wearing the mask of democracy--all suppressing the development of independent judgment and personal creativity.

Rather than through indoctrination, the young generation must have access to programs of education conducive to developing sound and independent judgment and the creativity to act on the basis of such judgment. This requirement highlights the difference between indoctrinating with preconceived values and beliefs, and catalyzing timely wisdom. Educating for the 21st century calls for providing students with relevant state-of-the-world briefings and an impartial learning environment to allow the unbiased assessment of the information contained in the briefings.

We need a shift in civilization

The basic insight to crystallize in this learning process is that the presently unsustainable condition of society cannot be remedied by patch-up solutions: *it is a shift in civilization*. This would not be the first civilizational shift in history, but the first to occur rapidly, in the span of a single generation, and to occur on the level of the planet as a global village.

Systematic exposure to this information can catalyze new insights on the part of students, and this in turn can motivate the search for, and the adoption of, a more adapted and responsible ethics.

Competitiveness or Spaceship ethics

An ethics suited to a new and sustainable civilization can evolve on the part of the students themselves when they recognize the reality of the civilizational shift and the challenges it poses. Central to this ethics must be the extent to which individuals and organizations recognize the limits of stability in human socio-ecological systems. Consequently the indicated new ethics could be many things, but it must also be a "spaceship ethics"—the realization that we are all on this "spaceship earth" together, interconnected and dependent on each other for survival.

In conclusion, the crucial task of contemporary education is to catalyze adapted insight and ethics. Without the insight that we are in the midst of a Great Transition toward a globally interconnected and interdependent civilization, individuals will not fundamentally change the way they are thinking, and without the appropriate ethics they will not feel compelled to act on their insights.

Since a new civilization cannot be created by directives from a higher authority but must arise from the fertile soil of grass-roots concern and creativity, education's task of catalyzing *timely wisdom* in the young generation is crucial. Without it, competitiveness in the short term could spell obsolescence in the long term (Laszio, 2005).

Closing remarks: In the midst of unsustainable societies

To close out the conference Yoshiyuki Nagata, of the National Institute for Education Policy Research (NIER) expressed these ideas.

He began by stating that the idea of growth--that we can sustain an increased and unlimited growth, which encourages "going around and doing whatever we please" with the planet's resources--is a myth. The reality is: We are situated in the midst of unsustainable societies.

We must take this precious opportunity to turn full circle: Look back at where we have been, where we are, and where we are going. He noted Dr. Laszio's words appear to be a message directed to each and every one of us, sounding a warning bell for human society

When we turn our thoughts to education, it is crucial that we critique our various motives and expectations so that we can reexamine our vision of what education today should be in light of the reality of unsustainability that faces the entire global community.

This conference contains a message of penetrating insight into the educational community: Education has been entirely too preoccupied with immediate profit, and has placed greater value on competing rather than on coexisting with others.

He closed the conference by emphasizing we must change the nearsighted views of children and their academic ability we have had in recent years. We have to realize our children and youth can and must be prepared to save our planet. This is what the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development is all about (Nagata, 2005).

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5.

Democratic Education: A common terminology

What is Democratic Education? Perhaps a view of possibilities can continue a conversation about the definition. Currently, the definition seems to be bound by 4 general areas: 1. Democratic processes, school governance, civic education, citizenship; 2. Democratic classrooms and schools; 3. Freedom to choose, learning without compulsion; and, 4. Global aspects, self-actualization.

Democratic processes, school governance, civic education, citizenship

Democratic education

Advocates of democratic education believe that students, if they are to acquire the skills, knowledge, and values they need to perform their roles as citizens in a democracy, should receive a type of education that actively engages them as citizens in their own schools and communities. For example, they believe that students should participate in the governance of the school and engage in service-learning activities in their local communities.

Democratic purposes of education

Historically, one of the primary missions of the public schools in the United States has been to prepare children to perpetuate American democracy. Schools are expected to ensure that all children, regardless of family economic status or future occupation, acquire the skills, knowledge, and civic values they need to perform their roles as citizens in a democracy (ASCD, 2002).

Democratic classrooms and schools

Democratic classrooms

There are many classrooms around the country where students are highly involved in classroom decisions concerning class rules, curriculum, or assessment rubrics. Morning meetings, weekly class meetings, classroom constitutions, a bill of rights and responsibilities are examples.

Democratic schools

Democratic schools are now a worldwide phenomenon. For a list of schools go to <http://www.educationrevolution.org/listofdemscho.html>. Involvement of students in democratic schools goes far beyond traditional student councils or student government where participation in school decisions was limited to academic status and decisions concerning picnic menus or school dances. Presently, in many democratic schools students help with school climate, school rules, scheduling, curriculum, budgeting, and hiring decisions. (From www.idec2003.org)

Freedom to choose, learning without compulsion,

The 2005 International Democratic Education Conference, held in Berlin from 31 July to 6 August, attracted 200 participants from 28 different countries. These participants agreed upon the following statement:

We believe that, in any educational setting, young people have the right to decide individually how, when, what, where and with whom they learn,

to have an equal share in the decision-making as to how their organizations--in particular their schools--are run, and which rules and sanctions, if any, are necessary. (From www.idec2005.org)

Global aspects, self-actualization.

Democratic education defined internationally; aspects emphasize human rights, the community, and individual development.

Democratic education views the purpose of learning as creating a developmental process, which accompanies people throughout their lifetime. Such a process promotes the multi-facet development of one's personality, encourages independence and authenticity, fosters respect to human rights, and increases social and environmental responsibility.

Democratic education views the declaration of human rights, and its pertinence to individual, social and environmental rights as the basis for the development of a true democratic culture.

Democratic education views life in a democratic community culture within the school system as the basis for promoting a global democratic culture.

Democratic education views the right of every human being to be recognized as a unique individual, and to express his uniqueness, as the basis for educational interaction centered on respect, tolerance, and love.

Democratic education views the right of every human being to direct his life in general, and his life within the school system in particular, as a preliminary condition for the promotion of independent, responsible, creative, and authentic individuals.

Democratic education views the educational field as comprised of all aspects of life, such as family, play, work, school, culture, and the environment.

Democratic education views every democratic educational system as a "laboratory" and every person involved in implementing democratic education as an "education researcher" who aims at creating new methods and breakthroughs in the fields of learning and education (Hecht, 2002).

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7.

The welcome to Australia by Dr. Dennis Foley

IDEC 2006 began with a welcome from Dr. Dennis Foley who talked about the problems Aboriginal students had/have with Australian public education. Himself an Aboriginal, he spoke of a few independent schools that are successful because they educate students in their own self-interests and encourage students to share in school/curriculum decisions, helping make sure the school respects their culture.

He expressed concern with the Australian government's attempts to rewrite national history. He went through a list of names of famous Indigenous persons hidden from the current national curriculum. He mentioned the Acacia Ridge independent school in Brisbane as an example of a curriculum that respects Indigenous history. He noted that the graduation rate for Aboriginal peoples is 25%. The *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* and the *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues* were mentioned as examples of publications that one could trust to give the Indigenous perspective.

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

Indigenous peoples and Australian public education

Dr. Foly's talk is a reminder of Beresford's (2004) research where he showed the educational disadvantage and alienation reflected a broader problem of social marginalization of Indigenous youth. Beresford went beyond the traditional factors that attempted to explain why Indigenous youth failed to graduate:

1. School-based issues such as language and curriculum, teacher attitudes and school responsiveness to Indigenous culture; and,
2. Environmental factors such as low income, racism, poor employment prospects.

Beresford proposes 2 more constructs to fill an important gap in understanding the issue:

3. Trans-generational disadvantage

Widespread denial of access to mainstream education and ideas about the inherent inferiority of Indigenous people led educators to believe that they could not be educated within a Western system beyond elementary level. If and when mainstream education was made available, it occurred in a segregated and inferior manner. As mainstream education was more widely provided, in return students were expected to adopt the dominant culture's values, attitudes and aspirations. In this case, they were those influenced by white European culture.

This exposure to assimilation was seen as "alien" to Indigenous students because it placed emphasis on Western learning styles and status quo social attitudes while perpetuating and reinforcing cultural attitudes of superiority/inferiority among staff and students and their families.

Public schools are an extension of Australian society's past and present economic/social exclusion, segregated schools and neighborhoods, and inequalities in employment, health, criminal justice, and housing. These negative experiences and attitudes of parents and extended family are passed down through generations on to children in the form of anti-intellectualism and low aspirations.

4. Trauma

The “reality of psycho-social dominance by the colonizers (dominate culture) who engaged in cultural/spiritual genocide driven by the view that Indigenous were non-persons, over time caused them to believe this about themselves.” To survive, over the generations, Indigenous peoples had to suppress/deny their feelings of inferiority, distress, and despair. These were internalized within the family and across generations, and expressed in destructive behaviors and rejection of education by the young.

In many instances, Indigenous youth adopt an oppositional identity—schools are seen as the domain of whites and means of colonization. Also, they have not developed the resilience needed to do well in a competitive system. Doing poorly at public school becomes a ‘shame job.’ Students see themselves as losers who are processed, defined, and recycled within the mechanisms of the system. Their existence as persons becomes devalued and they become targets of reform or exclusion (Beresford, p. 12).

Similarities to the United States of America and the world

This scenario sounds very similar to the experiences of American Indigenous (Mondale and Patton, 2001), and some working class whites (Finn, 1999). Although public schools promised to be a source of success for blacks, in many instances they found schools to be a source of self-doubt rather than self-development (Hamovitch, 1990).

American educators must see that resistance to schooling by certain groups is not a quirk or isolated phenomenon, but a global reaction by youth to public education (Sewell, 1997) and school authority (Willis, 1977) that seeks to educate them not in their own self-interests, but in the interests of the dominate culture.

"I failed your class 'cause I ain't with your reasoning. You tryin' to make me you..."

Boogie Down Productions, 1989

This is why in 2003 various educators at the global level, concerned with increasing school dropout rates in all countries, published the first of its kind: *The International Journal of School Disaffection*.

Framing traditional American urban education from a global perspective

To understand the current failure of urban schools (Holzman, 2006) to educate all students, it has been necessary to frame this in terms of widespread global school disaffection and growing awareness of the history of the global use of public schools not to educate, but as a political tool to assimilate, acculturate, and acclimate minorities and the working-class for the benefit of the mainstream culture. In order to affect change American urban educators must be shown that the rejection of the assimilationist definition of public education by their so-called urban minority and working-class students is not an isolated phenomenon. In fact, this is a psychologically healthy response to urban public schools that attempt to persuade urban youth to deny their own experiences and common sense (Hamovitch, 1990).

The entire issue of last November's *Phi Delta Kappan* concerned, “A New World View: Education In a Global Era,” In it, educator Dr. Suarez-Orozco (2005) writes from a post-colonial, post-modern global viewpoint that is not tainted by the politics of 20th century American schools. His ideas are a welcomed world perspective of the purpose of education, and so of American public schools in the 21st century.

9.

Children growing up today are more likely than in any other generation to face a life of working, networking, loving, and living with others from different national, linguistic, religious, and racial background. The Tensta classroom (a model school in Sweden that has a multi-class/multi-national student body) is a microcosm of the classrooms of tomorrow. Students are challenged to engage and work through competing and contrasting cultural models and social practices, adjusting to and accommodating differences in such areas as kinship, gender, language, and the complicated interrelationship of race, ethnicity, and inequality. Trans-cultural communication, understanding, and empathy and collaboration are no longer ideals. *It is not as simple as the one-way assimilation and accommodation of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious minorities learning the codes of the majority society in order to get along and get ahead* (p. 211).

Americans know the drawbacks, as well as the advantages of assimilation; this is the “melting pot” scenario they grew up with. What is interesting is the many minorities who are assimilated and so have been rewarded with power, who either from pressure to say so, or because they actually believe assimilation and accommodation into the majority is necessary to be successful, push this on urban minorities and working-class families and their children.

Yet, many students know there is no pay off for them in this one-way conformity and they reject this paradigm and its politics. Instead, they want to be educated in their own self-interest, to be “educated” to be who they are. They want a personalized, customized education, not a one-size-fits-all model. They want an education as is defined in the root of the word educate: “educate.” This means to “draw out,” not fill in with the “...codes of the majority society in order to get along and get ahead.” They know this is phony. They want to be authentic. They want to self-actualize. They want to be true to themselves and want educators to respect their language, culture, sensibilities, and who they are.

Hip hop culture and authenticity

In American this is epitomized by hip hop culture. Born out of the post-1960s attempt to clarify what it means to be urban and black, hip hop has been a major catalyst for the issues of black culture, and especially today’s generation of youth.

Black people in America were left no choice but to reinvent themselves. With no tenable link to Africa and the desire to distance themselves from their enslavers, blacks have continued to create and recreate forms of cultural expression and thus personal identity.

Self-actualization is the intrinsic growth of what is already in
the organism, or more accurately, of what the organism is.

Abraham Maslow

In the 70s, hip hop artists felt they had a responsibility to recognize what or who was “fronting,” (faking) to recognize it within themselves as well, and to keep going until they discovered their own authentic or the “intrinsic” self that Maslow describes. Hip hop is about “Keepin’ it real” vs. “busters,” “perpetrators,” “wanna be’s,” or “fakes.” In the understanding of the hip hop nation as a family, others who do not fit the true “b-boy” (hip hop) mold, are considered to be inauthentic and disrespectful imitators. Verbal

battles between M.C.'s (rappers) began when it was perceived that someone wasn't being true to themselves, or "true to the game" (Brady, 2000).

And remember, all of this is done to the backdrop of the history and politics of race in America where identity formation was and continues to be influenced by the insanity of white supremacy's "one drop rule" (Malcomson, 2000).

Unfortunately, due to generational, culture, and class differences, in many urban schools the repression of this urban black identity is a daily matter of fact.

The cultural disconnect between the civil rights generation and the hip hop generation is perhaps the single most important challenge in reaching black youth who are simply not motivated, interested, or inspired by school reform efforts in which their urban identities are not represented.

Dr. Shawn Ginwright, *Black in school*

This is tragic because if urban educators saw the promise of hip hop culture as the genuine efforts of this generation to clarify who they are, they would validate and affirm black youth identity and in so doing think of urban youth culture as an asset, not a liability (Ginwright, 2004). In doing so they would not only help give urban black youth a strong and healthy personal sense of "self" and group/cultural identity, but make urban schools work for students and help America live up to its potential.

While progressive hip-hop culture functions as the voice of resistance for America's black youth, it also provides a blueprint for the possibilities of positive social change for the entire society—helping America live up to its promise of liberty and justice for all.

Dr. Shawn Ginwright, *Black in school*

The issue here is: The forces (both black and white) within our public schools see leaving one's culture behind (as though it were somehow, according to the deficit model of education, deficient) and/or adopting the dominant culture, as the answer to schooling, social, and economic/employment problems.

However, when viewed in the present reality of a global consciousness, according to Dr. Suarez-Orozco, assimilationism is merely one part of the problem of how to make schools work for both individuals and for society. Education as passive conformity, in order to fit in, it's not the total answer that it is presented to be. This is in stark contrast to the oppositional nature of hip hop culture, a culture that arises out of the need for authenticity and self-actualization. Basically, many black (and white) urban students who identify with the values of hip hop culture do not want to pay the price to "get along and get ahead." (See Prof. Akom's arguments in "Assessing the costs and benefits of not "playing the game,"" p. 14 of this report.)

11.

Can US urban schools acquire this global level of sophistication?

American urban school districts cannot model/support this level of global sophistication if we continue to see success as something that comes through "...the one-way assimilation and accommodation of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious minorities learning the codes of the majority society in order to get along and get ahead."

Would it not be helpful to urban minorities and working-class students to be respected, treated, and viewed through global standards? Are they not smart enough, or good enough to be on par with other students around the world? Or is it the lack of sophistication and foresight, coupled with the fear by assimilated minorities of losing all they have gained (Meacham, 2000) which keeps 20th century-oriented urban school boards and educators from democratizing education by celebrating difference?

For those who want to assimilate, fine; but, for those who do not, why discourage new and innovative ways to succeed beyond the lines of the traditional? In fact, why not enable, in our youth, the creativity, boldness, and heart it takes to be who you are and do things differently. This is what America is about. Conformity limits innovativeness.

The duty of a citizen is not to fit into society, but make society.

John Holt

Democratic education, as explained in this report, is the way around the limiting and debilitating traditional purpose of public education as a common school to create America's melting pot.

American middle class European-based culture can no longer be the only standard. In a global, flat world, urban educators have to expand. Why not set up curricula that respects the cultures, languages and grammar, and sensibilities of the minority as well as the majority—that encourages and fosters an education that teaches the history, depth/breadth, quality, and power of each culture, enabling students to finesse in both American worlds...and on to the global village.

Indigenous Academic Journals: De-colonizing research and society

Mr. Foley's mentioning of the *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* and the *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues* was purposeful. If we review *De-colonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, by researcher and Aboriginal Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1995), it is easier to see why he mentioned these publications.

From the vantage point of the colonized, the term 'research' is inextricably linked with European colonialism; the ways in which scientific research has been implicated in the worst excesses of imperialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples.

De-colonizing methods critically examine the historical and philosophical base of traditional (Western) research. They take into account the different ways in which imperialism is embedded in disciplines of knowledge and methodologies as 'regimes of truth.' They re-examine such concepts as 'discovery,' 'claiming' and 'naming' through which the West has incorporated and continues to incorporate the indigenous world within its own web.

Smith examines the various western paradigms, academic traditions and methodologies, which continue to position the indigenous as 'Other'. Her efforts will help in reclaiming control over indigenous ways of knowing and being. She shows, with respect to the decolonization of research methods, 'When indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed' (Library of Congress, 1999).

Similarities to the African-American community and urban public schools

The issues and concerns brought to light by researcher Linda Smith are similar to those of many Americans. As is the case in Australia, historically, the majorities in the United States have taken advantage of so-called minorities through controlling knowledge—how it is obtained, defined, and distributed. The following are common concerns and relevant remarks:

- *Her concerns about “research”:* How, via the Eugenics Movement, scientific research was used to “prove” the innate inferiority of certain groups which had a negative influence on public education for these same groups;
- *Her concern about the issues with “discovery,” “claiming,” and “naming” through which the status quo via the public schools has incorporated, and continues to incorporate the minority’s world within its own web:* The co-opting black music or inventions, discouraging the use of Black English/Ebonics;

If Black English is not a language, what is?

James Baldwin, author

- *Her concern with issue with reclaiming control over ways of knowing and being; dealing with various western paradigms, academic traditions and methodologies, which continue to position the so-called minorities as “Other”; and, the transformative power, yet challenging power, of academic studies when so-called minorities become the researchers and not merely the researched:* The efforts of African-American teachers can overcome western paradigms, traditions, and methods in public schools by using cultural knowledge, via liberatory and emancipatory pedagogy, as a form of discourse (Gordon, 1994). Situations similar to Indigenous scholars are reflected in American black intellectuals' efforts to achieve freedom from European-centered constructions of knowledge and to counter the abnormal scrutiny by the academic status quo of their social oriented research (Carruthers, 1994).

Is colonization still practiced today in the United States of America?

Perhaps, we do not see ourselves as colonized. But, Mari Evans (2006) does. This trusted Indianapolis native and member of the so-called “minority community” has reason to see America as colonized and its institutions, media, public schools/educators as colonizers.

In “A Cursory Study of Sophisticated Systems of Private Sector and State Controls,” (subtitled: Systemic Racism as Experienced by African-Americans in the U.S.), Evans clearly illustrates how colonialism is not dead. Her outline in 3 sections covers exactly how colonization takes place:

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- I. Area of vulnerability and attack; The African-American Mind
 - A. Define and identify the dominant or controlling groups, e.g. “Shakoes.” Define, identify, and isolate (color, caste, or religion as determinate) the target population, e.g. “Blakes,” (African-Americans).
 - B. Change “Blakes” self-concept: Establish “Shakoes” as model.
 - C. Substitute Shakoes values: Institute new forms of thought via the verbal and visual language of media.

- II. Area of vulnerability and attack; The African-American Body
 - A. Use superior force as integral part of the economic fabric: The implementation of power through mega-corporation ownership, and regulatory controls: low wages, job discrimination, availability of drugs and guns, police action, felons can’t vote, imbalanced assignment ratios—medical experiments, hazardous jobs, and combat units.

- III. Area of vulnerability and attack; The African-American Environment
 - A. Uses of superior force (numerical strength) through the “democratic” political system; or, superior force as manifest in special interest exclusivity; or, the use of “capitalistic principles” that require funds or contracts the colonized rarely have; control of land (“eminent domain”), schools (property taxes), housing (redlining/predatory lending/high rent), mobility (public transportation/gas prices), health services (hospitals that require insurance), food supply (inferior foods at neighborhood stores), the judiciary (“minorities” have little influence over Federal and high court appointees), or private enterprise (location, loan policies, insurance rates, competition with mega-corporations).

Viewed through the frame poet Evans prepared, it is easy to see how America is kept from progressing beyond the 20th century. Yet, the majority of Americans would differ with this insight. Why? Perhaps it is clear to the colonized, not the colonizers.

Reexamining Resistance as Oppositional Behavior: A lesson for public schools

A.A. Akom (2003) studied a small group of female high school students who were members of the Nation of Islam (NOI). Their grades in school were very good. Prepared for school by NOI tutors and ministers, these students met as a group to do daily homework, complete semester assignments, and study for exams. They learned how to take class notes, outline reading assignments, write papers, think critically, and defend their point of view. Due to the influence of the NOI, these students resisted assimilation in favor of cultural preservation. They acquired the ability to question their peers and teachers, the state curriculum, and the textbooks that supported it. They actively participated in classroom discussions. Many times they used their own facts and ideas from the discussions with their tutor and readings suggested by other NOI members.

These young black women did not take on the adaptive coping strategies of many urban youth who equate doing well in school with assimilating into the dominant group, “acting white,” and the consequent resistance to school and societal norms.

Get along to get ahead: Assessing the costs/benefits of not “playing the game”

Their behavior/attitudes were not completely oppositional nor completely assimilationist. The “dual frame of reference” and “resistance within accommodation and without assimilation” allowed them to resist “the cultural and linguistic patterns of the majority culture, yet embrace education achievement.” They were not viewed as “acting white” because they were in fact constantly critiquing the dominant white culture—a culture both they and their peers believed the school represented. The NOI helped these students to *“politicize their cultural resistance and develop counter-ideologies, while they assess the costs and benefits of not playing the game”* (p. 318).

Prof. Akom’s work encourages “reinterpreting popular notions of resistance” that suggest that working-class students get working-class jobs because they refuse to develop skills, attitudes, manners, and speech that are necessary for achievement. Their oppositional/resistant behavior was “Transformative,” rather than merely reproducing the normal situation in schools where resistant students--with their oppositional identity--get suspended or expelled, or they eventually quit, keeping them at the bottom of the social-economic ladder.

Innovations occur precisely because they simultaneously engaged in structural assimilation (promoting traditional values such as hard work), separation (affirming their own racial and cultural identities), and resistance (challenging key tenets of the achievement ideology by not conforming or assimilating to school rules or social etiquette) and, at the same time understood the importance of academic achievement (p.319).

They did not go along and get along. Rather their experiences were transformative because they were able to be “oppositional” while achieving academically. Their success in school provided them the mobility to move up the social-economic ladder.

Will our public schools see themselves as colonizers and change?

It will take a major paradigm shift to make public school teachers see to what extent they are colonizing and schooling instead of educating. It will require them to take an honest look at themselves and their American society to give credence to Mari Evans’ paradigm of colonization.

What are at-risk children at-risk of doing? In plain language, at-risk children are at-risk of turning the poverty and prejudice they experience against society rather than learning how to conform and take their “proper” place. The children are maladjusting, and it is their teacher’s role to make that maladjustment functional and creative rather than to suppress it.

Herbert Kohl, I Won’t Learn from You

Ironically, most educators feel that have taken an honest look in the mirror and at their society. As a result they have concluded that if so-called urban minority and working-class students are going to make it, they must conform to the rules--how to play the game. Thus, they feel they are necessary social agents, there to assimilate students, of course for their own good, into the mainstream. They easily encourage students to be like them: Go along to get along, follow the rules, be on time, and make good grades. You will graduate and get a good job. Then, follow the proper work ethics: be a good

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employee and be cooperative, punctual, honest, work hard, etc. (that's how they made it) and you will be rewarded.

We have to give respect to get it. Don't disrespect your teachers because you think they don't respect you. You don't run the place. So go along and get along.

Superintendent Dr. Eugene White to high school students, Indianapolis Public Schools

Royster (2003), along with common sense and information gleaned from a day at the barber or beauty shop, disproves this formula. It works for the majority, but is hard to justify for minorities and urban working-class students.

Urban school reform must be viewed in context of urban poverty. This is difficult due to the socio-cultural everyday distances between educators and urban students.

Shawn Ginwright, *Black in School*

All education is political

As graduation rates get worse, educators continue to look outside the system and themselves for causes. They do not see the importance of politics: *All schooling is political. It either colonizes, or it liberates.*

Because teachers are either politically native, or know better but do not act, or are simply incompetent with respect to teaching urban children, students are not formally made aware of the social-economical-historical-political context of which public schools are a part. And, for the many urban minorities who come to school politically conscious, and thus knowing where they stand in the hierarchy and why, they find a climate where they are more likely to be seen as oppositional—troublemakers who interfere with learning and need to be removed.

Black youth identity is constructed in resistance to public school education.

Shawn Ginwright, *Black in School*

Putting all the above ideas and issues together, it is urgent that urban educators who teach in schools with large minorities and/or urban working-class populations must realize that if they are to get the support of these students, their families, and communities, they must reflect and work toward fulfilling the democratic vision of teaching for social justice. By creating critical thinkers and providing these critically thinking students the opportunities to act on their critiques, the school will begin to solve the very neighborhood problems, students face everyday, that influence school failure or success.

Simply stated, respecting the authentic identities and solving the day-to-day struggles of post-modern urban youth must be central in the development of any school reform strategy (Ginwright, 2004).

To educators from those who fight the colonizing effects of our public schools

- Schooling that was always intended to instill loyalty to and prepare so-called minorities to serve a social order that oppresses them must be rejected and replaced with a liberating education.

- Is success in school a simple matter of demonstrating one's ability to represent the interests of the status quo, a situation dominated by European-American elite social institutions? Can we call the preparation to produce the cultural hegemony of European-American elites, education?
- Education is how to determine what is in one's own self-interests, and distinguish them from those of others. It is a process that reflects the interests of minorities as a culture and their history.
- True education, non-colonizing education, transmits to a society's minorities their values, beliefs, traditions, customs, rituals, and sensibilities along with why these must be sustained (Shujaa, 1994).

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Dennis Foley Gai-mariagal (Matrilineal) his father is a descendant of the Capertree/Turon River people, Wiradjuri. Dennis was a Lecturer at Koori Centre Sydney University and recently moved to Swinburn in Melbourne. Dennis' areas and interest include the ethnographic study of the Eora and Guring-gai peoples of the Sydney basin, Indigenous political and social study, racism in Australia, together with Indigenous poetry and contemporary art. (From www.idec2006.org)

The presentation of Stuart Hill

Democracy! What's Next? Transformative Learning

Mr. Hill began his talk by critiquing the assimilationist/conformist nature of Australia's public schools and his efforts to "de-colonize" them.

He continued to discuss "the educational ecology" of non-traditional approaches-- Aboriginal and Native American approaches to learning. These systems challenge the post-modern "colonialism" of our present state/public schools with their overemphasis on competition, conformity, consumerism, and a one-size-fits-all paradigm. He mentioned *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* by Gregory Cajete (1993) as an example of this point of view.

Co-operacy

He discussed his concept of "Co-operacy."

- Autocracy was about "power over" someone, thus control
- Democracy was about shared power, thus justice
- Co-operacy is about enabled/enabling personal/relational power and agenda, thus emergence and spontaneity

By "enabled/enabling" he meant an approach to facilitating learning: enabling individuals to clarify and pursue their unique learning agenda.

Socialized vs. enabled to be social

He discussed the difference between socialized and enabled to be social. He asserted that we humans do not have to be socialized, as many believe it is the school's job to do, because we are by nature social beings. Socialization then, is where one generation determines the next--thinking they know what the next generation needs. Thus what the "socializing" schools go about doing is simply systematic brainwashing—preparing fodder for the industrial machine and creating consumers. *This was substantiated by the assertion that there is no such thing as a neutral education: Schools are either training students to conform or liberating them.*

He suggested participants resist what he called the "Olympic" ideas of change: Thinking too big. He believed the way to go about change is through small meaningful steps carried through to success. As we think through possible ideas, they need to pass the test: "Can you absolutely guarantee it can be done? If so, go for it!"

Most of the time we walk around hypnotized, but we forget. Why? Because, we are hypnotized to forget we are hypnotized.

Mr. Hill used a quote from British psychoanalyst R. D. Lang (paraphrased here) to make a point about today's society. Schools have colonized us: We scarcely remember what it means to belong to the natural world. What we have inherited, our past experiences, are mainly colonizing experiences that have given us negative messages. We have been colonized to salt and sugar. We have been educated to be consumers. We have to swallow our "core" self and develop our "adaptive" self in order to follow our consumptive behaviors.

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Mr. Hill made the following statements:

Climate change issues overemphasize productivity and under-emphasize maintenance and rehabilitation.

Economics needs to be a tool to help us act on our values.

This is a critical moment in history with respect to unlimited growth, market driven forces, and large cities.

Eco-ethics: Competition vs. ethics

We need a new vision of the world: Global transformation needs personal transformation. Until it involves "me" nothing will change.

People are not evil. They do not need to be reformed or saved; instead, they are deeply hurt and need support.

People have an over-individualistic view of life and themselves: I have a right to consume and be competitive. He mentioned Ruthellen Josselson's, *The Space Between Us* (1995) as a book to read in this regard.

An important sign of mental health in humans is spontaneity appropriate for the situation.

What is Transformative Learning?

The theory of transformative learning, developed in the late 90s by Jack Mezirow, has during the past two decades evolved "into a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience." Centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse are three common themes in Mezirow's theory, which is based on psychoanalytic theory and critical social theory.

Transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frame(s) of reference (their perspectives) by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds. This theory describes a learning process that is primarily "rational, analytical, and cognitive" with an "inherent logic."

Perspective transformation explains how the meaning structures that adults have acquired over a lifetime become transformed. These structures are specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions. These structures are frames of reference that are based on the totality of an individual's cultural and contextual experiences--ones that influence how they behave and interpret events. For learners to change their "meaning schemes" they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation.

"Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings" (Transformative learning, 2006).

Models, qualities, paradigms: Transformative Education, effective indicators, and Transformative Learning integrator-indicators (Hill, Wilson, and Watson, 2004)

Transformative education vs. Colonizing education Part I

Transformative	vs.	Colonizing
Equitable Differentiation, Local (& Selective Global) Access & Life-Affirming Diversity		Inequitable & Hierarchical Differentiation, Local & Global Access, & Controllable Homogeneity
Transformative, Differentiated (personal & group agendas), Experiential, Community--and Place-Based, Deep, Integrated (personal, social, environmental) Trans-disciplinary Education		Colonizing, Domesticating, Controlling, De-contextual, Disciplinary, & Shallow-Utilitarian Education
Spontaneity, Deep Subjectivity (engaging with wonder, mystery & the unknown as well as the known), Ecological & Cultural Sustainability, Big Picture, Emergent Improvements & Positive Co-evolutionary Change.		Grandiose, Competitive Individualism, & Adversarial Processes
Small, Meaningful Expressions of Participation, Collaboration, & Mutualistic, Negentropic & Synergistic Relationships, Self-Regulation & Maintenance		Predictability, Naive Objectivity, Specialization, Simplicity (deceptive), Growth in Material Production, Consumption & Profit (ecologically & culturally unsustainable), and Rapid Response Competence

Transformative education vs. Colonizing education Part II

Transformative	vs.	Colonizing
Spontaneous; contextual (in present); relational thinking & action (emergent)		Patterned
Empowered: take leadership, responsible, collaborative, flexible, don't procrastinate, truthful, act on love, ask for & offer help		Dis-empowered: act on fear, seek compensation & substitution, over-competitive
Open, attentive, listening, engaged, aware; compassionate, sense of wonder		Closed, defended, distanced; unmoved

Profound, often paradoxical, deep understanding; sense of social justice; actions linked to developed values	Naive, shallow; values undeveloped; actions may contradict professed values
Holistic, integrated, multi-dimensional (time, space, etc.), complex, profound perceptions	Fragmented, un-dimensional, deceptively simplistic perceptions
Realistically hopeful about human potential & future (actions/inactions support this view); creative, visionary	Apathetic & negative
Minimal anxiety before, & minimal fatigue & negative judgment after, experiences	Anxious, fatigued, self recriminations, regrets, internalized oppressions
Communicate with others' 'essence'; interrupt or counsel distress material if appropriate; responsive	Focus on, and communicate with, 'distress material' (easily 'hooked'); often non-responsive
Learn from experience; thirst for learning; constantly improving, coevolving	Often don't, or only in partial ways; often uninterested & stuck
Design & redesign structures & processes to foster well-being and prevent problems proactively	Enemy, problem & magic bullet' over-reactive, curative solutions oriented; shoot the messenger; control freaks

Note: All expressions on the right are best viewed not as evil, bad or failing, but as "the best the individuals displaying them are able to do" given their past experiences, how they adapted to them, and the nature of the present environment (especially its level of safety and support). By processing them we can eventually let go of them and develop behaviors similar to those on the left.

Source areas for testing questions/indicators for effective/ineffective education

Some Source Areas for Testing Questions And Indicators of Effective Education:

vs.

Some Indicators of Potentially Ineffective Education:

Atmosphere of love, caring, respect, hope; leadership, mentoring
 Helps individuals & groups define their learning goals and ways to achieve them (their own, owned agendas)
 Supports clarification of objectives; provides relevant frameworks & content, & enthusiastic presentation, etc.
 Deals with whole picture, & its Complexity

Disinterest, lack of respect, hopelessness; negative modeling
 Imposed goals, means & agendas (insensitive to learner)
 Unclear objectives; low quality frameworks, content & presentation
 Fragmented, deceptive simplicities

Inclusion of political, cultural, social

Neglects most such concerns

justice, ecological sustainability,
well-being, psychological concerns,
& relationships between personal, social
& environmental

Multiple time and space frames
History & future considered
Acknowledges & builds on present
Meets learners where they are;
Contextual

Provides opportunities for
participation in a collaborative
learning community

Links to values & worldviews
Acknowledges the provisional,
evolving & constructed nature
of the 'known'

Acknowledges & engages
with the 'unknown'
(including the 'spiritual')

Provides opportunities for creative,
equitable participation & creative
expression; flexible

Unawarely selective & restrictive
None or both neglected
Not grounded in present
De-contextual

Competitive, individualistic focus

Naïve; may claim to be value neutral
Overemphasis on 'the facts'

Overemphasis on the 'known'

Set curriculum, authoritarian;
inflexible

New-paradigm, Transformative Learning integrator-indicators

AWAKENING, OPENING: Providing contexts (time, space, resources, supportive attitude and, especially, patience, attention and enthusiasm) for something different, new, essen[ce]-tial to develop/emerge--being **open to meta-level transformative change**--additional to the usual provision of clear objectives, organization, frameworks, and high quality content, presentations & experiences.

- *Scheduling unstructured time--including time for high-energy interaction, humor, group discussion and also quiet individual reflection.*
- *Sharing and mapping past transformative moments and present dreams and sources of inspiration--anchoring them with key words, phrases, sounds, colors, images, totems, etc.*

COLLABORATIVE, RELATIONAL: Using the collective wisdom & competencies of the whole (extended) group--the "WEs" of the total **learning community-- participatory**, more **dialogue** than monologue, building mutualism, as well as autonomy--**communicating with people's 'essence'** (vs. their distresses)-- providing opportunities for **leadership** initiatives & sharing.

23.

- *Small group dialogue about shared hopes for the experience followed by mapping this for the whole group, and emergent group projects. This is receptive, accessible and shared leadership, with equitable delegation of responsibilities--*

soliciting and responding to suggestions, encouraging initiative, working with the "WE" energy.

- *Making presentations and handouts "crisp" and enabling--focused on the "essence"--and supportive of emergent group initiatives.*

HOLOGRAPHIC, ISOMORPHIC, FACTAL: Working holographically/fractally--**recognizing the profound and universal in the specific**--whether personal, socio-cultural or ecological, from sub-atomic to cosmic, local to global, across disciplines, issues & phenomena--including political, social justice, sustainability, futures, peace & well-being concerns--**using this to engage with the unknown and new.**

- *Capitalizing on unexpected illustrative and information rich experiences to go from the specific to the general (induction), and to others' generically related experiences, as opportunities for learning "universal truths", especially about the amazingness of interrelationships, and of our parts in them.*
- *Keeping our stories rich and multi-leveled vs. fragmented, naïve, prejudiced and deceptively simple.*

VALUES BASED, CRITICAL THINKING: **Staying connected to life affirming, co-evolutionary, future & equity-based values and worldviews-- hierarchically--**regularly questioning, "What is in the service of what?" For example, working to avoid the above values being compromised by technologies and institutional structures & processes--to build **multidimensional citizenship, and critical, relational, sustainability and change literacies** (as well as the usual disciplinary ones, **IT and communication**).

- *Keeping values, ethics and worldviews in the picture as reference points and open to revision.*
- *Challenging views and actions that undermine well-being, social justice, peace and sustainability--sharing our own decisions to change in these areas and welcoming others to do the same.*

HOLISTIC: Working holistically/fractally--**recognizing systemic, generalized whole-system structures, processes and relationships, and their application to the specific**--moving creatively and flexibly between **knowing** (always provisional) and **unknowing**, and between chaos/**complexity and emergent simplicity** (also provisional)--**integrating head, hands, humor, and spirit.**

- *Keeping the "big picture" in mind--recognizing system-level phenomena and going from the general to the specific (deduction)--essential for avoiding our over-controlled, curative "magic bullet" approaches to dealing with problems and crises.*
- *Hanging in with confusion, chaos, complexity and mess as a necessary pre-requisite for the creative emergence of new improved understandings and order.*
- *Emphasizing whole-person experiential learning within a learning community.*

24.

CHANGING, CREATIVE DESIGNING, IMPROVING: Working with the creative change moment--from where people are to **where they want to go next** (acknowledging and celebrating the past, being in the present, clarifying personal

agendas, supporting small meaningful present and future initiatives)--**fostering spontaneity, pro-action and goal-setting** (as well as response), open to fundamental system **redesign and paradigm shifts**.

- *Mapping the development of our individual relationship competencies with nature and the environment, including records of special items and places, and the evolution of our "sense of place" connectedness--with time to discuss and reflect on present and future implications.*
- *Accommodating the taking of frequent small meaningful personal "risks"/initiatives (that don't endanger others)--avoiding mega-risks--and sharing emergent insights and learnings.*

MAINTENANCE, SUSTAINABILITY: Prioritizing maintenance functions--mutual support, sharing, celebration, nourishment, empathy, respect, praise, taking care, rituals, recreation, rest (activities not directed at productivity and achievement)--includes **establishing boundaries** ("NOs", "YESs" and standards).

- *Set clear boundaries, guidelines, rules, procedures and consequences.*
- *Because they are usually neglected, prioritize self and mutual caring activities, including the design of numerous supportive individual and group "rituals."*

GROUNDED IN PRESENT STATE, CONTEXTS & RELATIONSHIPS

(INCLUDING WITH PLACE): Rich picturing the unique meanings of the present moment for each individual--as the starting point for change--through sharing joys, achievements, celebrations, problems, issues, fears, hopes, dreams, intentions etc.--especially about relationships--to others, other species, place, the Earth, the unknown, spirit, God etc.--**supporting empowerment, awareness**, and development and **clarification of passions, hopes, visions, "missions," values and worldviews.**

- *Keep most attention in the present--check frequently where people are at and what's going on for them in the moment.*
- *Work with the emergent next profoundly (vs. deceptively) simple steps out of the confusing complexities that confront us.*
- *Help individuals to develop and select tools (anchors, mantras, images, totems, strategic questions, meditations, prayers, etc.) to help plan their life-affirming processes, decision-making and action.*

What is Social Ecology

Professor Hill teaches students who are getting degrees in Social Ecology. Social Ecology is a post-graduate program that explores the dynamic interrelationships between the personal, social, environmental, and "spiritual." Its view acknowledges that everything we do as individuals affects others, our shared communities, and environments—we are parts of the whole and we need to take responsibility for our role. Key themes include cultural action, sustainability education, ethical leadership, 25.

transformative learning, and applied spirituality. These courses are for those who think achieving ecological, social and personal sustainability will require a shift in values and attitudes, rather than just the development of more scientific knowledge and technology.

From: The School of Social Ecology and Lifelong Learning website:
<http://www.uws.edu.au/about/acadorg/caess/ssell>

Also see: Social Ecology Research Group website is at:
<http://sites.uws.edu.au/research/SERG/stuartpage.htm>

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

There is so much to Dr. Stuart's ideas. With respect to urban minorities and working-class children, youth, families, and their communities, the issue of colonizing is the most important.

The possibility that current urban schooling is indeed colonizing, and that schools are a form of classical 3rd world colonialism may be a stretch for some, but when one critiques the effectiveness of current urban schools, it is more plausible.

The possibility of an understanding, that leads to change, will increase now that public school educators can see what transformative learning via transformative education is. As well, once they see what colonizing education is and reflect on it to see to what extent they may or may not be a "colonizer" and so a colonizing or transformative educator.

Will urban educators use colonizing indicators?

Many urban schools have educators who are categorized as white, middle-class and suburban and/or black and middle-class (and sometimes suburban). When actually experiencing the many, many instances of conflict in schools between staff and students, it makes sense to sit down and list the factors that contributed to these instances. In an effort to affect positive change, causes attributed to factors both inside and outside the school, and to factors attributed to both students and urban educators need to be listed. Reviewing such a list, in light of Stuart Hill's indicators of colonization (and Ms. Mari Evans' ideas, p. 12) would put the onus on the adults to look at urban suspension, dropout, and graduations rates, and then look at their school climate and individual practices.

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27.

The presentations of Yaacov Hecht

Democratic Education – Roots, Present, Different Directions

Democratic Education: A New Vision of Education for a Sustainable World

Yaacov Hecht, director of the Institute for Democratic Education (IDE), began his presentations by describing Hadera, Israel's first democratic school which opened in 1987. With 380 students ages 4-19, each decided how, when, where and what to do at school. It was run as a democratic institution with a school parliament, and mediation and executive committees. There are now 25 democratic schools in Israel.

Next, he discussed IDE's goal: Take what is learned in democratic schools and turn it into tools for innovative educational and learning systems. The goal reflected the respect for diversity that democratic schools promote.

Human rights are at the center of IDE schools. For schools to work, the spirit of democracy must be inside the school: Freedom to think, to speak, associate, question, etc.

The goal of democratic schools is respecting human rights in schools

Yaacov Hecht

Democratic Education--Roots, Present, Different Directions

His review of the past 100 years suggested 3 waves of educational reform, the first being the Progressive era of the 1920s. Next came the 1960s with open and free schools. The 1990s began an era of democratic education. He noted that many schools around the globe are now looking into democratization. Adding to this, he pointed out the increase in homeschoolers and un-schoolers, and the present 175 democratic schools representing 28 countries (Bennis and Graves 2006). This freeing-up of learning, teaching, school climate, and assessment, was in contrast to and in spite of the severe crisis in education systems all over the world.

He argued that in order to understand the past, the present, and especially the future, we must understand the difference between the 1960s and the present era of democratic education--these 2nd and 3rd waves of schooling change.

2nd Wave

The ideas for free/open education derived from dismissing traditional education

Education operates within the pedagogical field—concerned with the individual

Focused on national activities

3rd Wave

Creating a theoretical/independent knowledge base revolving around the question: What is suitable education in a democratic society?

Education operates in a social field: Education is that which interacts with the community beyond the schoolyard—concerned with society and human rights

More focused on international activities such as IDEC

One dominant growing culture: The Summerhill model and so-called hippie counterculture

The idea that different is beautiful: A variety of educational models are employed

Education is discovering “the truth”—the source of freedom is “that the children know what is best for them”

Skeptical education—“The right to learn from your own mistakes.” The source of freedom is in the awareness of the “not knowing” and the choice derives from your own mistakes
Education is subject to critique. Schools critique themselves in public—cannot progress without self-critique or encouraging critique from others

Self-righteous education

Child-centered and freedom-centered education

A human-centered and dialogue-centered education emphasizing “lifelong learning

The institution as the enemy—private and independent schools resulted

Contacts within the institution to deal with human rights—school as Part of the community/country

The academy is the enemy

The appearance of an academic teacher development and qualification program

Intuitive information that informs a few people

Structural information that informs many people

Pluralistic Learning

He discussed his concept of pluralistic learning. He described it as a type of learning that acknowledges uniqueness--each person is different with both weak and strong attributes, talents, and abilities.

Democratic education is self-managed learning.

Yaacov Hecht

One-size-fits-all: The source of problems in society

He argued that the source of problems in society is the one-size-fits-all “square” we all must fit into. This is reinforced by schools where we are told, if you want to learn, you have to come inside the square. We judge everyone by the square. We are asked, “Why are you outside of the square?” This, he said, is the danger of school.

The role of national tests is to keep us in the square. He predicted an era of global testing would arise to promote world standards. He sees this as no more than creating a culture of competition, power, and money--creating a “Coca Cola” culture that would turn individual cultures into one global culture.

29.

In traditional approaches to standardized testing:

- Learning disabilities are dismissed

- Every grade level has a fixed standard of achievement

In Democratic self-managed learning approaches, testing is not standardized:

- Unique learning abilities are recognized
- Each person had unique areas of strengths and growth

Democratic Education: A New Vision of Education for a Sustainable World

Hecht's next talk predicted that the democratic school movement of the late 90s and early 21st century would create a democratic culture in society. Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs, he noted that presently only around 20% of the population self-actualizes.

A democratic culture is one that guards the equal right of every individual for self-actualization.

Yaacov Hecht

He remarked that to have a democratic culture we must:

1. Recognize the fact of "the different"--difference is beautiful
2. Accept the fact that we do not own the truth
3. Recognize that "the different" is also a part of the establishment
4. Recognize the importance of self-criticism as a constructive tool for growth
5. Disburse democratic education outside school borders--to businesses, government agencies, social/community, and civic organizations.

He gave his new vision for a sustainable world. Presently the world continues to grow past 6 billion. Conflicts continue to arise. The technology to kill improves. 142 million have died from wars in the 20th century. Thus, it is obvious: *The problem is we do not know how to deal with difference.* But, why?

- We only see ourselves
- We only see the world from our point of view
- We want everyone to be like us
- We want to expand ourselves, and our point of view everywhere

Thus, the goal of education for sustainability must be to reduce our aggressive impulse.

This can be accomplished by:

1. A democratic culture in schools--this would foster closer relationships between adults and children
2. Looking for the uniqueness of every child
3. Providing a place for it to develop
4. Bringing this to the attention of the community and celebrating

30.

Excellent Centers

A collaboration among private, government, and education organizations would promote "Excellence Centers" outside of school that would represent a variety of intelligences

and subjects, interests, occupations/careers, etc. Here, students could see what they are passionate about learning and doing. They could begin intense personal study and/or hook-up with adults who have the skills, careers, interests, talents they wish to have. This would be the first of many steps to self-actualization.

Self-actualization

Self-actualization is the instinctual need of humans to make the most of their unique abilities and to strive to be the best they can. Maslow describes self-actualization as follows:

Self Actualization is the intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, or more accurately, of what the organism is.

Maslow writes the following of self-actualizing people:

- They embrace the facts and realities of the world (including themselves) rather than denying or avoiding them.
 - They are spontaneous in their ideas and actions.
 - They are creative.
 - They are interested in solving problems; this often includes the problems of others. Solving these problems is often a key focus in their lives.
 - They feel a closeness to other people, and generally appreciate life.
 - They have a system of morality that is fully internalized and independent of external authority.
 - They judge others without prejudice, in a way that can be termed objective.
- (Maslow's hierarchy of needs—self-actualization, 2006)

Self-actualized people will not be aggressive or violent

Communities that encourage and provide opportunities and encourage its members to fulfill "...the instinctual need of humans to make the most of their unique abilities and to strive to be the best they can be"--bringing each person's uniqueness to self-actualization--will reduce the human aggressive impulse.

This will provide an opportunity to move from a society based on democratic procedures to one that fosters a democratic culture—a culture that abides by the following principles:

- Every person has a right to know and express their uniqueness
- Every person is capable of recognizing the uniqueness of every other member of society
- Every person is capable of understanding that difference and/or uniqueness do not pose a threat, but are rather an opportunity for the individual and the community as a whole
- Every person is capable of understanding the importance of supporting others in their quest to find uniqueness

31.

- Every person is capable of recognizing that the integration of differences guarantees a world that chooses construction over destruction

- All mechanisms of our society are responsible for the integration of these differences (Hecht, 2003).

Although a lot of people are not presently excellent, everyone can be excellent, especially if we let a child in school choose the area they wish to develop. *What is your uniqueness? What do you bring?* These are the questions we ask our children to encourage self-actualization.

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

Can self-actualization reduce the human aggressive impulse?

Yaacov Hecht and the IDE are significantly close to answering this question in the positive, and they need to be congratulated. Expanding on his use of the concept of self-actualization in this area will help us to understand his reasoning.

According to Maslow, we all have a need for recognition--a sense of significance and fulfillment that is innately self-satisfying, and is appreciated by others. If these needs cannot be obtained legitimately, they will be obtained...somehow, in whatever form and degree. In *Power and Innocence*, Rollo May (1998) argues that when our need for recognition/significance is blocked, we become assertive. This is natural. If our assertiveness is blocked and we still do not get the recognition and sense of significance we are seeking, we may become aggressive. If others continue to ignore us no matter what we do, or if our need to fulfill our possibilities is blocked, the soil is made ready for the seeds of alienation, uselessness, and hopelessness--and we may be inclined to violence.

Violence is the expression of impotence.

Bronowski, *The Face of Violence*

Power corrupts, but so does powerlessness. The problem is: In order to decrease the potential of "the human aggressive impulse," *we must recognize the underlying causes of the social disease of impotence*. When a person's need for recognition is stifled; when their sense of justice is ignored; when they feel they have little influence over events; when they are kept from realizing dreams, ambitions, longings, ideas, full-filling their potential and actualizing who they are, they can become apathetic. *Violence is not the child of power, but of powerlessness*. Apathy is the stage before violence. We can only imagine the complete lack of significance, or sense of fulfillment and influence, and the feelings of nothingness that are inside the mind and heart of each of society's most violent.

Look at it this way:

The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference.

The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference.

The opposite of life is not death, it's indifference.

Elie Weisel

Now, let's add: The opposite of peace is not violence, it's indifference. It's nothingness, inauthenticity, anomie, and unfulfilled potential (Loflin, 2005).

32.

If these ideas have truth, Hecht and the IDE have proposed one important way society can empower citizens, challenge indifference, enable the actualizing of our potential,

and give people a basic sense of recognition and significance, thus countering the causes of violence: Self-actualization via democratic education.

People have a voice. And they want to be heard. They want to be involved. They have a sense of history, of what others have done, and what needs to be done. They want to feel important, to have a sense of power that is more personal, that is psychologically or socially powerful—the power to be able to assert oneself, to exercise influence on the world, to make a difference.

Violence is, essentially, a confession of ultimate inarticulatedness.

Time Magazine

Are those performing the deeds of violence in society the ones who are trying to establish their self-esteem, defend their self-image, and demonstrate they too are significant? These needs of esteem and importance, by themselves, are potentially constructive. Our human aggressive impulse arises not out of the excesses of power, but out of powerlessness--the feeling of insignificance that leads to the sense that nothing matters and that there is no other way to express or articulate it than through violence.

To review, Rollo May discusses five levels of power's potential in each of us: 1) the infant's *power to be*; 2) *self-affirmation*, the ability to survive with self-esteem; 3) *self-assertion*, which develops when self-affirmation is blocked; 4) *aggression*, a reaction to thwarted assertion; and, finally, 5) *violence*, when reason and persuasion are ineffective. By enabling self-actualization, self-affirmation will not be blocked, nor will self-assertion be "thwarted." When basic levels of power are respected and given expression, and our basic psycho-social needs are met, the reason and potential for the human aggressive impulses will be neutralized.

When schools think democratically by following the advice of the Institute for Democratic Education; and, so enable students to articulate and follow their interests, goals, dreams, career interests, so as to reach their potential and self-actualize, there will be little or no need to be aggressive in order to have the sense of significance we all seek.

Self-actualization and hip hop culture: "Keepin' it real" (Brady, 2000)

It is no coincidence that the concept of self-actualization Yaacov Hecht's sees as so important for a sustainable society is also the essence and "promise" of today's global and national youth culture. To understand the potential of self-actualization as the mission and goal of our public schools, we must examine and discuss the repression of black identity within these same American public school settings and larger society. To do this, we must first examine the culture of identity of the black adolescent male as reflected within and influenced by rap music and the hip hop culture.

In the early 1970s, a group of black men gave birth to a culture of music, graphic art, dance, and fashion. They termed this culture "Hip Hop."

In "Keepin' it real, keepin' it right," educator D. Miles Brady discusses being a black student in urban high schools in America. In this article, he quotes James Cone, in his 33.

groundbreaking work of 1969, "Black Theology 6-Black Power." Mr. Cone offered the following "kernel of truth" which drove Miles Brady to compose the article referenced in this report:

This is a message to the oppressor, not in hope that he will listen, (After Dr. King's death, who can hope?), but with the expectation that my own existence will be clarified.

Cone's insight made Brady asks: How will my own existence be clarified? How will the existences of young, black students be clarified and respected?

The pursuit of clarity by black people is directly linked to the enslavement of Africans in this country. The culture of these enslaved Africans was stripped from them. They lost their languages, religions and family kinship systems, being left no alternative but to learn their master's language, values, and institutions.

Yet, most black people in America, for the sake of their sanity and psychological health, were at the same time left no choice but to reinvent themselves. With no tenable link to Africa and the desire to distance themselves from their enslavers, blacks have continued to create and recreate forms of cultural expression and thus personal identity.

According to Brady, out this same desire for re-creation was born the clarifying potential of hip-hop culture. He describes hip hop as "...an artistic rebellion against the humiliating deadness of western culture." It is a culture that reflects its own values. Among those values held in highest esteem are respect, loyalty, and authenticity."

Despite its own acknowledgment of a number of styles, hip-hop and rap are about "keeping it real" and remaining authentic to the culture. As a narrative of survival and independence, this authentic rap's success is about not giving away one's music to mainstream culture and speaking and acting out on those who do.

Within this equation, skin color is usually, but not always a determinant. Those black folk who misuse the genuine values of hip hop culture, are identified as "busters," "crossovers" and "sell-outs who need to get the hell out." Those unauthentic white folk are typically considered to be "Frankenstein creations" outfitted in the expensive garments of young blackness.

Again, Brady points out, rap is not about perpetuating stereotypes. Genuine rap is not all about "the cheese" or being the top player or pimp. However, when white media deemed certain styles of rap as being gangsta rap, soon ignorant and "wack" MCs (rappers) began "wanna be" attempts to live up to this reputation. The original gave way to the copy. Commercialization turned hip hop into hip pop.

Problems that plague the hip hop nation and black students in urban schools.

In Brady's estimation, our urban public schools are a culture that misunderstands real identities of young black men, preferring to devalue them, and find them to be somehow unmotivated and/or threatening. He says, unfortunately many times these young men will live up to the reputation. Or, some fall into categories of racelessness, attempting to cut out blank, generic identities. Others, who do not try to fit into the black urban mainstream, or who try to fit into the larger society are dubbed by their peers to be "defectors" and called "oreos" or "incognegroes." So, how can young black men "keep

it real”? More importantly, how can our urban public schools help black urban youth be authentic?

Question: How can our urban public schools help black urban youth (and all youth) be authentic?

Answer: Follow the advice of Yaacov Hecht.

IDE’s concept of education/schools as the crucible for self-actualization and the realization of human freedom fits perfectly with hip hop culture as the crucible for youth to clarify their identity and be who they are.

If what Yaacov asserts is true and viable, that “A democratic culture is one that guards the equal right of every individual for self-actualization,” then we can also say, “A hip hop culture is one that guards the equal right of every individual for self-actualization.”

This is profound and the key to making our current failing urban schools work for the many youth who feel disaffected as students due to the 20th century, one-size-fits-all, controlling, and thus alienating and undemocratic mindset of urban school boards and educators.

Schools as crucibles for self-actualization and as means to clarity

One thing is certain; identity development must begin in finding out who you are and expressing the knowledge first to “self” and then to the world. Both concepts of school as crucible for self-actualization and hip hop culture as “a means to clarity” provide fine models for doing so.

Our urban public schools/educators must go about the important business of examining the proper/best part they can play in this process. The IDE has already provided a framework. *Urban educators must realize that a democratic culture, hip hop culture, and Maslow’s concepts have the same basic foundations: Authenticity—Self-Actualization as the intrinsic growth of what is already in the person, or more accurately, of what the person is.*

Three suggestions for what urban educators might do are:

1. Follow IDE/Yaacov Hecht’s idea of Pluralistic Learning in a democratic culture that is geared toward self-actualization.
2. Provide an enlightened, conscious, caring, and psychologically healthy attempt to provide the right kind/amount/balance of limits/resistance vs. acceptance/respect needed for students to rebel against, finding out about themselves as they go through the process of identity formation. This would imply that urban educators would validate black urban youth identity and see hip hop culture as an asset not a liability.
3. Don’t hassle urban youth in our public schools. Get out of the way! Let the (now global) culture of hip hop do what it does naturally—enable clarity. Brady notes that part of the solution of reconciling the struggle with the ability “to keep it real” lies within the struggle itself. It is the “quest to be recognized for who you are as not what the stereotype says, not what the image says, but for who you are, is a deep spiritual quest.” This quest begins initially with the individual.

Brady believes that certain questions need to be asked and will be answered by today's black urban youth as they search for clarity through cultural authenticity and personal self-actualization:

- What is the black identity that one is struggling to adhere to?
- What is real?
- What is not real?
- If the quest is about being recognized for who you are then who are you?
- What is being black?

Lying within a struggle for respect amongst its peers, hip hop re-appropriates what a larger society has taken from it. Hip hop is historically and culturally based. It is built upon a long-existent black musical tradition. It knows where it is from and continually makes reference to its predecessors by its style and structure. It models for youth the authenticity they seek. It promotes itself as itself, rather than as something else (Brady, 2000).

IDE and MET: Similar visions, similar schools

The ideas and designs of education expressed and explained in Mr. Hecht's talks are reflected in the American high school concept known as "The MET."

Founded by the Big Picture Company, the first MET opened in Providence Rhode Island, USA in the fall of 1996. There are now over 30 MET schools in America.

The MET philosophy is grounded in educating "one student at a time." The schools promote and personalize education programs that are unique for each student. They believe that true education occurs when each student is an active participant in his/her education, when his/her course of study is personalized by teachers, parents, and mentors who know him/her well. School-based learning is blended with outside experiences, and learning from mentors in real-world situations. This relevance automatically heightens the student's interest in learning.

Each student has a learning plan that grows out of her or his unique needs, interests, and passions. MET ensures that students and families are active participants in the design and authentic assessment of each child's learning. The schools have a democratic climate and are small (+/- 100 students) to encourage the development of a community of learners, and to allow for each child to be known well by at least one adult. This provides an opportunity for the right measure of challenge and support to promote growth for each student.

Everything that makes up the student's learning experience--the curriculum; the learning environment; the use of time during the school day; the choice of workshops or college classes; the focus and depth of investigation through the Big Picture learning goals--is developed based on the student's individual interests, talents, and needs.

Students must also take responsibility over their learning and pursue their interests and passions in depth in the real world and at school. Students are encouraged to pursue their interests in depth in order to grow both personally and academically (The Met, 2006).

There is no coincidence: This must be a good idea--Small, relevant, personalizing, democratic schools

Throughout the description of the MET approach, the ideas of the Yaacov and the IDE are present. The MET emphasis on the individual (One student at a time), that person's interests/passions, and the school being the "vehicle" and "avenue" for the actualization process, reflect the IDE orientation.

This is also the reasoning behind America's present Small Schools movement. Here, large high schools are broken into smaller schools of no more than 400 students. The students have the same teachers all 4 years. The 3Rs of Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships are the themes of this movement. The idea is that teachers and students will get to know each other and education can be more relevant, thus more personalized.

What can 2d Wave educators learn?

Yaacov's comparisons of past and future "Waves" are insightful and will be helpful to many 2nd Wave educators who remember the past and see the present landscape. Foreseeing the progression from Summerhill to education as a business venture (Edison Schools, Inc.) would have been quite a leap of imagination back in 1970. Viewed from the armchair of 1970 alternative education values, the sheer number and variety of options in 2006 would cause one to ask, "What happened and where are we going?"

Yaacov Hecht's insight can help answer that question because his analysis creates a sense of potential, of future, of possibilities, of change, of a shift. It will provide a platform for 2nd and 3rd Wave generation educators to debate and dialogue on past and present, hopefully in an effort to crystallize the IDE vision of "Educational innovativeness from a democratic point of view."

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Yaacov Hecht was founder and principal of the Democratic School of Hadera 1987-1997. He established The Institute for Democratic Education in 1995 and has since then served as its chairman. He also lectures around the world, and along with the staff of IDE has helped to start 25 democratic schools and enable hundreds of mainstream schools in Israel to introduce democratic processes. He was adviser to Israeli Minister of Education--Mr. Yosi Sarid in 1999. Yaacov was recently named as one of the 10 most influential people in the social and educational areas in Israel. (From www.idec2006.org)

The Institute for Democratic Education (www.democratic-edu.org)

- Operates the Incubator for Entrepreneurship in Democratic Education;
- Supports 30 Israeli Democratic Schools (over 5000 students);
- Operates democratization programs in more than 200 regular state schools;
- Coordinates the regional program The City as a Democratic Learning System in ten different residential areas;
- Is in charge of the Academic Department of Democratic Education in Hakibbutzim College in Tel Aviv;
- Coordinates the Forum Hawadi project--one of the main programs for education for peace in Israel;
- Operates the International department which provides lectures and workshops worldwide; and
- Leads individuals and groups in the process of building Institutes for Democratic Education in different countries.

The presentation of John Edwards

The Things We Steal from Children

For generations we have followed practices in schools that keep the power with the teacher. Yet, viable education also involves parents and students. Using the provocative work of the gifted psychoanalyst Alice Miller, the writings of D.H. Lawrence, and current research, Mr. Edwards looked with different eyes at current educational practice. He presented a powerful new model of human action to use for understanding true knowledge, learning, and skill acquisition. (From www.idec2006.org)

By "The things we steal from children" he meant, what harm do teachers do by making all the decisions for students, stealing from them their participation in school, classroom, and their own learning decisions? He read a poem he and his wife wrote after she asked him, "And what did you steal from your students today?" The poem covered these ideas:

- If teachers do the deciding--what the topic is, what to do next, and what is needed, how will students ever know how to begin?
- If teachers are always monitoring progress, setting the pace, eliminating problems, confusion, frustration, or failure, how will students learn to continue their own work?
- If teachers do all the planning, assessment, and deciding what is valuable, how will students find ownership, direction and delight in what they do?
- If teacher provide no time to reflect, explore, think about thinking, give students "recipes" to follow, specify that there are right and wrong answers and the one right conclusion, how will students get to know themselves as a thinker?
- If teachers emphasize competitiveness, do not allow students to give or receive help from others, and see collaboration as cheating, how will students learn to work with others?
- And, if teachers create a climate where students always play it safe and never fail, never follow their passionate interest to a satisfying conclusion, are afraid to ask questions, and are paralyzed by the need to know everything before writing or acting, how will students ever know who they are?

The WRAP Final Report: Examples of what is stolen from children

As an example of what teachers keep from students, he explained the WRAP Project in South Australia, carried out in 1989-1991. The report revealed that for 10th grade students in that state, in respect of their school writing tasks: 75% of all tasks across the curriculum allowed students no choice in any aspect of the task. A total of only 1% of the tasks allowed students choice in purpose, audience or form (WRAP Final Report, 1992 p. 35).

They also found that: Nearly 60% of all writing across the curriculum was for the teacher as assessor. Another 31% was for the student's person interests or purposes. Very little writing was addressed to peers, either actual or implied, and almost none to parents (page 36). Approximately 90% of all writing across the curriculum was divided almost equally between the functions as learning tools and demonstration of knowledge, skill, or understanding (page 37).

To end this part of the talk, he pointed out that the study shows to what extend teachers keep the process to themselves. He noted real writers choose their topics and their audiences. Some of the best writers in the world are able to survive without teachers to mark their work. Endless homework and marking are a disaster for family life and for the lives of students and teachers. Yet, he said, most of the community seems convinced this is what students should be doing with their lives.

To foster more student voice in learning decisions, Edwards encouraged teachers to ask themselves:

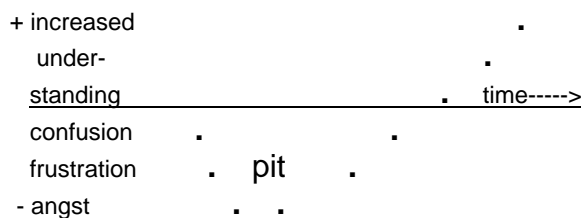
- Which part of the process do I keep to myself?
- What do I steal from students that they could do for themselves?

Mr. Edwards argued against the one-size-fits-all sorting paradigm of the traditional public schools and government testing. He said the bureaucracy and fear of loosing their job causes teachers to want to make all the decisions for everyone and to make sure students pass exams. He also emphasized that *when educators realize that children are naturally curious and motivation to learn, they will see less of a need to keep the learning and decision-making process to themselves.*

Things get worse before they get better

He concluded his presentation by noting that many times when learning something new or going through change, things get worse before they get better. He showed a chart with a vertical line representing the continuum from anxiety, frustration and confusion moving up through to increasing understanding. A horizontal line representing time crossed the vertical.

As we are introduced to something new, we tend to have questions. This vertical movement downward through confusion, frustration and angst happens when change begins or when students are introduced to new ideas or concepts in school (like dividing fractions). As time passes and people/students understand more and progress (through time), the downward line moves upwards. This causes a loop he called the "pit."



The problem is, although time in the pit is normal and we finally emerge from it as we learn more and progress, teachers let students (who still do not understand the idea or concept) wallow in the pit while the class goes on to the next chapter.

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

It will be a struggle to get educators to see the value in John Edwards' idea, "What we steal from children." It implies they do not care about children, which can never be the case, they reason, or why would they be in education! Sadly, they are products of a system where many decisions were stolen from them, so they are trained at the university to do all the thinking, planning, evaluating. In fact, their peers and everyone else esteem teachers who do this and do it "well" (keep everyone happy and get good test results). This is what they are trained to do and they spend countless hours at it. For many educators, school is about preparing students as future workers and citizens, and to insure this, the school/teachers must have the power to control the outcomes. This is done by doing all the thinking, planning, decisions, evaluating--for the good the child and society of course. This blinds them to the benefits, for everyone, of student voice.

However, to imply that this is "stealing" may be too much political/personal reality for teachers who seek sympathy from the public concerning all the financially unrewarding time they spend "preparing" and the worrisome time in class making sure "everything goes right." As well as grading papers, add the discipline problems they must handle and parents and administrators they must put up with.

Asking most teachers "What did you steal from your students today?" would be equal to a slap in the face. And to shine light on the idea that many "things" were stolen from them in school/university implies they were taken advantage of--something only the "weak" would admit to.

This sounds pessimistic, but hopefully, the Edwards' poem will slowly find its way into teacher lounges, parent organizations, and student handbooks.

On returning from lecturing his students, (as was noted) his wife asked him: "And what did you steal from your students today?" The question rocked him, and as he examined his practices under her skilful questioning, he realized how much of the processes he kept for myself. They wrote the following:

If I am always the one to think of where to go next.

If where we go is always the decision of the curriculum or my curiosity and not theirs.

If motivation is mine.

If I always decide on the topic to be studied, the title of the story, the problem to be worked on

If I am always the one who has reviewed their work and decided what they need.

How will they ever know how to begin?

If I am the one who is always monitoring progress.

If I set the pace of all working discussions.

If I always look ahead, foresee problems and endeavour to eliminate them.

If I swoop in and save them from cognitive conflict.

If I never allow them to feel and use the energy from confusion and frustration. If things are always broken into short working periods.

If myself and others are allowed to break into their concentration.
If bells and I are always in control of the pace and flow of work
How will they learn to continue their own work?

If all the marking and editing is done by me.
If the selection of which work is to be published or evaluated is made by me.
If what is valued and valuable is always decided by external sources or by me.
If there is no forum to discuss what delights them in their task, what is working, what is not working, what they plan to do about it.
If they have not learned a language to discuss their work in ways that are intrinsically growth enhancing.
If they do not have a language of self-assessment.
If ways of communicating their work are always controlled by me.
If our assessments are mainly summative rather than formative.
If they do not plan their way forward to further action.
How will they find ownership, direction and delight in what they do?

If I speak of individuals but present learning as if they are all the same.
If I am never seen to reflect and reflection time is never provided.
If we never speak together about reflection and thinking and never develop a vocabulary for such discussion.
If we do not take opportunities to think about our thinking.
If I constantly set them exercises that do not intellectually challenge them.
If I set up learning environments that interfere with them learning from their own actions.
If I give them recipes to follow.
If I only expect the one right conclusion.
If I signify that there are always right and wrong answers.
If I never openly respect their thoughts.
If I never let them persevere with something really difficult which they cannot master.
If I make all work serious work and discourage playfulness.
If there is no time to explore.
If I lock them into adult time constraints too early.
How will they get to know themselves as a thinker?
If they never get to help anyone else.
If we force them to always work and play with children of the same age.
If I do not teach them the skills of working co-operatively.
If collaboration can be seen as cheating.
If all classroom activities are based in competitiveness.
If everything is seen to be for marks.
How will they learn to work with others?

For if they
have never experienced being challenged in a safe environment.
have had all of their creative thoughts explained away.
are unaware what catches their interest and how then to have confidence in that interest.
have never followed something they are passionate about to a satisfying conclusion.
have not clarified the way they sabotage their own learning.
are afraid to seek help and do not know who or how to ask.
have not experienced overcoming their own inertia.
are paralyzed by the need to know everything before writing or acting.
have never got bogged down.
have never failed.
have always played it safe.
How will they ever know who they are?

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John Edwards is the Managing Director of Edwards Explorations, an Australian based company concerned with exploring and developing human potential. He is internationally recognized for his research and consultancy work on how people think, the direct teaching of thinking, professional growth and learning, leadership, and the creative management of change. For the full text of: "The things we steal from children," and the following poem go to the Encouraging Achievement--Gifted Education Resources: EAGER website at: www.det.wa.edu.au/education/gifttal/EAGER and click on John Edwards.

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The presentation of Adrian Bertolini

RuMad? Creating Student Change Makers

In recent times national and state government policies in education have emphasized the need to teach for greater and deeper understanding and for the incorporation of values education into the curriculum.

ruMAD? (Are you making a difference?) is an innovative approach to teaching and learning. It is a bold example of how these two important curriculum directions can successfully be addressed within one program. ruMAD? activities are based upon student identified values and interests. With ruMAD? students take responsibility for their learning through an inquiry approach that is designed to assist them to come to a deeper understanding of the community issues they tackle.

ruMad? is about making a difference. Through this concept, students are immersed in a unique program of social change and innovative learning.

The process has 3 phases. It starts with students identifying shared and important values as a group. Once shared values are established, students identify community issues that are inconsistent or in conflict with those shared values.

Students then explore possibilities for action through various levels of involvement in social change activities, and lead the planning, implementation and evaluation of their chosen projects.

UNDERSTANDING: PHASE 1

1. Values and Visions Workshop: Through exploring students' values and interests, they create a vision statement.
2. MAD Workshop: Students understanding of projects that make a difference is expanded.
3. Hypothetical Workshop: Students discover the underlying causes and having solutions address the "Change vs. Charity" issue. Here students improve research skills while investigating the facts of the issue in order to judge the usefulness/sustainability of various solutions.
4. Creating a Project Workshop: Students create their ruMad? Project with the completion of the MAD Project Plan Worksheet.

ACTION: PHASE 2

1. Getting What You Need to Know Workshop: Role-play is used to develop a student's ability to get what they need--How to make requests, speak to power, be a person who makes things happen.
2. Planning Workshop: Students plan their project with 4 sub-phases—skills in effective planning to achieve a positive outcome are reviewed.
 - a. Meeting and Minutes Guide: How to have meetings, reach consensus, and determine team roles are learned—minutes of meeting are taken.
 - b. Budget Guide: Students understand being responsible for the financial aspects of their project—develop a Budget Plan.

- c. Fundraising Guide: Guide to raising money or getting support for their project is reviewed to determine what each student can contribute (the 3Ts of Time, Talent, and Treasure), and what resources are already available or not.
- d. Publicity and Inspiration Guide: Students learn how to publish and inspire others about their projects—publicity materials, press releases, pamphlets, and ways of gaining community recognition are discussed.

CELEBRATION: PHASE 3

1. Evaluation and Reflection Worksheets: Students reflect each week on what they have learned and skills acquired. At the end, what did/did not work, and “What’s next?” are discussed. Celebrating outcomes give students a chance to see how they can inspire others to make a difference. (From presentation handout: “Education Foundation KIDS CAN DO”)

The workshop demonstrated the power of the program by involving the participants in a range of exercises from the ruMAD? program.

Mr. Bertolini started off by having the group break into smaller groups. Everyone was asked to list what was of value/importance to them and why. These were listed on the board. The “Whys” were tallied and prioritized by which received the most votes.

Next, the group brainstormed on issues they deemed important to confront in order to make a difference: The things one would like to create and/or to make a difference about. He challenged the group to create a vision statement by filling in the blank: “Our big possibility is a world where_____”

The group picked Ethiopia as an example of a situation they would like to tackle.

Using the saying, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime,” Bertolini discussed the concept, “Introducing Change vs. Charity.” The group charted the situation concerning Ethiopia:

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Causes</u>	<u>Give a man...</u>	<u>Teach a man...</u>	<u>Partners</u>
--Locked in cycle of survival	war	drop in water from air	how to farm with little water	systemic change
--No food/water	climate/drought	seed clouds/build a pipeline		

This was to assist the group in understanding that “helping” must go beyond the charitable to focus on how we can empower people to look after themselves. We must understand that there are systemic issues that cannot be overcome by simply teaching a man to fish. *Partnering with people to organize themselves allows for real change to occur.*

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More examples followed: INTRODUCING CHARITY VS. CHANGE

If you GIVE A MAN A FISH you have fed him for a day.

- Consider:
- a. If you give me a fish everyday then I may lose the will to look after myself
 - b. We will need this approach when disasters happen.
 - c. But what about tomorrow?

If you TEACH A MAN TO FISH then you have fed him until the river is polluted or the shoreline is seized for development.

- Consider:
- a. Maybe you can teach me new sustainable methods of how to fish.
 - b. If I can't already fish, there are probably no fish nearby.

If you PARTNER ME TO ORGANIZE then whatever the challenge I can join together with my peers and we will fashion our OWN solution.

- Consider:
- a. If we understood how to stop the development we would still have our land to support ourselves.
 - b. If we can get into government we can restrict the pollution from the coal mine that is killing our fish.

Examples of ruMad? projects were given. Student from grades 5 through 10 were involved in action dealing with pollution, drug use, bullying, removing the stigma from depression, and lack of positive activities for youth.

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

Service/charity vs. (Systemic) Change

It is now commonplace for such activities as collecting food for the homeless (charity), or reading to the elderly (service) to attract some students, teachers, or school programs that encourage or require it. The International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma is an example. Students who do well in school generally like these kinds of activities and get involved easily.

On the other hand, many youth avoid these activities because of the stigma associated with "community service" since it is often a form of "punishment" tacked on by the judge to a person's sentence for wrong doing.

The ruMad? attitude!

Yet, those students more politically minded, more angry, more oppositional, who may not do as well in school, or who tend to be suspended or expelled, would like "the attitude" of the ruMad? approach. It is their experience/awareness of these injustices in society (injustices ruMad? tends to challenge) that contribute to the oppositional or alienated attitudes of these students. Thus, these "more difficult" students, their families, and their community could benefit (directly and indirectly from a social justice standpoint) from projects where a real difference (systemic change) is made.

Possible ruMad? projects that go beyond merely feeding the homeless and move to issues concerning why the homeless are hungry and without homes (systemic change), or go beyond merely reading to the elderly at nursing homes and move to why society and its families de-value our elders and put them into nursing homes (systemic

change) are a direct critique of the status quo. This is the kind of rebellious or oppositional attitude the ruMad? approach shares with many youth.

At the heart of the matter are projects that build on ruMad?'s, "Our big possibility is for a world where _____" around issues of poverty, police brutality, failing schools, health and healthcare, housing, lead paint, over-representation of black males in special education, gangs, public transportation, and the juvenile justice system.

Examples of national ruMad?-type projects

Youth United for Change (YUC) (Ginwright, 2004)

In Philadelphia, youth between the ages of 14-19 comprise 8 percent of the population. Impacted by issues of overcrowding in their schools, safety, decent housing, and lack of after-school activities, in 1994 high school students formed Youth United for Change (YUC), an organization of youth who fight for educational equity in their schools and communities and work together to hold schools and public officials accountable for services and policies that directly impact their lives. For example, they have been working closely with school administrators, principals, and teachers to redirect resources toward academic preparation for college.

Youth Force Coalition: Books Not Bars (BNB) (Ginwright, 2004)

In April 1999, representatives from 20 California youth organizations came together to form a coalition of youth to proactively fight for educational reform, environmental justice, after-school programs, and community centers in an effort to proactively keep kids out of jail. By forming the Youth Force Coalition, they worked together for a unified campaign that was stronger due to the participation from diverse members and organizations.

One U.S. city's situation: Indianapolis, IN

Indianapolis, the drop out capital of the United States, is in very poor shape. Between 1990 and 2000, it was the only district in the nation where students had no choice but to go to a dropout factory (Belfantz & Letgers, 2003). Today, all IPS high schools, but the newest, are still dropout factories. The Schott Foundation Report (Holzman, 2006) reported that IPS is the worst district in the nation for graduating males--only 1 in 5 graduate. This contributed to Indiana having the worst dropout rate in the nation (Annie B. Casey Kids Count Report, 2006).

The Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS): This begs these questions

Does IPS need the kind of student support YUC and BNB provide? YES. Do local youth need similar youth-led initiatives to look out for their educational needs and juvenile justice issues? YES. Does the local community need to emphasize schools not jails? YES. Do local youth have the potential for the sophistication necessary to challenge the status quo? YES. Will youth organize to plan and carry out such ideas? NO!

Why? No local adult leadership. Local educators and youth leaders, either because they do not know better or because they know better but are powerless, are not discussing this level of serious social and economic change with youth. Local school

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initiatives have stayed at the level of charity and service to/for the community. As well, local youth initiatives have been and have stayed at the level of recreation (keeping kids off the streets and out of trouble) and information (sex, drugs, gangs), but not serious youth activism and systemic reform.

Could Indianapolis youth organize?

Could Marion County youth organize campaigns focused on both concrete measurable changes in their “dropout factories,” and quality of life issues within their communities, such as reduction of juvenile incarceration? *This is doubtful.* Presently schools are not teaching for social justice and local youth organizations such as the Girls & Boys Clubs or organizations associated with Community Centers of Indianapolis have never and continue not to be in the business of involving youth in serious social and economic change. They just keep the lid on things, and do not question why the lid is needed.

Could Indianapolis youth do this?

It is very doubtful. Local youth could, but will they? With the tradition of adults demanding passivity in schools and classrooms, of youth organizations being more concerned with keeping youth off the streets, the climate of apathy needed to perpetuate the status quo is prevalent. In fact, one might conclude that after 100 years of youth development in Indianapolis, youth organizations see youth as a limited resource with respect to challenging a status quo--a status quo that funds these same youth groups. Would they loose monies if they encouraged youth activism?

Public schools' best friend: The ruMad?

The above examples offer at least two important lessons for educational reformers. *First, engaging youth in addressing issues that most impact their everyday lives leads to more relevant and meaningful programming.* These efforts illustrate that improving the every-day quality of life--issues such as teen employment, childcare, gangs, drugs, abandon houses, availability of AP level classes, after-school activities, smaller class sizes, and the over abundance of liquor stores, cigarette ads, check cashing, rent to own, and pawn shops in their neighborhoods--are all central to how youth experience education. Paying closer attention to what students need now, and including them in meaningful problem solving that leads to real change, paves the way for more effective school change. The ruMad? approach could be our public schools' and our society's best friend.

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The presentation of Roger Holdsworth

Connect Student Action, Participation, and Community

As a supporter of student participation in education, Mr. Holdsworth began his presentation by stating he is particularly concerned with issues surrounding student voice and community service. Why? Modern schooling provides little opportunity for action and experiencing consequences—valuing a more passive role for students. Thus, he is not concerned, as much with what students will become tomorrow, as he is with student action and what they can do today. Students put into passive roles in schools have little opportunity to develop a strong self-concept that comes from a sense of:

- Control (capability, competence, power to change one's self and the environment)
- Bonding (need to belong, wanted, have needs met)
- Meaning (feel relevant, sense of esteem, able to accomplish tasks)

Can strong self-concepts result from having a say in school and community affairs? First, however, we must ask and attempt to answer two related questions concerning how we frame student participation.

Question 1: Student voice or student action?

He questioned if the current efforts in creating student voice are enough. In most instances, or even when students have a say, they have no or little control over such areas as:

Student Voice

- Who gets involved?
- Who is allowed to speak?
- About what?
- For how long?

Listening

- Who is listening?
- What are they hearing?

Spaces for dialogue

- What action results?
- Who controls them?
- Where are the spaces for dialogue and negotiating?

He portrayed traditional student councils as ineffective, and controlled or micro-managed by the adults. To end these pseudo-student councils, each student must be involved in school governance decisions/negotiations in the following areas:

- Purpose: Why are we doing/learning this?
- Goals: What do we want to achieve?
- Content: What will we do/learn?
- Methods: How will we do/learn this?

- Assessment: How do we know what we have done/learnt?
- Reporting: How can we show what we have done/learnt?
- Evaluation: How has this approach worked?

Question 2: Serve the community or shape the community?

He emphasized *shaping* the community, not community service or service learning.

He pointed out some student see community service as slavery/bondage issue: Thus they do not want to do community service because it's required.

Even when framing the discussion in the form of volunteering, or as a personal, class, or school project of choice that students want to do, community service/service learning still puts students in the role of servant--It's as though it is not their community; that they are an outsider; they serve it as though they are doing for/providing a service for.

This makes students feel disconnected from their community as opposed to being a part of their own community that they could shape.

Educators need to consider helping students shape their community: Give back, not provide a service.

This shift in perspective gives students a sense that they could go off and take control of/change a community problem.

Student Action Teams as an answer

The idea of Student Action Teams (SAT) was introduced.

Student Action Teams are about supporting young people to question, construct, and develop the multiple communities in which they live and wish to live.

Connect, 2004

SATs involve a group of students who work on a real identified issue of community interest. The students carry out research on the problem and develop solutions--either proposals for others or actions they then take.

SAT Principles are:

- An active role for the young people as part of their community
- Young people as community investigators
- Young people doing something that makes a difference or brings about change
- Programs that involve learning and meet academic goals

The "3-Way Test of Value" is used to determine the usefulness of a proposal.

- Value to the participants: student choice; active commitment; makes sense to them
- Community Value: active; hands-on; audience beyond the classroom; seen to be of value by the community
- Academic Value: involves learning; meets or exceeds mandated curriculum goals; shared knowledge of what these goals are

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Mr. Holdsworth also discussed the progression of student participation:

1. Teacher-Centered Learning: teacher action and provision of information
2. Student-Centered Learning: student investigation and discovery of information
3. Active Student Participation: productive outcomes and learning by students

To give a student council/government power, he encourages the creation of Student Action Teams formed out of issues/concerns from council (and/or class discussions) whose members would go about dealing with the idea, problem, etc.

Previous Australian Student Action Team proposals and actions have involved community and traffic safety, the environment, police relations, truancy, intergenerational conflict/dialogue, bullying, and personal values/relationships initiatives.

Action as a way of building a strong self-concept

What is obvious is: The basis of the Student Action Teams concept is action, not passivity. It is through involvement in these SAT activities that students get to do, get to act. In doing and acting, students learn about themselves: theorizing, testing, succeeding/failing, learning, adjusting, acquiring self-knowledge and confidence along the way in order to gain the sense of Control, Bonding, and Meaning, according to Holdsworth, that is needed to build a strong self-concept--all in efforts, not just for themselves, but for others and the community.

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

The shift from voice to action, from service to shape

Is this all about attitude?

Yes! As is argued in this report's understanding of the relevance and application of information presented at IDEC by Foley, Hill, Huber, Bertolini, Roberts, and Burton and Smith, many urban minorities and working-class youth who traditionally do not do well in school, and who may be rebellious, confrontational, resistant or oppositional in attitude due to an assimilationist, colonizing, and undemocratic climate in urban schools, would be empowered by the new and sharper attitude implied in the shift from voice to action, and from service-oriented to change-oriented school/community activities.

This "attitude adjustment" would attract students to a school where their voice is heard and where they are seen as an asset in shaping the community, and not as something that needs to be repressed or removed from classrooms and the school.

Is this all about power?

Yes. This is a political issue. Taking power away from urban schools and sharing it with urban students is threatening to some teachers and administrators because they have little say in school affairs themselves. They feel powerless in the bureaucracy of large urban school systems (Loflin, 2004). Nonetheless, taking power away from educators to define "service" (as in service learning or community service) and sharing power with students so as to re-define service as changing or shaping the student's community is necessary if schools are to reach all students.

Giving students “permission” to act on their voices as change and shaping agents could be difficult because the status quo will see the students as “troublemakers.” It will be ironic if by simply re-defining service as change or shaping, a school’s more difficult students, who have labeled troublemakers by school staff, become gadflies, shapers, and agents of change for a better world.

With over 150 years of public education, the current low graduation rates of urban school districts prove the adults cannot solve the problem alone (Holzman, 2006). When the Student Action Teams concept is taken seriously, all students will be able to share power and help make sure their school works for them, and has teachers and curricula equal to the best in the world.

America: Practicing what it preaches

Popularized by the rise democratic governments in the former Soviet Union and South Africa, and the events surrounding the failed democracy movement in China, citizens around the world are more than ever looking to democratic ideals and democratic governments to replace non-elected ones. This is illustrated by the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar (Burma), the drafting of a constitution in Afghanistan and Iraq. Articles in the newspaper such as, “Bush to pressure Cuba for democratic reforms,” “Bush calls for democracy in the Middle East,” and “Bush urges democracy in African nations,” provide evidence of recognition of and respect for self-determination (Loflin, 2004).

Every major U.S. war has brought or made possible social changes. Our women’s right to vote came after WW I. The seeds of the Civil Rights movement were planted during WW II and the Korean War. Vietnam influenced the lowering of the national voting age to 18 and pushed the Civil Rights Movement to fruition.

What changes will the war in Iraq bring to in American society?

Although there is a strong debate over the reasons and purposes of the war, one could argue that due to the many who see the conflict as one of democratization, questions such as, “How democratic is American society?” or “How can we improve American democracy?” will soon be asked.

It will be hard for the women and men who fought in the Middle East to accept a vote counting system that may be manipulated, a two party system where the parties are so similar nothing really changes, various social justice issues that our democracy can’t seem to affect, or how some Americans are left out due to democracy itself (See, “Democracy as Paradigm for Colonization,” Evans, 2006).

In other words, our Iraq war veterans will not be able tolerate a constitutional democracy that is less than the system they were “selling” to the Iraqis. To the extent they were trying to win the hearts and minds of Iraqis--and especially the Iraqi youth-- concerning the spirit and empowering qualities of democratic self-determination, how could they deny the same and more for their neighbors and children?

What happens in the public school classroom, not Cuba or Iraq, will in the final analysis, reveal how deep are the roots of our democratic commitment.

H. G. Hullfish

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It will be hard for U.S. soldiers to return to America and not hear the voices of public school students who are beginning to want a say in classroom, school, learning, and community decisions that direct and indirectly affect them. To say that we want democracy in African nations or China, and not provide our own children and youth the opportunity to practice this form of community, is the worst form of hypocrisy--and image we cannot afford to present to the world.

We need to treat students like citizens now, not citizens in the future.

Sheldon Berman, Superintendent of Hudson Public Schools

The Student Action Teams concept fits perfectly under the umbrella of self-determination: Involved in the responsibility that is freedom--a freedom that is reflected in the opportunity provided by the Student Action Teams to speak, decide, and take action.

It is time to push IDEC ideas in urban public school districts?

The idea of Student Action Teams proves it is time to push for many of the proven ideas and programs that IDEC member schools and organizations have been practicing, researching, and promoting for over 40 years.

- American urban communities need to know that democratic education is not new.
- They need to know the advantages of democratic schools over the present rigid, one-size-fits-all, authoritarian, curriculum-centered urban public schools.
- The community needs to know students want a say. When they realize this, they will support the students. Right now few know about student voice efforts.
- And, when students create democratic schools and go about their “democratic” efforts inside the schools to have a say in school governance (how, when, where, and with whom they learn)--supporting their uniqueness to self-actualization--they need to know the community is behind them, supporting their efforts.
- Today’s children and youth are very sophisticated. They pay attention to what the adults are doing and fussing over. It is obvious to them: They know America must teach democracy by doing it, and the place to learn and practice it is in their schools.

This is not an adult problem that information and education won’t cure. *It is time to push IDEC ideas in urban public school districts.*

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The presentation of Di Roberts Minimbah Aboriginal Education

The Minimbah Aboriginal Pre-School and Primary School was founded in 1963 in east Armidale, New South Wales, near the local Narwan village. It was opened as a pre-school under the auspices of the Save the Children Fund. "Minimbah" means "place of learning" in the Anaiwain language.

Principal Di Roberts noted that the state of Aboriginal education has progressed over time. Yet, issues such as low self-esteem, feeling of helplessness, poor health conditions, social isolation, and cultural persecution still plague the community. The historical use of a monolithic one-size-fits-all state curriculum made it easy to judge and label those who did not fit.

From the beginning, to protect children from stereotypes and assimilationist tendencies, Minimbah parents and staff did the following:

- Maintained "aboriginality" and Aboriginal culture
- Teachers taught with Aboriginal language
- Maintained kinship, kinship obligations, and Aboriginal community involvement
- Maintained a respect for elders
- Nurtured each other and the environment
- Made sure students were supported from where they came from and as they were, and not according to government curriculum/standards
- Used the children's own strengths and curiosity—recognizing the child's natural abilities
- Used flexible teaching styles
- Provided children a chance to explore new experiences
- Taught a respect for all things
- Stressed creativity
- Used a shared decision-making/team approach that included children, parents, teaching and non-teaching staff (secretaries, bus drivers, maintenance)
- Made sure students understood their own Aboriginal perspective as well as the non-aboriginal/mainstream points of view so students could move with dignity and agency between the two cultures

This was done because the pressure on indigenous tribes to assimilate has always been a part of the ethos of Australian society. This is epitomized by "the stolen generation."

The story of the Stolen Generation is very tragic and actually includes several generations of Aboriginal children. Early in the history of Australia, it was a common belief that the Aboriginals would soon die out. Such an attitude became justification for the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their parents. Contrary to what some believe, more than just mixed children were taken from their homes. Some were put in orphanages, while others were given to white families to be raised.

This horrific displacement started at different points in each territory and dates back as early as 1885. The last children were taken as late as the 1970s. Since the territories adopted these policies, a generation of Aboriginals has emerged without links to their heritage. To this day, many Aboriginal-Australians do not know their roots and thus are caught between the two cultures (Stolen Generation, 2006).

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

Were Indian Boarding Schools the story of America's "Stolen Generation"?

Beginning in 1875, nearly 100,000 Native Americans had to attend government and Christian schools. The system, which began with President Ulysses Grant's 1869 "Peace Policy," continued well into 1940 (Porterfield, 2002).

The schools were part of Euro-America's drive to solve the "Indian problem" and end Native control of their own lands. Some Americans wanted to exterminate Indians. A Captain Richard H. Pratt suggested, "Kill the Indian and save the man." In 1879 Pratt, an army veteran of the Indian wars, opened the first federally sanctioned boarding school: The Carlisle Industrial Training School, in Carlisle, PA.

Like our American government, Canadian authorities took Native children from their homes and tried to school, and sometimes beat the Indian out of them. "Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit," said Pratt. He modeled Carlisle on a prison school he had developed...at Florida's Fort Marion prison. His philosophy was to 'elevate' American Indians to white standards through a process of forced acculturation that stripped them of their language, culture, and customs" (Smith 2006).

The philosophy and intent of these schools were to assimilate Indian children by removing them from their native cultures, and teaching them the manners, dress, and job skills that were deemed important (Labriola National American Indian Data Center, 2006).

Indian boarding schools are a significant part of the history of our American public schools. They remain a critical factor in why some American Indian parents find it difficult to communicate with public school system administrators and teachers – and even more difficult to trust them. American aboriginals continue to fight the theft of language, of culture, and of childhood itself (Porterfield, 2002).

Are today's urban students the "Unconvinced" generation?

Does the above description of Indian boarding schools in America and their purpose sound familiar? Do the attempts by Miminbah parents and staff to maintain culture, language and sensibilities of Aboriginal children and youth remind one of those same efforts by American Black Independent School parents and staff (Bush, 1997)? Perhaps it is no coincidence that past issues of education vs. assimilation are still alive in our present public schools.

Daily confrontations between urban minorities/working-class students and school staff over the same issues of "manners, dress, and job skills," as well as language and culture, reflect that either American schools have not learned their lesson or they intentionally continue to frame schooling as acculturation—assimilation based on white

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middle-class standards—schooling many students have historically resisted and continue to reject.

It's not that urban students have not heard, "You got to have an education." Yet, incredibly low state (Florida 31%) and district (Indianapolis 21%) graduation rates for black males (Holzman, 2006) imply these youth are not persuaded this is true. After years and years of hearing this slogan, evidently, *they remain unconvinced*.

Education for...?

The philosophy and intent of boarding schools was to assimilate Indian children by removing them from their native cultures, and teaching them "the manners, dress, and job skills" that were deemed important. Isn't this also the philosophy and intent of our current inner-city schools towards urban minorities and working-class families and students?

Could not lessons be learned from Minimbah, many of IDEC's democratic schools, and the legacy of Indian boarding schools?

As reiterated throughout this report, national, state and local graduation rates for urban minorities and working-class students are a direct proof of the rejection of a school system designed by professional European-Americans (Watkins, 2001).

This begs these questions:

- Education for what?
- Education for whom?
- Education toward what kind of social order?

Are there examples of these political/policy implications in current urban schools?

Or, to what extent are there tendencies in our present public schools to carrying out the same political-educational agenda with its urban minorities and urban working-class that led to Australia's Stolen Generation or the creation of American boarding schools for Indians?

Work Ethics is a curriculum many urban districts have chosen to use in order to do, what they claim, would help prepare urban students for the work force (and society)—and, through inference, out of the judicial system.

Work Ethics asserts the Number 1 priority of employers is to improve the work ethics of employees. Personnel and management see work ethics as increasingly important for worker success, but admit it is increasingly difficult to find employees and job applicants with a strong work ethic.

The curriculum uses 10 traits identified by business and industry leaders as the essential work ethics needed to be taught and practiced in order to develop a viable and effective workforce.

- Attendance
- Teamwork
- Attitude
- Organizational Skills

- Cooperation
- Character
- Appearance
- Productivity
- Communication
- Respect

The *Work Ethics* rationale sees the mission of (technical) education is to provide business and industry with trained workers who possess strong occupational skills and good work habits. See www.workethics.org.

Work Ethics from another point of view

There is nothing wrong, per se, with the *Work Ethics* concept and its 10 traits. Most people would agree that the 10 characteristics are important, and for many reasons.

This is not the issue; it is the intentionality of the program. The intention of Captain Pratt's employment curriculum was to "elevate," but we know now this was not the case. So, what are the intentions of the *Work Ethics* curriculum, colonizing or liberating? Is it meant to help only the employee, or only the employer, or both?

Yet, it is obvious that since the 10 *Work Ethics* traits were "identified by business and industry leaders" and by implication not labor leaders or the average worker, *Work Ethics* intends to benefit employers.

Consequently, what is missing in *Work Ethics* is the point of view of the employee. What would employees define as essential to the development of an effective work force: Fair wages, health benefits, safe working conditions, shared decision-making, co-ownership, flex-time/pregnancy leave, profit sharing, enlightened world-class workers rights, or ethical and honest employers?

Of course...if it's all about the bottom line...

Remember, according to most employers, "It's all about the bottom line." Thus, from the perspective of workers who know this about employers, it is obvious: Of course "employers (want) to improve the work ethics of present and future employees." Of course, "They express concern that a strong work ethic is increasingly difficult to find among employees and job applicants." Of course employers see "...positive attitudes toward work as among the most important qualifications in hiring workers."

As well, in reviewing the 10 *Work Ethics* traits from the point of view of labor: Of course employers want workers who come to work everyday and be on time (Attendance); who work well with others, and with little supervision by the employer (Teamwork); who do not cause trouble (Attitude); who can be a supervisor and/or can do all the planning (Organizational Skills); who do what they are told (Cooperation); who "go along to get along," inform on their co-workers (Character); who will wear company outfits or costumes, impress/not offend customers (Appearance); who work hard and make the company profits (Productivity); who can "spin" company advertisements (Communication); and, who do not ask a lot of "unnecessary" questions (Respect).

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It is just unfortunate and ironic that these are also 10 qualities slave masters wanted from their slaves—an issue that must be raised (in light of slavery in America) if public schools are serious about getting the trust of many African-American families.

Do we need *Work Ethics* for Employers?

Yes, if the business world is to be a part of its own community. The one-sided, one-way accommodation pro-employer *Work Ethics* curriculum needs to be balanced by a pro-labor “Work Ethics for Employers.” What might these traits be? Here are some possibilities:

- Honesty
- Fairness
- Flexibility
- Attitude
- Ethical
- Respect
- Empathy
- Be an example
- Charity
- Communication

As well, the *Work Ethics* curriculum for students needs to be fair and balanced. Perhaps chapters on the history of labor, worker’s rights, how to recognize and report discriminatory hiring practices, how to form worker’s groups/unions, how to approach or report employers who are breaking the law or using unethical business practices, how to pursue job-related complaints, and how to react to the misuse of labor and safety guidelines would be appropriate.

Do we need a paradigm shift?

To be fair and balanced, there needs to be a shift in perspective. Attempts to honestly understand the benefits of educating students about the responsibilities of employers, as well as their responsibilities as employees, must be considered.

Urban educators must respect that the philosophy and intent of Indian boarding schools (and current urban schools) to teach students “the manners, dress, and job skills” that were deemed important for success in society can be viewed with equal seriousness as helpful or harmful or neutral depending on frame of reference.

The terrible history of the American coal industry alone is enough to shed doubt on the intent of some employers. Urban minorities and working-class families who remember the history of labor and have learned not to trust employers, pass this on to their children. Just look at the “cheap” Mexican labor employers take advantage of for personal gain, not to mention the shameful profiteering from child labor or the urban poor in the 3rd world by unethical employers.

Remember, this same “pro-employer” climate experienced in Indian boarding schools long ago, remains to this day one of many reasons “...why some American Indian parents find it difficult to communicate with public school system administrators and teachers--and even more difficult to trust them.”

Urban public schools actually invert black culture

Also, urban public schools continue to be mistrusted by some urban families due to the chronicled mis-education of African-Americans (Woodson, 1933). Public schools create mistrust in black urban students because *they invert black culture*—they disregard African-American values such as cooperation, and they ask students to “...endure a context that values breadth over depth and noninvolvement over personal engagement” (Hamovitch, 1999).

Finally, to add to this distrust, the startling research by Deirdre Royster (2003) shows there is no guarantee a black male, just out of high school, who has the work ethics traits needed to get and keep a blue-collar job, will get work. The glass ceiling for women is another example that there is no guarantee having and practicing good work ethics on the job will be beneficial.

It is this shift in paradigm that urban educators must have. It would benefit everyone involved if urban public schools avoid combining the distrust of our schools due to mis-education and cultural inversion with the distrust of employers due to the past/present local and global misuse of workers. Providing all sides of the management/labor relationship would erase all doubt in the public’s mind as to the fairness of such a curriculum.

For urban educators

Some urban educators might say: “But that’s how I made it”; “These are the 10 traits I used to get and keep a job”; or, “Good work ethics got me where I am today.” True, but they must be reminded that this was and is not the case for many Americans who were taken advantage of economically, socially, and personally by employers exactly because they were good workers.

For those urban educators who view themselves as well-educated professionals, this ought to lead to asking, “As we support the current *Work Ethics* curriculum, are we and the school an arm of corporations and businesses?” To the extent that this is true, and it may well be, “Is this ethical?”

For those urban educators who see the negative as well as the positive side of the *Work Ethics* curriculum, they can make sure the program is fair and balanced.

Cui bono?

Employer and employees must work together for mutual benefit. Both labor and owners benefit when equity is paramount. And, is it fair to students to have an employment curriculum in an urban public school with only one point of view? The *Work Ethics* program will be naturally balanced when employers, urban educators, and students ask these questions:

- *Work Ethics* for what?
- *Work Ethics* for whom?
- *Work Ethics* toward what kind of social order?

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Dianne Roberts is principal of Minimbah. A leading Aboriginal educator, she was appointed the first Aboriginal director and principal of the school in 1987. Today the school extends from pre-school through infants to primary, has over one hundred pupils and a staff of seventeen. Mrs. Roberts has received the Order of Australia for her work at Minimbah. Her contributions to Indigenous education are fundamental to all Aboriginal parents and children.

The presentation of Adrienne Huber

After democracies what next...freedom!

Adrienne Huber's concept, "distributive decision-making" was refreshing and brought a lot of discussion. During her talk, she explained that democracy is traditionally reduced to some form of voting as in consensus or majority rule. Ideas, proposals, issues are brought forth and discussion, deliberation, negotiation takes place--followed by a vote. This seems to leave some "out in the cold," keeping them from needs they have to develop as human beings. In some situations, due to various factors (more people of one persuasion than another) it takes a while to reach consensus.

The concept was a way to "distribute" democracy to each member of a community. Using a school community as a background example, she explained the 3 main parts of the concept as: the Community Council (CC), the Whole Community Meeting (WCM)—an intentional community, and the Learning Cluster (LC).

The WCM meets weekly and is made up of the school (students, staff, parents, and other community members), including the CC.

The CC is formed from WCM participants. The CC is the legally constituted body of the "community." It is responsible for any and all legal aspects of the school and the whole community: Articles of Incorporation, by-laws, non-profit status issues, (budget, finances—these are the prerogative of the CC and ratified by the WCM), taxes, etc. It is a small group whose members are from the whole community and are elected by the WCM. The CC meets monthly.

If a student/students want to bring up an idea, a proposal, an issue, a project, an event, the WCM listens. It acknowledges and records it. The WCM cannot say yes or no: it's an enabling body. For example, it cannot say there's no money, or it can't be done, or they don't like it. Thus normal group discussions as to the pros/cons of an idea are not necessary at the CC meeting. There is no need to make decisions or to vote. The WCM recognizes what is proposed and those involved. The WCM may ask what it can do to help. An individual or group may ask the WCM for advice, suggestions, or help.

There are no rules in this model. Everything is negotiated or dealt with on a one-to-one basis with other support sought if and when needed. Rules predispose people to cease thinking and begin complying. Without rules we have to go deeper, and talk to each other. Negotiating with each WCM issue and/or LC proposal, as it happens, promotes ways to be more thoughtful and compassionate rather than compliant--causing us to find out how things impact on individuals and others.

Unless the CC sees the proposal as illegal, it is up to the student or students to form a Learning Cluster around the topic, issue, project, etc. and undertake the details of the proposal. And, since this is a distributive, not a collective model, individual/groups of students must represent themselves. They cannot do something or create something and put the school's name on it.

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LCs must have reason to exist. If the LC cannot eventually accomplish these details, or it is not supported enough by others in the school or larger community so the proposal can be completed, the idea, project, etc., dies out and the LC no longer exists since it can only exist as an active entity. This is seen as a learning opportunity for those involved and not seen as having failed. There is no need to have any proof of the viability or success of the proposal such as in its actual accomplishment and/or its ability to be sustained through to completion or the end of a phase at a point in time. The process involved and the outcome of that process is where the learning takes place and this is valued equally with learning that occurs in completed endeavors.

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

Distributive democracy protects the right of individuals or small groups to have their ideas given respect and a chance to develop. An Individual or group who have good workable ideas, but who would not be recognized and given a chance in a “majority rules” climate, find this form of governance equitable. This creates a positive, enabling culture: Go for it! Prove yourself!

Students in schools would especially like the openness, the true sense of equality and equal opportunity the distributive model provides.

Parker (2003) defines democracy with the question: How do different people share the same space? What’s is fair for everyone? Meier (2003) notes, “If we all agreed with each other we wouldn’t need democracy.” The point is: Diversity needs democracy. Difference is good. America is land of diverse peoples, and Huber’s distributive democracy model epitomizes this characteristic.

Many students in public schools feel left out and marginalized. They feel no one listens to their complaints and ideas, and that they have no voice in classroom and school decisions that affect them. Thus, they must go along with the majority. This is particularly true for African-American or Latino groups in schools where they are in the minority with respect to student population and/or teaching and administrative staff.

This would all change under a distributive model. Along with supporting the right for larger minority groups to be heard, this model would also be very attractive to students involved in the life-styles of so-called “fringe” groups or attitudes represented by such characteristics as dress, hair style; or, philosophy such as Gothic, anarchist, or vegan; or, musical genre’ such as punk, reggae, grunge, and hip hop. Although much of their identity comes from opposition to the mainstream, school government with a distributive democracy approach would give them regard—a chance to be involved in classroom and/or school decisions they deem are important. This more inclusive approach would create a positive effect on school climate. These experiences would make all students more open to mainstream ideas, preparing them for real-world politics, before and after graduation, where they can join with others to have a voice in local, national, and global decisions.

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The presentation of Asakura Kageki

The Tokyo Shure

During his presentation, Mr. Asakura discussed the 1980s when the Japanese public schools experienced an increase in school disaffection. Some students stopped going to school and became what are now known as “school refusers” or “futoko.” These students rejected the competitive, mass teaching approach in large public schools where bullying was prevalent.

In 1985, school refuser Ms. Keiko Okuchi and parents of other school refusers started a democratic alternative of choice. Since the Tokyo Shure free school (www.shure.or.jp) opened, the movement has grown. In 1999, various students from Tokyo Shure began thinking of the possibilities of creating a university. In 2001 a free school network (www.freeschoolnetwork.org) was founded to support other free schools. Presently there are over 125,000 school refusers in Japan. They have also established the Home Shure organization for Japanese homeschoolers (www.homeshure.jp).

Currently there are about 200 students (elementary through high school) attending. Shure's philosophy states a respect for freedom and individual children's autonomy. Shure believes that it is important that children are released from anxiety, or suppressed feelings—all in a space where they can be themselves and are accepted. The individual uniqueness of each is respected. Shure does not depend upon ordering, forbidding anything, and enforcing competitions. It's all about individual autonomy—uniqueness, not conformity.

Students decide to become members of the school and when they graduate, how many days they attend, when to come and leave each day, and what programs they take. As children try to realize their own plan, they enrich their experiences at Shure. Also, since students share in school decisions, the staff and students do not have an authoritarian relationship.

In 2000 Shure University opened. It now has 40 students. Students come so they can have democratic control over their education--pursuing what they want to know more about or what they want to express in the way that fits them best. Shure University does not give credits or degrees, so the government does not recognize it as an “official” school.

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

The present set up of public schools works for about 30-50% of the urban minorities and working-class population (Orfield, Losen, Wald, and Swanson, 2001). This implies that the rest may not “naturally” fit into the monolithic paradigm of “one-size-fits-all.”

Considering the failure of the traditional schooling approach of our public schools, it would make sense for urban public school advocates to look at so-called free or democratic schools. This raises the concern about why free schools are not discussed as a mainstream option in America.

Public Free/Democratic Schools: A contradiction or possibility?

Free schools, also known as democratic schools, are built around freedom: students share in the choices, decisions, and responsibilities in all aspects regarding their education. Free schoolers may argue that free schools by definition, can't be compulsory. Thus a free school that is public is not a free school.

But is there common ground? Can public schools offer a non-traditional, yet compulsory education in a free and democratic climate where students help determine when, how, why, what, where they learn; and, also with and from whom they learn, and how they will be assessed? Why not!

The contradictions between compulsory education and these 'self-directed learning' schools could be solved in America under the framework of "democratic" schools. It would be hard for parents and politicians, who view themselves as citizens in/of "the world's greatest democracy" to see democratic education as a waste of time. As well, free/democratic schools, many of which have been around for over 40 years, are presently practiced as a proven schooling approach around the world. See <http://www.educationrevolution.org/listofdemscho.html>.

Alienated students would attend if they did not have to. This sounds like a contradiction, but in a world where students do not attend because they have to, free/democratic schools would make sense. Since under compulsory education, some do not come anyway, "public" free/democratic schools may fulfill a niche for this particular group. It has in Moscow!

Moscow's School for Self Determination

The school was founded in 1970. The first headmaster was Iskra Vasilevna Tandit. Under her, teachers and students laid in the foundations of democracy, and love for freedom and justice.

Alexander Tubelsky (tubelsky@cnt.ru) became headmaster 1985. Since that time the educational process at the school has been based on the interactions of unique individuals reflecting on their experiences. Students have the opportunity to make choices, to pursue their own interests, and to participate in governing the school on an equal basis along with all other school members including adults. The School for Self-Determination is a public school and kindergarten for about 600 students, ages 3-17.

Philosophy: Developing individuality

The key idea of the school is that every human being has a particular individuality to develop during their whole life. As the school helps students work out universal skills essential to society, it has set up a system of favorable conditions to fulfill individuation processes of self-knowledge, self-expression and self-determination in respect of environment, culture, community, and their inner world.

Teachers arrange various cases for involving students in different learning environments. The school also values unexpected situations in which students are challenged to make up his /her mind, to choose, and to act.

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The school pays special attention to leading a democratic way of life. It maintains a friendly atmosphere where each member of the school has a basic right to act freely according to their views and the reasoning from their values. This right is only limited by the freedom of other members to act the same way. Tolerant behavior in respect of others is a standard of the school community.

In order to provide a better variety of opportunities for students to perceive and develop their individuality, the school changed strictly regulated traditional school structure for a system of Learning Environments (LE) based on themes such as: Subject, Playing, Creativity, Lawful, Labor, and Social. This interdisciplinary model runs counter to the prevalent system that is based on learning only one subject at a time.

All LEs are based on the following principles:

- Students are given freedom in choosing a teacher, themes of study, ways of working, their speed of learning
- Students are challenged to set personal goals and objectives in making their individual curriculum and learning plan
- Teachers consider the student's personal experiences, learning style, capacities, interests, relationship styles, etc.
- Students may have mutual assessment and/or self-assessment

An example of an LE: The Lawful Learning Environment

The Lawful Learning Environment is a democratic learning community with the following characteristics:

- Each member of a school community is a citizen with equal rights along with all other citizens. School "leavers," parents and school friends have a right to claim school community citizenship.
- There is a friendly atmosphere for public discussions of democratic values and relationships inside the school community. Situations are created that prompt children to comprehend these values.
- Children and adults take active parts in creating rules about living in a democratic community. Each has an opportunity to take part in making decisions concerning the most important matters through either the School Meeting or School Council. As a result The School of Self-determination created a Constitution, and passed 12 laws and 8 regulations about different aspects of the school's life.

Each person knows that the essential part of realizing the philosophy of the school is the clear perception that this lifestyle is only possible as an agreement between those who are going to lead it. (From the School of Self-determination's website: <http://734.com1.ru>) The school 's E-mail address is: school734@yandex.ru

Public Urban Free/Democratic Schools and Hip Hop Culture (Loflin, 2005)

Indeed, private democratic or free schools, home schooling, unschooling, distance learning, and virtual schools are some examples of an expanded set of schooling options for families and students who, for various reasons, do not want to attend regular public schools.

Yet, public free/democratic schools are not a contradiction in definitions when common ground is sought with such intent. Moscow's School of Self Determination is an example.

Types of free and democratic schools such as non-government Shure and the government/public School for Self-determination are not for everyone. If offered in America, schools like these could attract students who want to start slow, be in control of their education, or like a democratic climate.

They may also attract urban black students who are told traditional public education is vehicle for social mobility and a higher quality of life yet, know from their own experiences, it can also be a tool to reproduce social inequality (Hamovitch, 1999).

Inner city Zeitgeist 2006: 3 scenarios black urban students face today

To understand why urban public free/democratic schools may be attractive to urban black children and youth, we have to consider three possible scenarios of circumstances these students wake up to each day.

Scenario one: Negative perceptions via public policy increase repression

- Fear of crime helps shape public policy hostile to black youth.
- Legislators respond to community fears by drafting laws that underscore the stereotype that to be black, young, and poor is also to be criminal.
- These negative perceptions are reinforced through public policies that increase repression through institutions such as our public schools (Hopkins, 1997), law enforcement and juvenile justice systems.

Scenario two: The conspiracy to destroy black boys

Another scenario sees, as part of the times we live in today, a "conspiracy to destroy black boys" that manifests in black males being so poorly educated in our nation's public schools, that some tend to drop out as early as the 4th grade (Kunjufu, 1982).

Scenario three: Public schools in the making of black masculinity

A third scenario is described by Ann Ferguson, in her book *Bad Boys: Public School in the Making of Black Masculinity* (2000). She notes that most parents, community members, and educators want school to be a safe place to learn. In contrast, in an American society where race, gender, and class have and continue to shape school policy and outcomes, her study of a west-coast elementary school exposes how the "daily school routines and practices" actually construct black masculinity as an oppositional social identity in need of discipline and control.

Ferguson critiques punishment practices. She argues that our society "adultifies" young black boys, thus pathologizing and fearing what might otherwise be seen as common childhood expressions. As American forms of racism stereotype black men as dangerous and in need of control, our communities adultify the activities of black boys, distorting and obscuring its childish qualities.

What most interesting in *Bad Boys* is how the children in her study make meaning about and gain power from the oppositional identities assigned to them by urban educators. As these black boys act out the troublemaker labels and "bad boy" behaviors, they learn they can command power, gain stature, and earn peer respect (Stein, 2002).

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Black youth in urban communities struggle to not get caught up in these complex networks of control and containment, and their identities are often constructed in resistance to such systems. Their struggle for identity is played out through the expression of new and revived cultural forms such as hip-hop culture, rap music, and various forms of political or religious nationalism that redefine, reassert, and constantly reestablish what it means to be urban and black (Ginwright, 2004).

Blackness as a form of resistance

These forms of identity are organic expressions of racial meaning that emerge out of a context of struggle within urban environments. There is a common theme between all these expressions of black identity and that theme is they all define blackness as a form of resistance (Ginwright, 2004).

Black youth identity is constructed in resistance to public school education.
Shawn Ginwright

Both blackness and free/democratic schools as forms of resistance...

If, as Ginwright says, "Black youth identity is constructed in resistance to public school education," then urban free/democratic schools (which are also constructed in resistance to public school education) and black urban culture have very much in common.

Since free/democratic schools are, by definition, non-traditional and critical of the mainstream, the learning climate would be conducive to respecting black urban identity formation discussed above in which black youth and their communities respond to oppression through the often unacknowledged strength, resilience, and resistance that emerges from alienation (Ginwright, 2004).

Are public free/democratic schools and hip-hop culture made for each other?

Public free/democratic schools can counter this school disaffection because these schools were/are created by those educators, parents and community members who also feel alienated from the mainstream (Satterwhite, 1971; Kozol, 1972). It is no coincidence that free/democratic schools and Freedom Schools in the south share the same roots and history (Miller, 2002). Freedom Schools were created in the late '50s and early '60s. They opposed southern U.S. mainstream values. These Saturday "schools" met in churches and were unprecedented because as well as tackling voting rights issues, they taught, "Black history." Southern Freedom Schools were the precursor to the civil rights movement, alternatives of choice, and the present small schools movement in our public high schools.

The failure of Afrocentric urban school reform (Ginwright, 2004)

Efforts to improve the quality of urban schools have yielded few successes. School reform initiatives, particularly in urban communities, have had little impact on the schools or the lives of the students who attend them. For African-American students, this effort has been particularly challenging. In the early 1970s, educators and community activists pushed for curricular strategies that better represented children of color. Multicultural education emerged as a response to the Eurocentric bias pervasive in America's urban schools. An outgrowth of the Civil Rights movement, multicultural

education was viewed as a social resource that could forge greater educational opportunities and was closely tied to the struggle for jobs, economic power, and community vitality. The goal was to gain power to define how education for children of oppressed racial groups should be conducted. In short, multiculturalism was tied to a larger struggle for economic and political equality, and public schools became one site where this struggle was carried out.

In the early 1980s, Ginwright remarks, educators and community activists saw Afrocentric educational approaches as one possible solution to the disproportionate failure among black students in urban schools. Afrocentric education can be defined as a set of principles based on East and West African philosophy that connects cultural values with classroom practices. These principles form a common framework that views African culture as a transmitter of values, beliefs, and behaviors that can ultimately translate to educational success. The fundamental Afrocentric argument is that African-American students who perform poorly in school do so in part because the curricula they encounter has little relevance to their lives and culture. Afrocentric scholars argue that cultural omissions in schooling and curricula consequently erode students' cultural and self-esteem and contribute to poor academic performance. This perspective assumes that ethnic and cultural identity is inherently linked to school performance.

Nonetheless, although past and present multicultural reform efforts that integrate race, ethnicity, and culture in urban school reform were and are indeed necessary, if the goal of this reform was keeping African-American in school and graduating, the reform has not worked (Holzman. 2006).

The Future of Urban Education Reform: Public Urban Free/Democratic Schools

Starting with the assumption that black urban youth should be understood in the context of communities and neighborhoods rather than the confines of schools, multicultural efforts must be strengthened by the potential of youth to transform their school and communities. Armed with the deep understanding of inequality and a passion to achieve social justice, black youth around the country are demanding that they have a voice in decisions that impact their lives.

For urban educators who do not know or who do know, but do not take seriously the extent to which hip hop youth of all global "colors" and nationalities want and are creating a voice, check out The 2006 National Hip Hop Political Convention held in Chicago July 21-23, 2006. (<http://www.hiphopconvention.org/index.cfm>)

For more details, go to <http://www.hiphopconvention.org/schedule/full.cfm> and click on "View the Hip Hop Political Agenda."

These voices hold great promise for effective educational, socio-economic and globally oriented reform strategies for the hip-hop generation.

Afrocentric reform is democratic education.

Advocates of free/democratic schools believe that students, if they are to acquire the skills, knowledge, and values they need to perform their roles as citizens in a democracy, should receive a type of education that actively engages them as citizens in their own schools and communities. For example, they believe that students should participate in the governance of the school: share in decisions about school climate,

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school rules, curriculum, learning, assessment, personnel and budgets, and engage in activities that improve their local communities.

The idea of urban free/democratic schools fits perfectly in with the suggestions for Afrocentric reform initiatives and the characteristics of the hip hop generation to critique the mainstream.

Disadvantages of traditional authoritarian urban school climates

Due to various factors, traditional urban public schools have become more regimented. Due to such factors as drugs, gangs, and alienated students, security cameras, locker sniffing dogs, and mental detectors are the norm in urban school where the main job of school administrators is to “keep control.”

These strict and rigid urban schools with their use of school police to maintain order, have turned-off many urban minorities and working-class students. This is especially the case with males who have trouble with authority and see forced compliance as abuse of power by educators, keeping them in their place at the bottom of the social-economic ladder, and making public schools the enemy.

Dr. Louise Porter (2000) believes the limited effectiveness of traditional urban public schools and the authoritarian conditions that characterize them. Her research on the disciplinary approaches to behavior management in traditional public schools shows:

- Administrators depend too much on rewards and punishment to control student behavior and attitudes.
- Students have to be saturated with rewards for it to have an effect; some will learn to comply, but will become submissive and unadventurous;
- Coercion has a negative affect on school/student relationships; and,
- These methods do little to prepare students for the self-regulation required to live in a free and democratic society.

Rewards infer punishments: by not rewarding, we punish.

Dr. Louise Porter

She endorsed as “democratic environment” where students are given freedom but not license and learn autonomous regulation, cooperation, and responsibility.

She noted that most of children want to behave; they do not need consequences. The remaining behave/do things to show adults that they can’t tell them what to do—*thus, rewards/punishments won’t work with this smaller group.*

When will urban educators realize that rewards and punishments do not work, as these tend to excite resistance and rebellion in children who do not obey instructions in school just to show everybody they don’t have to?

Why do they continue to use strategies that are coercive and manipulative on urban students whose very identity is formed in opposition to the intent of these same strategies? Why?

However, when schools and classrooms have a free (Mintz, 2000) and democratic orientation, students learn the characteristics of self-regulation and self-determination

required by our constitutional democracy and the 1st Amendment (Hayes, Chaltain, Ferguson, Hudson, and Thomas, 2003).

It is common American horse sense that students are more likely to obey school rules they helped create. And, they are more likely to respect school authority if they have a say in who that authority is and what that authority does.

Urban public schools that are free or democratic would be more attractive to many urban students whose oppositional identity rejects the hierarchical, obedient, compliant, and top-down approach of the traditional school administrative guidelines, an approach that in light of very low graduation rates, is failing and may be obsolete (Evans, 2005).

Rethinking urban educational strategies through public free/democratic schools

Free/Democratic public schools will create a climate where urban black working class youth, as well as adults, are totally involved in the problem solving process. Since by definition, students will share in school climate, curriculum, learning assessment, personnel, and budget decision-making, democratic classrooms and schools will guarantee the focus will be on the tangible day-to-day problems students' face in their schools and neighborhoods, thus developing strategies that are more connected to students' experiences.

When youth organize for social justice, they are practicing democracy.

Hip-hop culture can encourage black youth to change their thinking about community problems. Public free/democratic schools can provide the model toward creating a more equitable world. In that progressive hip-hop culture functions as the voice of resistance, along with free/democratic education, it can be utilized as a politicizing tool to inform youth about social problems and how to solve them, while democratic practices provide the structure or blueprint for the possibilities of social change.

Free/Democratic public schools are viable options for traditional schooling because of hip hop's natural ability to boldly criticize and reveal the serious contradictions in American democracy. Rap lyrics about police violence, expansion of prisons, or repressive American foreign policies provide the place for black youth to think about issues that impact them and shape their lives.

Youth input into solving classroom, school, and community problems is necessary: Those closest to the problem are often in the best position to solve it.

Shawn Ginwright

By including black urban youth in education policy decisions, public free/democratic schools can be the "connector" Ginwright (2004) claims Afrocentric reform needs to evolve—to connect to, to recognize the everyday problems youth face. Thus, both the Afrocentric reform movement and students will be transformed because they are empowered through public free/democratic school decision-making to challenge the problems of poverty that impact their schools and communities. Also, this makes public institutions, like our public schools, more accountable for meeting the needs of their communities.

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The challenge to urban educators is to tap into the oppositional culture of hip-hop so that it might revive new and more inclusive forms of schooling and democratic possibilities.

Shawn Ginwright

Urban black students are critical thinkers

Higher order thinking skills are important for several reasons: basic physical survival, school academics, social-political citizenship, or personal fulfillment. Urban educators must realize that black urban students are by nature critical thinkers due to their opposition to the mainstream. As a result of their every-day experiences, they easily make connections between local concrete conditions in their schools and communities and how larger social systems can be transformed to better meet their needs. These strategies can strengthen urban reform by engaging youth and developing their capacities for greater civic engagement.

Rethinking urban educational strategies through free/democratic public schools opens new and exciting possibilities for reaching black students. The conditions they face on a daily basis need much greater attention on the part of educational reformers. Black youth in urban schools want and deserve a better education, and if scholars, educators, and policy makers would simply listen to what they have to say, they would learn that they have analytical capacity, creative energy, and the desire to make good things happen in their schools and neighborhoods. *This is the democratic potential of urban public free schools.*

The challenge is not to be afraid of freedom

In free and democratic public schools, the post-modern perspective grounded in spirituality that welcomes the bringing of the whole self to the work of school leadership offers the most hope in constructing schools in the future that celebrate and exercise democracy, equality, and social justice (Dantley, 2002).

In free/democratic urban public schools, urban black youth will be enabled to use their political power, creative energy, and desire to challenge the status quo and struggle for school and community change. We also must create and support these schools so they might revive new and more inclusive forms of democratic possibilities that Dr. Ginwright envisions. *The challenge educators, policy makers and the African-American community is to not be afraid of freedom.*

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The presentation of Phil Smith and Sue Burton A Conversation Between Sustainability Education and Democratic Education

Mr. Smith and Ms. Burton asked the group to list the characteristics of a democratic school. The group listed these ideas:

- Freedom (to think, associate, express, choose, self-regulation)
- Open (clear about what constitutes learning, how it takes place)
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- A philosophy that reflects international human rights laws
- Individualization/customization (respect the uniqueness of each person, enable self-actualization)
- High expectations (being in charge of one's learning, protecting excellence, enabling continuous empowerment)

Burton and Smith then noted that these characteristics could also be used to describe that which enables sustainability. They discussed the UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014 (DESD)—a global effort to ensure the future for “every one, every where, every when.”

They went on to explain “sustainable schools” which they defined as a means to carry out the DESD initiative. These schools:

- Require changing the way we think, live, and work
- Are about:
 1. Learning for change
 2. Learning to make informed decisions
 3. Widening our capacity to take action and make practical change

They listed the values for sustainable schools:

- Care
- Excellence
- Responsibility
- Collaboration
- Participation
- Critical thinking
- Future thinking
- Visioning
- Values clarification
- Cross-cultural connections
- Multi-stakeholder dialogue
- Action and reflection
- Organizational change

- Holistic thinking
- Integrating thinking and action
- Exploring the process of change
- Participation and the knowledge and skills for participation
- More on social and structural change than personal
- Local action in workplace and community
- Local community orientated action and learning
- Facilitating the growth of leadership qualities in everyone
- Recognizing local knowledge and capacity
- Education that questions our thinking, our assumptions, practices, and education approaches

That made the point that sustainable schools ask:

- How do we democratize the public school system so students have a voice?
- Once students have a voice, how are students involved with decisions?

They also noted that sustainable schools imply teacher training for quality teaching.

They discussed the term “environmental citizenship” as the duty of citizens to take a voice in environmental issues and decisions. As well as encouraging students to take on their duty to vote and be a part of their political community, *schools must encourage students to take on their environmental responsibilities.*

The relationship between Sustainability Education and Democratic Education was then made:

- Students must be informed and given the opportunity to share in classroom and school decisions that directly/indirectly involve the values, practices, and goals of global DESD efforts.
- This would involve them in the process of:
 - a. Deciding what issue, problem, or task that they, the class, school, or community wants to study, research, solve, or carry out
 - b. How, where, when they want to study/research/solve it
 - c. How their DESD efforts will be assessed

Funding possibilities for democratic public schools

Burton and Smith finally noted that although there is no funding for Democratic Education per se, there is for Sustainable Education. Since the two are very similar, those interested in democratic education could get funding under the DESD orientation.

They suggested contacting the North American Association for Environmental Education (www.naaee.org) for funding opportunities.

In conclusion: If we want sustainability, we have to have democracy. Environmentally sustainable schools/classrooms need student voices. Sustainability Education needs Democratic Education.

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

The argument that there is a relationship between sustainable education (SE) and democratic education (DE) is a solid one. It makes sense that not only must our public schools prepare students (our future generation) to create and maintain a sustainable world, but that students must be an integral and equal part of the decision-making process covering all aspects of our sustainability efforts.

Characteristics of both sustainable education and democratic education require the use of lower, middle, and higher order thinking skills. They also require application processes that rank from the simple task of distributing information to applying solutions to real world situations, and on to the complexities of public policy formation.

Inherent in both SE and DE is teaching for social justice—having students list, research, and solve social/economic issues that affect urban students on an everyday basis. To some urban minorities and working class youth, schools represent the power structure (Polite, 1994; Watkins, 2001; Duncan-Andrade, 2005). When educators enable students to use their time in school to do something about the injustices they experiences, the school will seem less of an obstacle. Respect for teachers and administration will come when students see that staff are on their side and want to educate them in the own interests, not the interests of some other entity. Why would the urban poor want to be assimilated into a socio-economic system where they're at the bottom?

Sustainable schools/democratic schools collaboration would be all encompassing, fundamental, and powerful. As well as being relevant and urgent, it has emotion, challenge, and it is filled with hope. To top it off, this is not just a local or national concept, but also a global initiative. With world communications available for students to talk and collaborate across borders and oceans, the possibilities are remarkable.

Education For Sustainable Development website:

www.EducationForSustainableDevelopment.com. Here you will see links to a presentation by Soren Breiting given at the 2005 International Health Cities conference in Taipei, October 29-30, 2005 titled: "How can schools help healthy cities? Experience from Denmark about the development of students' action competence."

Viewers will see how educators, at the global level, are taking a new look at environmental education in the presentation at 3rd World Environmental Congress Torino, Italy, October 2-5, 2005: "The New Generation of Environmental Education as ESD" (Education for Sustainable Development). Examples from Denmark, Thailand and Hungary are included.

One can also view via the above web page the UNESCO website for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the Draft International Implementation Scheme for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and read: "Review the First meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee (IAC) on the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)."

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The presentation of Mahati Belnick Kinesiology in Democratic Education Processes.

The topic of the talk by Mahati Belnick was: Educational Kinesiology in Democratic Education Processes. Her point is complex and brilliantly simple at the same time: Education is too focused on the mind. This results in a dictatorship of mind over the body. She intends her work to bring equity and democracy at the “inner level.”

Ms. Belnick works in the field known as Educational Kinesiology (Edu-K for short), and particularly with the Brain Gym concept--movements that stimulate a flow of information along nerve and muscle networks, restoring the innate ability to learn and function with curiosity and joy. Edu-K enables learners through specific activities and movement sequences to communicate to the whole brain/body system.

Ms. Belnick believes every person has an immense untapped potential. The Edu-K movement-based programs can provide effective tools to draw out our potential. The Edu-K balance process helps each person to access and establish communication with many levels of the human body and awareness. The physical human body as experienced in the intuitive Indian and Chinese traditions is understood to be included in a continuum that ranges from the energetic, sensory, emotional and mental at the inner level to the physical at the outer level.

The physical body is intimately linked to the whole body complex and can potentially access the full spectrum of information as experienced at all levels. When we activate and engage the whole brain and body in communication through the Edu-K process, then we find that we shift our awareness from the merely mental and/or emotional to a deeper level that is more inclusive of all available experiences and more expansive in our perception of reality. The body complex responds instantaneously to all thoughts, feelings, emotions, information, and action.

Belnick made a point to remind the group of just how old our bodies are. The instinct and intuitive mechanism developed over history are seen as useless in a world of facts, science, and materialism. Yet, the goal of her efforts is the simple noticing of our body. Noticing is a deep and dynamic level of awareness. The awareness of noticing is directed inward and serves as a technique for both evaluation of the body's information and responses as well as for initiating change to higher levels of function. In doing activities that bring this awareness of that which we “live in” appears easy enough, but is extremely difficult to do. This commonly felt difficulty of such a simple technique can be traced to the one-sided, predominantly intellectual/mental emphasis in the education system.

She sees education as focusing too much on the external and outward. Schools see students as receptacles for knowledge; and, they do not teach so students can connect knowledge to themselves. When students leave class, she noted, they do not talk about what they know or learned, but about their feelings. Thus students need educational opportunities about feelings and emotions so as to make them familiar with the “self.” She defined “self” as being. This increased familiarity with their “self” will help students understand what goes on inside: their feelings, emotions, thoughts,

relationships with urges, or appetites and the world. The Edu-K process and Brain Gym movements enable this understanding and help make learning meaningful.

More about Educational Kinesiology (Educational Kinesiology Foundation, 2006)
Developmental experts have known for more than eighty years that movement enhances learning. Beginning in the 1970s, Southern California educator and reading specialist Paul E. Dennison, Ph.D., built on this knowledge by bringing specific movements into his learning disabilities clinics. Dr. Dennison researched these movements, simplified them, and created techniques that developed a whole new way of understanding the learning process.

The mission of educational kinesiology is to teach activities for optimal mental performance to people of all ages and energize the body through kinesiology, the science of body movement and the relationship of muscles and posture to brain function. The process applies current neurological research to the facilitation of whole brain learning as a means of bringing balance to life and learning. By integrating mind and body through movement, Edu-K strives to develop one's full potential, enhance body awareness, improve concentration, enrich social skills and promote stress-free living (Kenestic Learning, Inc., 2006).

Educational Kinesiology is the process of drawing out learning through our natural movement experiences. More precisely, it is the study and application of exercises that activate the brain for optimal storage and retrieval of information. Edu-K is a process for re-educating the whole mind/body system for accomplishing any skill or function with greater ease and efficiency. The Edu-K process emphasizes the "educational model"--the model of "drawing out through movement". The intention is to support and nurture the learners innate and organic unfolding of skills and intelligence.

As humans develop, normal growth comes in certain developmental sequences. For example, with proper skeletal and muscle growth, the sequence of development over a 2 year period is: at 3 months the baby can hold up its head, at 6 months roll over and sit up, at 9 months stand, at 12 months walk with support, at 18 months walk on its own, and at 2 year it can run. At 5, children can skip, jump, and hop.

Other examples of developmental sequences are described in Piaget's theory:

- Sensorimotor stage: birth to age 2 years (experience the world through movement and senses)
- Preoperational stage: ages 2 to 7 (acquisition of motor skills)
- Concrete operational stage: ages 7 to 11 (children begin to think logically about concrete events)
- Formal Operational stage: after age 11 (development of abstract reasoning).

According to the Dynamic Learning & Health Centre, formal education can affect children's learning. As we start our formal education, we leave the world of movement and three-dimensional, experiential learning. Our learning becomes very structured and two-dimensional and providing very limited whole-body movement. Limitations begin to be programmed into our movement. If a developmental sequence is incomplete, skipped or inhibited by stress, our experience is built in with a compensation pattern, so we then struggle in a new learning situation.

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Each time we reach beyond our present limits, we create new nerve networks. As we develop links of communication and cooperation within the brain, we grow in our ability to access and use our innate capabilities. Our systems embody learning at amazing speeds. Research supports that we learn better when we have stimulated our multiple intelligences, which include music, movement, drawing, inter and intra personal skills as well as verbal and logical skills, as we have more connection into long term memory.

Exercise, besides shaping up bones, muscles, heart and lungs also strengthens the basal ganglia, cerebellum and corpus callosum of the brain. Aerobic exercise increases the supply of blood to the brain. But a coordinated series of movements produces increased neurotrophins (natural neural growth factors) and greater number of connections among neurons. Integrative movements like Brain Gym are an effective, profound, common sense, non-drug option that greatly facilitate lifelong learning.

The Brain Gym concept consists of simple movements similar to the movements that children naturally do during their first three years of life as they complete important developmental steps for coordination of eyes, ears, hands, and the whole body. The Brain Gym movements have been shown in clinical experience, in field studies, and in published research reports to prepare children with the physical skills they need in order to learn to read, write, and otherwise function effectively in the classroom.

This program is distinctive because it addresses the physical (rather than mental) components of learning. It builds on what the learner already knows and does well: it meets the learner just as he or she is, without any judgment of capabilities: and it teaches the student key elements of learning theory that he or she will be able to apply.

Movement is the key to learning. We start life using movement to stimulate our learning process. From the time we were infants until school began, we live in a three-dimensional world of exploration through movement and the senses. The thrill of discovery, the joy of moving with our new knowledge and the ease of ownership of that new learning filled our days.

Integrative movements such as the Brain Gym movements accommodate all learning styles, enhance myelination between the two hemispheres and balance the electrical energy and integrative processing across the whole brain...

Learning itself is part of a totally fulfilling life, and should continue to occupy a central role from infancy to old age. Movement, a natural process of life, is now understood to be essential to learning, creative thought and high level formal reasoning. It is time to consciously bring integrative movement back into every aspect of our lives and realize, as I have, that something this simple and natural can be the source of miracles.

Carla Hannaford, Ph.D.

Thus according to Dr. Hannaford, our mind/body system has the exceptional capability of reorganizing itself for more efficient learning through the use of specialized Brain Gym movements (Dynamic Learning and Health Centre, 2006).

For research on Edu-K, go to: www.braingym.org. See Research: A Chronology of Annotated Research Study Summaries in the Field of Educational Kinesiology.

RELEVANCE/APPLICATION

ADHD and Edu-K: Is there a connection?

The first thing that came to mind was Chris Mercogliano and his book, *Teaching the Restless: One School's Remarkable No-Ritalin Approach to Helping Children Learn and Succeed* (2004). He issues an urgent call for a shift in how our society perceives hyperactive children—away from theories of faulty brain chemistry and toward an understanding of children's lives.

Mercogliano co-directs the Albany Free School in Albany, New York. There, he and his faculty have developed numerous ways to help hyperactive children relax, focus, modulate emotional expression, make responsible choices, and forge lasting friendships—all prerequisites for learning-without assigning pathological labels to the children or resorting to the use of bio-psychiatric drugs (Education Revolution, 2006).

I don't know if the school uses Edu-K; regardless, the point is giving more respect to and understanding of the body. This is especially relevant for what is considered to be the normal behavior of young energetic children. Thus, with active (so-called "restless") students (especially boys) supposedly "suffering" from ADHD, the middleclass sedentary oriented "sit still, be quiet, and listen" is literally drugged into them. Here logical positivism and instrumentalism have taken schooling to a new level. To certain people, principally the over-educated, it makes a lot of sense (it's logical) to create a policy needed to run public education institutions smoothly (instrumentalism) and simply drug children.

Yet, in light of what Edu-K and the staff at the Albany Free School, the use of Ritalin, etc. in our public schools is a misguided policy alternative and thus suspect. Is taking time to, as Mercogliano says, "...move toward and understanding of children's lives," more important than normalizing students with drugs for the sake of efficiency?

For a history of ADHD and a review of the literature, a discussion of the Ritalin with ADHD, the politics and the results of labeling children, and educational alternatives including Brain Gym, see the research of Joan Spalding (1997).

The body in the learning process

Watching "Demonstration of Cross Crawl Activity" on various Edu-K websites reminds one of the positions and movements on *Carlos Castaneda's Magical Passes Unbending Intent* video (1999). These videos demonstrate a series of movements developed by ancient Mexican shamans to restore vitality, awareness, and energy to one's being.

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This is reiterated in his concept *Transegrity: Twelve Basic Movements to Gather Energy and Promote Well-Being (2003)*--a series of movements developed by Yaqui Indians in ancient times that promote health, vigor, youth, and general well-being. This series introduces viewers to the basic minor and major movements, specialized movements for returning energy to three vital centers in the body, and a sequence of movements that shamans used to enhance the scope of their awareness.

Ms. Belnick's idea of "noticing the body" fits well into the outcomes which intend to quiet the mind and its sometimes-incessant chatter, "internal dialogue," or what simply can be viewed as thinking. To quiet the mind so that the "still, quiet voice" can be heard has been the goal of seekers for ages.

The flow state

Not coincidentally, for Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience (2001)*, a quiet mind implies those times when people report feelings of enjoyment, concentration, and deep involvement. "Flow" is a state of concentration so focused that it amounts to absolute absorption in an activity—an exhilarating feeling of transcendence, of breaking out of the boundaries of identity. In the flow state, our mind is clear. We are not thinking, breaking everything down into parts, comparing, categorizing: our minds are not filled with the self-talk about our lives--our little autobiographical story-drama. We are in the moment, absorbed in the task.

It is easy to be in the flow state, but very hard to maintain it. Yet, our 5 senses provide a doorway to the moment. Listen intently. While you are doing this, you are not thinking. You can't! Look hard at something. Concentrate. As you eat, taste, touch, listen, and smell. Concentrate. This is the Japanese tea ceremony. This is being in "the here and now." Don't lose concentration. Sense your body—the muscles, the heart and organs, and your breathing. This is meditation.

Our body, our emotions, our brain and learning

What is also relevant is the idea that it is biologically impossible to learn anything we are not paying attention to. But what drives attention? Emotions. Emotions drive attention, which drives learning and memory. So when we remember, we remember with our whole body, not just in the neural synapses of our brain. The sympathetic nervous system is highly involved in the entire process. Mind/brain learning principles state:

The brain is a complex and dynamic system

The brain is a social brain.

The search for meaning is innate.

The search for meaning occurs through "patterning."

The emotions are critical to patterning.

Here, substantiated by brain research, are the emotions, our feelings, the body, and the connection of these with the mind (Scherer, 1997; 1998).

Emotional intelligence includes such things as: Identifying your feelings and needs, through body-awareness.

Robin Grille

Ecstasy and learning!

In her book, *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), educator Bell Hooks takes seriously the possibilities of the body, and the world of emotions and feelings in the learning process. Her ideas are highlighted in her chapters, “Eros, eroticism, and the pedagogical process” and “Ecstasy: Teaching and learning without limits.”

Intuition as intelligence: Democratizing intelligence

Investigations into the relationships among intuition, the right side of the brain, and our body must be made (Loflin, 2006). The tyranny of the mind over the rest of the body must be confronted and discussed. Equity must prevail. Not only is the present relationship “undemocratic,” it indirectly keeps many students from being successful at school because their strengths and abilities, which are non-traditional, are seen as unimportant or irrelevant and go unrecognized.

The right side of the brain is associated with intuition. Along with the ability to “see” the whole, the right brain is non-verbal, non-linear, visual, and the home of our imagination.

Intuition is a process of coming to direct knowledge or certainty without reasoning or inferring—a revelation by insight or innate knowledge and so akin to instinct. Intuition is also associated with such terms as “sixth sense,” “gut reaction,” “hunches,” and even “common sense.” Although none may have a place in science, as “creative imagination” they are essential. Many scientific laws were discovered after a scientist followed a hunch or “feeling” (Partridge, 2004).

In our fluid, competitive environment, the best decisions often come from intuition. So contemporary psychologists have designed a term to describe people who are in unusually close contact with their hunches. It is, “high intuitive.” They think with their gut feelings.

Gut feeling or intuition is sensing and thus becoming aware. Felt senses are the impulses of information received by the human body and sensory organs. Becoming aware of your personal intuitive perception, is your subjective knowledge of the objective. All ideas and knowledge possessed by mankind spring from this origin, nothing is contrary to what has been gained this way, so this “feeling” can be called the source of all knowledge (Marrix, 2006).

Serious consideration of these ideas can push educators to look into teaching our children not only how to think, but how to intuit.

Finally, these discussions will move us closer to democratizing intelligence (Williams, 1998) placing creativity and common sense on par with analysis and memorization.

The body and democracy

Parker (2003), in his chapter, “Making publics, finding problems, imagining solutions,” argues that listening is the key to democracy. Because democracy answers the question of how do different people share the same space, diversity needs democracy to work out what is fair for everyone in the space. Thus, deliberation matters. Coming together in talking and listening and action creates a public space we all share.

And listening, not just talking, is fundamental—a deep listening, listening without reacting, without judging and blaming. In deliberations, in finding common ground,

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listening is the key—open, receptive, sensitive, leaning forward to hear and see something other than our own cloud of assumptions, prejudices, and projections (p.101). This is the difference between listening to understand (where our mind is quiet) and listening to respond (where our mind is full of thoughts, busily planning our rebuttal). Listening, then, is democracy. And to listening well is to be in the flow state. What a connection!

In conclusion

It is the affective domain, not the cognitive, that will determine our future.

Dr. Donald Glines

Not only do many people feel uncomfortable with notions that exercises and body movements can help overcome learning difficulties, as is claimed by Edu-K advocates, they feel uncomfortable with their very own body. Be it the Christian/Puritanical associations of the body with “sins of the flesh,” or the comedy that is derived from mentioning any of the orifices of our body (or anything that comes out of these holes), or our over-concern with looks, health, and sex, many people are uneasy with that which they “live in” their entire lives. This is hard to fathom and illustrates Mahati Belnick’s point that education is too focused on the mind.

The human body has been around a long time. It knows a lot. It is wise. It can help us understand. We must respect it. We cannot disconnect our body from our mind. We must trust the whole body, listen to it, be aware of it, and accept the awareness it gives through its instincts, what it “senses,” and its intuitions. We will all be better off for it.

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Mahati Belnick presents "Power by Brain Gym" workshops designed specifically for students in India and Australia. Included in the workshops are Brain Gym exercises and self-evaluation (noticing) and self-correction (Brain Gym) techniques. Students can use these techniques to help themselves academically, emotionally and to deal with anxiety and stress. For more information, visit her website: www.braingym.in

The Currambena School

One of the hosts of the conference were the children, parents, staff, and board members of the Sydney's Currambena School. Globally recognized as a leader in innovative educational thinking, the school's motto reads:

“Where self-worth is the key to happy and effective learning”

Currambena School was founded in 1969, following a public meeting of parents, teachers, and academics from Macquarie University. With vision and determination, they pursued the possibility of a less formal school where children's curiosity and love of learning could be stimulated, where children's individuality was respected, and where parental input was valued. These were unusual ideas in the mainstream schools of the time. Today, Currambena delivers a holistic approach to learning, with the help of a flexible curriculum, which focuses on developing a child's skills for life as well as high academic standards.

Currambena students range in age from preschool to 12 years old. The number of classes and their composition vary depending on the number and age of the children attending the school in any year. As part of their philosophy they do not emphasize grades and so their classes are known by their teacher's names.

A class will typically cover 2-3 years and children will move "up" through the classes depending upon their social, emotional and educational readiness. In these small classes, each child receives individual attention, so the children can enjoy the benefits of multi-age classes without compromise. Small class sizes enable the teacher and school to work with each student to develop a challenging and inspiring program while providing freedom of choice that builds a deep and lasting love of learning.

Currambena is committed to providing an alternative to mainstream education developing all aspects of each child. They routinely incorporate valid theories in education, child development, and conflict resolution to complement the school's rich experience of providing alternative education.

One of the main characteristics of Currambena is Child Centered Education.

The philosophy of child-centered education consists of a number of beliefs about the nature of childhood and the nature of education. A search into its origins would include a consideration of views expounded by Jean Jacques Rousseau who wrote, "*Nature provides for the child's growth in her own fashion and this should never be thwarted.*"

The central recurring themes of child-centered education are:

- An appreciation of children as individuals--the focus is on what already is and less on what each might become.
- The nature of the child to be active. In a physical sense, this means the child freely moves within the school environment and does not spend most of the day being quietly seated. In intellectual terms, children actively create their knowledge. They are not viewed as empty vessels to be filled.

- Childhood is seen as gradual progression towards adulthood, best aided by adults who have a respect and an appreciation of children.
- Diversity is welcomed as richness and celebrated. There is no pressure on conformity.
- Learning is largely self-motivated and is most effective when taking place in a relaxed atmosphere.

Other characteristics of the school are:

Democracy

At Currumbena all decisions that affect the school are made at class, school and council meetings. Each student, parent and staff member has an equal vote and together they share the responsibility for the quality of life at the school. This builds children's understanding, pride, and ownership of their environment.

Conflict resolution

In a world where bullying in schools is a well-documented problem, Currumbena has a different approach. They actively teach children the skills, strategies and language to resolve conflict effectively.

In October 1999, The Currumbena School Council adopted the school's philosophical approach to education. They are based on a commitment to:

- The joyful pursuit of lifelong learning: Currumbena believes there is no restriction on what children can learn. The curriculum gives emphasis to academic, social, emotional, and physical aspects of children's development.
- Celebrating the uniqueness of each child: Each child's learning is meaningful, creative and intrinsically valued without being compared to others.
- Developing a nurturing community to support children's development: Learning goes on inside and outside the classroom at Currumbena. They work to create a caring and safe community that respects, trusts and treasures each individual child. In turn children actively contribute to the school and develop a sense of belonging.
- Supporting their professional educators so they can promote learning with energy and passion: The teachers earn the respect of the parents and children through their commitment, dedication, skills and educational expertise. They develop close and personal relationships with each child, involving them in sharing decisions about their own learning.
- Honoring the role of parents: Parents are respected as the child's first teachers. Their contribution to every aspect of the school is highly valued.
- Teaching and modeling effective communications: The school empowers children with communication skills so that they can learn to take responsibility for themselves, to cooperate with others, and to effectively resolve conflicts.
- Open governance: The school is committed to transparent, democratic, consultative, and contestable governance that is accessible to teachers, parents, and children (Currumbena School, 2006).

RELEVANCE/APPLICATIONWould families/students choose public democratic schools if they were offered?

There are many, many characteristics of so-called free or democratic schools, exemplified by those of the Currambena School, which must be considered by educators in our public schools in the United States. The 2002-03 National graduation rates reflect that for many Americans the traditional approach is not working. Minorities have a 50-50 chance of graduating and the Black male rate is only 43% nationally (Orfield, Losen, Wald, and Swanson, 2004). In urban Indianapolis, the graduation rate for males is around an incredible 22-21% (Schott Foundation, 2006)!

These graduation rates reflect a public elementary and middle school feeder system that could use the democratic, child-centered philosophy, and actions of Currambena.

The controlling, factory-like climate of bells that regulate school schedules, teacher-centered approaches, grading, a one-size-fits-all paradigm, and categorizing children according to state mandated developmental criteria--along with all the other characteristics of modern public education--are the antithesis of the openness of Currambena.

What does a traditional instructional environment look like?

The traditional schooling style is not only not meeting the needs of our students, but is turning off a great majority of them. One critique states:

1. Students were dissatisfied with teachers and classroom interactions
2. Students described school as boring and unpleasant
3. The sameness and narrowness in classroom instruction resulted in student passiveness and non-engagement
4. While the school did serve the top 25%, the rest were treated as "un-special" (Young, 1990).

Johnston and Wetherwill (1998) concur. They point out the 4 observed characteristics of traditional school:

1. The vehicle for teaching and learning is the total group in a classroom
2. The teacher is the strategic pivotal figure in the group
3. The classroom norms governing the group are mainly based on what maintains this strategic role
4. The emotional tone is "emotionally flat" or bland

One educator, Roland Barth, pin points the main drawback of the traditional public school system quite accurately.

But the major factor in students' lives that leads to depression, dropping out, drugs, jail, and suicide appears to be the *school experience*: ability groups, grade retention, college pressures, working alone, denial of strengths and focus on weaknesses, learning that is information-rich and experience poor, and the irrelevant curriculum that students must endure and frequently ignore (De La Rosa, 1998, p. 268).

Compare this to the previous description of Currumbena. In general, these types of school imply a place:

1. Where students have less reason to be disruptive or rebel against rules and/or “authority” since the school’s pro-active democratic school climate allows them to be a part of the school authority, sharing in classroom and school decisions.
2. Where students have no reason to resist a state mandated curriculum, and teachers do not have to be overly concerned with how to get students interested in school and learning since what students learn is based on the child’s individual innate curiosity, acquired interests, and dreams/goals;
3. Where students, especially boys, are not suspended, expelled, or have to take drugs because they are active or cannot concentrate since the school does not require students to sit still, be quiet, and listen.

Traditionalists view child-centered approaches

This makes a lot of sense, but many traditionalists view child-centered approaches as only for the children of educated middle class parents with their “permissive” child-rearing philosophy. They claim that the children of urban minorities and working class parents need a predictable environment, with strict guidelines and expectations. There would be chaos if children were allowed to just do whatever they wanted!

This exaggerated and simplistic response of many parents and educators proves the point of the advocates of democratic schools. It is these very traditional attitudes about authority and control that have led to public schools using medicines to get the strict, ordered, predictable, and quiet classroom environment they claim is necessary for learning.

This begs the question: Are some traditional settings so unnatural that the children have to be drugged to make schooling work?

For the sake of argument, traditionalists might have a point about drugs and ADHD, etc. Oddly however, when our outrageous national and local suspension, dropout, and graduation rates are taken into account, not much seems to be working anywhere.

A paradox for many African-American families

What is interesting is the paradox many African-American families find themselves in. They want to make sure their children get the education historically denied to them—through efforts to mis-educate, under-educate, not educate, or exclude. Tragically, this is why they easily take to 3Rs-oriented Core Knowledge, KIPP, and other back-to-basics spiels.

The irony comes when, given an opportunity to understand and experience democratic education--where children learn in an environment of freedom, spontaneity, trust, curiosity/exploration, and shared decision-making--that parents realize it was the pre-packaged, one-size-fits-all mold of the traditional public schools that their child would not, did not, could not fit into (except through drugs) that was the problem.

Control vs. Freedom

Advocates of democratic schools accuse our government, corporations, and lobbyists of controlling the outcomes of the schools--using the schools to perpetuate their interests, creating workers, and consumers. This is opposed to schools that are not concerned about the needs of government, corporations, or lobbyists, but the needs of children, their innate urge to become who they are by following their own interests. Of course, when this happens, the outcomes are less predictable. This is not good for business or government both of which need to control outcomes for their own advantage.

Indeed, conventional schooling works for many, but for those it does not, offering a free school climates will provide a genuine list of options for families. After over 35 years of development, these schools have proven themselves and can no longer be seen as an experiment or pipe dream. See <http://www.educationrevolution.org/listofdemscho.html>.

To have genuine choice further discussion is needed

There are many, many public schools that work for urban students and their families. In Indianapolis, the public Center for Inquiry and chartered Indianapolis MET come close to public free schools; yet, they seem restrictive when compared to schools like the Albany Free School. To have genuine choice in urban America, further discussion is needed. If and when this happens and more urban families are given an honest look at the promise of free and democratic schools, we will all be surprised what will happen.

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IDEC 2006 Endorses the Democratic Education Consortium

The 14th Annual International Democratic Education Conference (IDEC) endorses the Democratic Education Consortium (DEC).

Formed during the summer of 2004 in Indianapolis, the DEC is an independent group of over 35 persons that includes students, educators, activists and community leaders from 5 states and 3 countries who attend meetings and participate via the Internet.

The DEC is dedicated to promoting and advocating for democratic practices in education and has these goals:

1. A real shift to shared governance that empowers faculty and students in meaningful decision-making in policy, curriculum and instruction.
2. The creation and continuation of a public forum for issues around classrooms, schools, communities and the world.
3. Schools embrace practices that develop and encourage civic engagement for a robust and lively democracy.

Democratic schools hold the best promise for a democratic society. And, indeed, democratic schools hold the best hope for continued support for public education, a cornerstone of our American democracy.

Those attending IDEC 2006 held in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia give international recognition and support for the goals and efforts of the Democratic Education Consortium.

The consortium is located in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA.

See: www.democratic-edu.org/international/News/DemoEdu.aspx

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IDEC 2006 Supports The Booroobin Sudbury Democratic Centre of Learning

THE 14TH INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION CONFERENCE
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

13 July 2006

We, the people attending the International Democratic Education Conference being held this week in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, have learnt of and are dismayed by the detrimental effects caused by Queensland State Government education legislation on the people connected with The Booroobin Sudbury Democratic Centre of Learning ("Booroobin"), near Maleny in Queensland.

Booroobin Centre of Learning students, elected staff, graduates and parents have attended our conferences for some years and have participated equally and fully in our conferences.

We believe Booroobin's democratic education principles and practices support its students' learning to become reflective self-directed, responsible citizens and life long learners. This indeed is reflected in the United Nations Resolution of choices in education.

The International Democratic Education Conference supports the Booroobin community in using the appropriate processes to become an accredited school like other successful accredited schools in other countries using democratic education principles and practices.

About Sydney

A cross between Seattle and San Francisco, Sydney is the most populous city in Australia with a metropolitan area population close to 4.5 million.

It is the state capital of New South Wales and Australia's oldest city. It was established in 1788 at Sydney Cove by Arthur Phillip who led the First Fleet from Britain. Built around Port Jackson, which is renowned for its beauty, the city of Sydney has been called the "Harbour City". It is Australia's largest financial center and is also an international tourist destination, notable for its beaches and twin landmarks: the Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge.

Throughout the 20th century, Sydney continued to expand with various new waves of European and (later) Asian immigration, resulting in its highly cosmopolitan atmosphere. The majority of "Sydneyiders" are of British and Irish background. More recent arrivals have included Italians, Greeks, Jews, Lebanese, South Africans, South Asians, Sudanese, South Americans, Southern and Eastern Europeans, and East Asians.

Before the arrival of the English, there were 450 Aboriginal nations and 28 different languages. The Sydney region has been occupied by indigenous Australians for at least 30 000 years, and at the time of the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, 4000 - 8000 Aboriginal people from 3 language groups (Darug, Dharawal, and Guringai) lived in the region. Today, less than 1 % are Aboriginal (Sydney, 2006).

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What is IDEC?

IDEC stands for International Democratic Education Conference. It is not an organization or a group, but a series of annual conferences. The first conference was in 1993, in Israel, at the Democratic School of Hadera. A few teachers and students from democratic schools found themselves at a large conference in Jerusalem, called "Education for Democracy in a Multi-cultural Society." The speakers were mostly philosophers, professors and politicians, so the teachers and students had little opportunity to contribute. A small group was invited to Hadera for two days after the big conference, and the discussions were so stimulating that it was agreed to meet annually.

Since then there have been IDECs in Britain (three times), Austria, Israel again, Ukraine, Japan, New Zealand, India, the USA and in 2005 in Germany. The number of countries represented has risen from the four present at the original meeting in Hadera to twenty-seven at the Berlin conference.

Young people of school age have nearly always played a large part; the conference at Sands in 1997 and the Tokyo conference in 2000 were run almost entirely by school students. Sometimes there has been a full program of prepared talks and workshops, and sometimes the program has been entirely decided by the participants after they arrived; sometimes there has been a mixture.

What happens is that at each year's conference a school or similar organization volunteers to run the conference for the next year, or for the year after. At intervals calls have been made for an official structure of some kind, but in practice the autonomy of individual groups in arranging their own conferences has made for exciting variety.

There are differing views as to the purpose of the IDECs. Some see them as an opportunity to discuss shared problems in a supportive atmosphere. Others hope to spread the idea of democratic education by inviting possible converts and attracting favorable publicity. The purpose of any given conference is decided by the organizers (LIB-ED Articles, 2006).

IDEC is not dedicated to any specific system of education, but simply to the recognition that the role of the learner is central to the learning process. Commonalities typically found in democratic schools:

1. Self-directed learning whereby each child has freedom and encouragement to find his/her own path;
2. Flexible learning environment that allows for individual styles and pace of learning;
3. Holistic development of academic talents, social and emotional intelligence and ethical and moral values;
4. An environment that values diversity more than conformity;
5. Strong community focus and parental involvement; and
6. Democratic processes and structures for managing the classroom and school environment. (From www.idec2006.org.)

IDEC draws from a diverse base of international democratic schools, but has no formal membership structure. There are 184 schools from 31 countries listed with AERO as democratic schools (Bennis and Graves, 2006).

See <http://www.educationrevolution.org/listofdemscho.html>.

Also see the member list at <http://www.idenetwork.org/member.html>

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